

**STRATEGY PRACTICE IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: A CASE  
FROM STRATEGIC NETWORKING OF INFORMAL PRINTING  
BUSINESSES IN GHANA**

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## ABSTRACT

In response to calls for more strategy-as-practice studies that foreground structural and relational linkages in strategy practice, this thesis investigated strategic networking practices of informal printing businesses in Ghana. Despite the increasing interest in strategy as situated practice, studies that examine strategy work in the informal economy are lacking. The informal economy has been pervasive despite earlier predictions of its demise; it contributes significantly to social and economic lives through the provision of essential low cost products and services, and generation of employment. Informal businesses are integral to the competitiveness of formal firms in some economies, through their involvement in supply chains and strategic networks. Their contribution to global commerce has also been acknowledged, however we know little about how they organise, manage, and strategise to achieve these. The informal economy thus presents opportunities for unveiling new insights, given the peculiar characteristics of the setting and participants, and the consequence these may have for shaping their strategising practices.

Previous calls for strategy-as-practice research that bridge micro-macro treatments, in order to connect strategy work to agents embedded in states, fields, sectors, institutions, societies, cultures, and organisations remain to be fully realised. Invariably, an investigation of the informality phenomenon and its implicit complicity with strategic networking practices at the level of individual actors, businesses, field, institutions, the state, and the larger society in which they are embedded is expected to fill some of these gaps. The research employed Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory incorporating the concepts of field, capital and habitus as a theoretical framework for the analysis. A case study employing organisational ethnographic data collection techniques was adopted. An embedded case design option was employed to select participant informal printing businesses which were sampled purposefully and accessed via snowballing strategies. Network partners were also contacted by these means in a multi-sited data collection approach. Ghana, a developing country, was selected because of its history of a large informal economy and ease of access. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, shadowing, observations, and documents that provided secondary sources of data. A two-phase data analysis process with thematic analysis phase preceding a Bourdieusian analysis phase was adopted.

The findings categorised strategic networking practices of the informal printing businesses and their network partners into five main themes: 'Drivers', 'Nature of relationships',

‘Partners and exchanges’, ‘Building and managing relationships’, and ‘Outcomes’. Bourdieusian analysis that interpreted these findings articulated the strategic networking practices as an enactment of field logic of practice. The informal businesses engaged in strategic networking for the sake of practical coping in consonance with capital deficiencies that necessitated the creation of exchange-value. Exchange-value was created through capital exchanges amongst agents from fields with different logics, in order to transition to market opportunities controlled by dominant formal organisation field players. Interdependence behaviours (cooperative and/or co-opetitive) that sat comfortably with the focal field’s social structures (including material artefacts), and therefore agents’ dispositions and implicit codes of conduct, structured the conditions for these capital exchange and utilisation practices. To this end, the strategic networking practices were influenced by micro, meso and macro-level factors such as agents’ trajectories, the creative industry, the market, dominant players in the field of the informal printing economy, the regulatory framework, society, and trends in global trade. Again these ‘drivers’ delivered ‘outcomes’ at multiple levels that reached far beyond the local level of strategic networking practice. The study further suggests that the ‘drivers’ and ‘outcomes’ constructed, and were constructed by each other in a continuous cycle, much the same way that the strategic networking practice shaped, and was shaped by the social structures of the field in which the practices happened. This is depicted in a conceptual framework developed to summarise the findings.

The findings make a number of contributions that relate to the structural and relational approach to the study of strategy work. They capture the contextual complexities that are often treated lightly in traditional strategy scholarship generally, and network studies specifically. Also the research has given impetus to macro-level influences, as well as generative mechanisms that underlie strategy practice. The ways these were internalised by agents are illustrated. The findings further demonstrate the role of materiality in strategy work, especially how work spaces could produce strategy, and at the same time, be products of strategy work. Secondly the findings demonstrate the institutionalisation of materiality in a field of practice. Finally, the findings highlight the fine-grained ‘on-goings’ in the relationships between formal and informal businesses which is yet to be significantly captured in the strategic management literature.

**Keywords:** Bourdieu, informal business, informal economy, informal sector, Ghana, printing industry, informal printing economy, strategy as practice, strategic networks.

## MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLICATIONS DURING CANDIDATURE

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents an introduction and overview of the thesis that investigated strategic networking practices in an informal economy setting. The first section provides a background to the research, the framing of the research problem, and the justification for the research. Subsequently, the aim of the research, as well as the associated research questions that guided analysis is provided. This section is followed by an overview of the research methodology. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

This research studies strategic networking practices (SNP) of informal printing businesses operating in Ghana's informal economy, by adopting a strategy-as-practice (SAP) approach. The SAP research paradigm acknowledges the roles, influences, and constraints that a multiplicity of factors and actors have on strategising and its outcomes (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007). More importantly, this practice approach to studying strategy as something organisations 'do', rather than 'have', captures the socialness and situatedness of strategising (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Consequently, SAP scholars have extended our understanding of how the mundane and micro-processes of strategic planning (Giraudeau, 2008; Jarzabkowski, 2003), governance (Hendry, Kiel, & Nicholson, 2010; Smith, Dufour, & Erakovic, 2011) and change implementation (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007) are undertaken by strategy practitioners.

Equipped with SAP research tools, strategic management scholars can now explore how social structures which underpin the context of strategy practice, may predispose strategists' actions and decisions (Gomez, 2010; Whittington, 2006), since the SAP perspective assumes strategists do not act without recourse to shared social infrastructures. Strategies are usually products of everyday situated and socially-mediated coping activity (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007). As strategy work embraces a set of interrelated actors, routines, and materials that are complexly intertwined, there are some aspects of strategising that contribute to the success of strategy and firm survival, but are lost in the larger scheme of

strategy research (Chia & Rasche, 2010; Tsoukas, 2010; Whittington, 2007). These aspects of strategy work thus present opportunities for advancing SAP-type research that foreground micro-details of strategising.

Theories of social practice have been at the centre of SAP research, presenting researchers with tools for examining the socially embedded terrain of strategy work (discussed in detail in Chapter 2). These theories have been particularly salient in providing researchers a wide range of choice in theoretical and analytical frames. Social theories underpin the distinctiveness that SAP research brings to bear on strategy knowledge creation. Apart from the opportunity to take strategy research beyond that which ties closely to economic performance, SAP also provides latitude for studying a broad range of outcomes at the micro, meso and macro levels. For example, SAP approach supports research that examines how individual (micro) practices influence organisational strategy practices (meso), as well as the sector, industry or institutional (macro) levels and vice versa. The opportunity to produce knowledge on the relatedness and structural underpinnings of strategy practice is a motivation for this research. Invariably the informal economy provided an appropriate setting for which investigations using social practice theories are most appropriate, given the social embeddedness of the activities of participants, and the fact that compared to the formal economy, practices following economic and ‘rational’ logics may be less predominant (Godfrey, 2011).

As Vaara and Whittington (2012) observes, aside from the traditional and dominant for-profit organisational studies, SAP has been popular in the study of public institutions and other non-traditional settings amongst strategic management scholars than previously (see Denis, Dompierre, Langley & Rouleau, 2011; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Vaara et al., 2010; Whittington, Molloy, Mayer, & Smith, 2006). Studying these new contexts is worthwhile since the SAP approach offers alternatives to the meaning and study of strategy, rendering SAP study applicable and plausible in a wide range of settings. This research intends to extend the boundaries even further to an equally under-research setting, the informal economy in Africa, in order to uncover novel insights pertinent to that context. More importantly, it aims to extend our understanding of strategy as a shared logic of practice by agents doing strategy work in a field. The informal economy includes small owner/manager self-employed businesses that are characterised by partial or non-compliance to business, tax and employment regulations but produce and sell legal goods and services

(Godfrey, 2011). They also lack formal internal organisation and bureaucracy, and often have social embeddedness as a defining feature (Hart, 2006; Williams, 2006).

Although it is common for firms to form strategic networks with others, this aspect of strategy has not received much attention in the SAP literature. Firms usually form strategic networks in order to meet the goals and objectives of strategic plans or change initiatives. These inter-firm relationships or networks provide network partners a host of benefits which are pertinent to their success and survival; this may include access to information, capabilities, quality and reliable suppliers, profitable markets, and customers (Borch & Arthur, 1995; Gulati, Nohria, & Zaheer, 2000; Powell, 1990). Strategic networking involves a myriad of interrelated activities such as network formation, relations, behaviour, utilisation, evolution, change, and exiting that happen within networks (Chell & Baines, 2000; Coviello, 2005; Hite, 2005; Jack, 2010).

These are often constrained and enabled by a number of contextual influences. An investigation of SNP which has yet to receive attention in the network literature (Chell & Baines, 2000; Coviello, 2005; Hite, 2005; Jack, 2010) from an SAP perspective could contribute to our understanding of how this aspect of strategy work is done in practice. For instance, in terms of the flow of strategic networking activity (praxis); the materials and routines of strategic networking practice (practices) as well as how the 'doing' is influenced by the context of the actors or strategists (practitioners). Strategic networks are particularly critical to businesses operating in the informal economy since research suggests that informal businesses lack access to capital, strategic capabilities, technology, and markets due to their informality (Blunch, Canagarajah, & Raju, 2001; Tokman, 1978).

Informal arrangements and practices have been found to characterise economic transactions amongst informal businesses (Godfrey, 2011; Varcin, 2000). However, beyond themselves, informal businesses may form strategic networks with formal firms (Holt & Littlewood, 2014; Kar & Marjit, 2009). Through these networks they aim to meet their own requirements, for example getting supplies and subcontracts whilst satisfying cost and flexibility objectives of their network partners through their informal arrangements (Holt & Littlewood, 2014; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987). The evidence in the extant literature on strategic networks of informal businesses notwithstanding, previous strategic management scholarship is yet to explore the networking activity as social practice. In effect, the 'doing' of strategic networking which encapsulates the role of situated and contextual knowledge, interpretations,

assumptions, material artefacts, and capabilities were barely investigated by previous studies. This paucity in knowledge provides research gaps, and thus opportunities for the current research.

### **1.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY**

Despite the increasing interest in strategy as situated practice, studies that examine strategy practice in the informal economy are lacking. This thesis argues that strategising practices in an informal economy setting are an important and worthwhile topic for a number of reasons. First, contrary to early theorisation, the informal economy has been pervasive, and contributes significantly to social and economic lives through the provision of essential low cost products and services, and generation of employment (Blunch et al., 2001; Jones, Mondar & Edwards, 2006). Second, evidence suggests informal businesses contribute to the competitiveness of formal firms, through their involvement in supply chains and strategic networks (Holt & Littlewood, 2014; Piore & Sabel 1984). However, how they organise, manage, and strategise to deliver these essentials to businesses, customers, and society has been somewhat overlooked by strategic management scholars. These gaps exist despite the informal economy's important contribution to international commerce (Webb, Ireland, & Ketchen, 2014).

Studying strategising practices of informal businesses constitutes a modest step towards building new knowledge and theories that augment, and may also challenge those developed to explain phenomena in formal settings (Bruton, Ireland, & Ketchen 2012; Godfrey, 2011). The informal economy therefore presents valuable research opportunities, given the peculiar characteristics of the setting and participants, and the consequences these may have for shaping their strategising practices. In pursuing this informal economy research program (Bruton et al., 2012), this thesis investigated SNP of informal printing businesses in Ghana's informal economy. As mentioned above, this aspect of strategy work has not received much attention in the SAP literature; invariably micro-level strategic networking activities that the SAP perspective is intended to highlight are not well understood.

Furthermore, concerns have been raised about present limitations of SAP research (Carter, Clegg, & Kornberger, 2008; Chia & MacKay, 2007), resulting in a number of SAP handbooks (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2010; Johnson et al., 2007) and chapters (Gomez, 2010; Rouleau, 2010; Langley, 2010) and articles (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012;

Whittington, 2007; Whittington et al., 2003; Wilson & Jarzabkowski, 2004) identifying and acknowledging these concerns, and consequently pointing to directions for future SAP research. For instance, SAP scholars have emphasised and advocated for a greater attention to structural and relational linkages of strategy practice, especially to macro-institutions and structures as units of analysis, in opposition to ‘methodological individualism’ that dominates traditional strategy research. Methodological individualism presume individual actor(s) act as free, independent, and atomistic agents, whose thoughts and actions are hardly ‘touched’ by their environment and socialisation, as they pursue some intention, purpose, and goal (Chia, 2004; Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007).

Though micro, meso, and macro-level structural and relational linkages and outcomes might not be the focus of, or made explicit in existing SAP scholarship (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), some progress has been made (see Section 2.4). This notwithstanding, some research domains remain under-explored, thus providing impetus for this thesis. Macro-level linkages and outcomes for instance have received the least attention from SAP scholars (see Gomez & Bouty, 2011 for an exception). Thus far, calls for SAP research intended to bridge micro-macro treatments, in order to connect strategy making to agents embedded in states, fields, sectors, institutions, societies, cultures, and organisations remain to be fully realised. This development provides yet another motivation for this research, given the peculiar features and social structures that characterise the informal economy. Invariably, an investigation of informal business phenomenon and its implicit complicity with strategy practice at the level of individual actors, businesses, field, institutions, the state, and the larger society in which they are embedded is expected to fill some of these gaps.

This thesis follows Gomez and Bouty (2011), by investigating how strategy practice is co-constructed in a fluid relationship amongst micro, meso, and macro-level influences (Bourdieu, 2005) in order to better explicate the affordances of context (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). In particular, it illustrates the interplay amongst all levels of influence and practice thereby providing finer-grained accounts of strategising as a form of social practice, compared to previous studies. Consequently, extant SAP studies are problematised as requiring further elaboration, which is one of the different ways this thesis constructs its contribution to SAP scholarship (Golden-Biddle & Azuma, 2010).

This research employs Bourdieu’s (1977; 1990) practice theory incorporating the concepts of field, capital and habitus as theoretical framework. These concepts highlight the relationships



between individual agents' dispositions, their trajectories in time and space, capital configurations, and strategising activities as part of a logic of practice in a field. It is also instructive to note that SAP studies that draw on all three of Bourdieu's concepts remain scarce, despite their recognised potential to more fully explicate the structural and relational linkages that SAP scholars advocate (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Gomez, 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Whittington, 2003). The printing industry in Ghana is very competitive, with a lot of informal business participation. It is also characterised by a wide range of specialised activities, which engenders strategic networks. Ghana, a developing country was also selected because of its history of a large informal economy (Adom & Williams, 2012; Hart, 1973), and ease of access. Consequently, the chosen setting provided the social space for significant players that characterise the informal economy and strategic networking phenomena, and thus suitable for a Bourdieusian analysis (Hardy, 2014).

#### **1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS**

##### *Aim*

Taking the informal printing economy in Ghana as a field of practice, and a case study, this research aims to specifically sketch the linkages and interplay amongst individual (micro), organisational (meso) and the institutional, field, the state, and societal (macro) level influences and practices, and SNP of the informal printing businesses.

##### *Research questions*

An overarching research question guiding the study therefore is how do agency and social structural characteristics co-construct strategic networking practices in the field of the informal printing economy, and in what ways do these practices render intended and unintended outcomes. This is further broken down in three specific sub-questions as follows:

1. How do the informal printing businesses practice strategic networking in the field?
2. How is the practice of strategic networking by the informal printing businesses a reflection of, and reflected in social practices and influences at micro, meso and macro levels?
3. How are the strategic networking practices by agents in the field of the informal economy contributing to the durability of field practices and structures?

## **1.5 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research employed a social constructivist paradigm to understand the social reality of SNP from the perspective of the informal printing businesses and their network partners. A case study employing organisational ethnographic data collection techniques was adopted for this thesis, in cognisance with the study of a contemporary phenomenon as a situated real-life practice (Flyvbjerg 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Yin, 2014), and also, the tenets of Bourdieusian field analysis (Grenfell, 2014). An embedded case design was adopted in order to draw closer attention to how analysis of sub-units within a case individually and collectively shape the understanding of the larger object of analysis, in ways that are more representative of the case (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014).

Purposeful sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Cobin, 1990) was employed and targeted at the most productive participants. Consequently, the printing industry, a sector that is witness to vertical and horizontal strategic networks by informal businesses was selected as suitable for the purposes of this research (cf. Patton, 2002; Stake, 2013). Snowballing techniques guided the selection of informal businesses since the study targeted ‘hidden’ populations (Heckathorn, 2002). ‘Thick description’ of views, processes, and experiences (Ritchie & Lewis 2003) relating to the SNP of the informal businesses and their network partners were employed to enhance the logic behind inferences made about particular occurrences of the phenomenon. These are evident in the use and description of a wide range of data collection methods, multi-sited data collection approach, a two-phase data analysis procedure, and a vivid description of the research context. In order to enhance the quality of the research design, and given the fact that strategic management research in the informal economy is limited, a pilot study was conducted as part of prior preparation for main data collection, in order to test and refine the content, methods, and procedures applied in the larger research project.

## **1.6 THESIS OUTLINE**

The thesis consists of seven chapters. This chapter (Chapter 1) introduces the thesis and provides an overview of the content and structure of the thesis. It frames the research problem, justifies the study, and presents research aims and questions before giving a brief outline of the research methodology. Chapter 2 comprehensively reviews the three main literatures the thesis draws upon: the SAP, network, and informal economy literatures. The ‘practice turn’, its implications for the SAP paradigm, and the affordances it provides for this

thesis are elucidated. Additionally, SAP scholarship that borders on linkages and outcomes of strategy practice at micro, meso, and macro levels are examined. Since informal businesses are characteristically small businesses, major themes around which extant small business network research coalesces are also reviewed in this chapter. Theories, definitions, characteristics, and features of the informal economy phenomenon and informal businesses are also sketched and discussed broadly in consonance with the application of a Bourdieusian analysis.

In Chapter 3, the Bourdieusian logic of practice framework for studying the informal printing industry as a field of practice is outlined after an examination of the concepts of habitus, capital, and field. The research methodology is presented in detail in Chapter 4, justifying the research philosophy, research strategy, research setting, case selection, sampling, and data collection techniques. The choice of a two phase data analysis process is also discussed, in addition to steps taken in the research design and general conduct of the research, to enhance the trustworthiness and ethical basis of the research process. Chapter 5 reports the findings of the thematic analysis of the SNP of the informal businesses and their network partners, and concurrently interprets them using Bourdieu's logic of practice framework. Chapter 6 is dedicated to discussion of the main findings of the research, and summarises them in a conceptual framework. Conclusions are included in Chapter 7, it identifies and summarises the theoretical, practical and policy contributions, followed by a discussion of limitations of the research before pointing to avenues for future research. The chapter closes with a section on concluding remarks that draws together some general reflections on the findings and contributions of the research.

## **1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented an introduction of the thesis. It outlined the background to the study in which the research problem was discussed, followed by a justification of the study, and the statement of research aim and objectives. An overview of the research methodology was also provided, before a general outline and structure of the research was reported. The next chapter interrogates the SAP, network, and informal economy research as the main literatures that this thesis draws upon.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to achieve a number of objectives. Since the thesis studied a non-traditional strategy research setting, the affordances the strategy-as-practice (SAP) paradigm and the ‘practice turn’ in which it is rooted provided for studying the setting are first reviewed. Consistent with the aims of the research, as well as SAP research gaps that the study attempted to fill as outlined in Chapter 1, extant empirical SAP research is reviewed next, in order to identify and appraise existing work related to linkages between multi-levels of strategy practice and outcomes. This section of the review is intended to illustrate the positioning of the thesis in a specific research domain within the larger SAP literature, as well as highlight research gaps therein.

This thesis then turns to a review of network literature specifying how it relates to broader inter-organisational relationships, and how it is specified in the current study. The contributions and extensions that SAP can make to network theory are then explored, in an attempt to make a case for the potential value and new insights that the SAP paradigm may bring to bear on the broader field of strategy research. Since the businesses in the research setting were small businesses, the review hones in on small businesses network research. In this regard, a review of small business network research is included in order to highlight what knowledge exists, what gaps remain, and how the findings of this study can extend knowledge on small businesses networks. This set the tone for a review of how a practice-oriented approach may inform network literature, which is covered in the next section.

Following this, literature on the informal economy, which includes informal business networks are examined. This provides a sense of the significance, the participants, management and organisation practices, features and characteristics of the informal economy, as well as research gaps pertinent to this literature, and its implications for this study.

#### **2.2 STRATEGY-AS-PRACTICE PARADIGM**

After decades of economics-inspired research, some scholars of strategic management have charted a new course away from financial and economic performance-dominated strategy research, towards that which includes more socialised aspects of strategy and strategising,

popularly referred to as strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). For these group of scholars, SAP is a more nuanced research paradigm that uncovers practitioners' ingenuity in their day-to-day strategising activities since SAP 'is concerned with the doing of strategy: who does it, how they do it, what they use, and what implications this has for shaping strategy' (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009: 69), and less so about what strategy an organisation has (Whittington, 2006). Invariably this strategy research tradition accommodates the social reality of doing strategy work, whilst placing lesser emphasis on the econometric analysis of organisational, firm or industry-level performance, unlike the traditional strategy content research paradigm (Chia & Mackay, 2007; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Whittington, 2007).

Until the SAP perspective, economic analysis was the dominant research approach in strategy (Ramos-Rodríguez & Ruiz-Navarro, 2004; Wilson & Jarzabkowski, 2004). An economically grounded approach to strategy research undoubtedly has contributed to knowledge on strategy and performance outcomes, especially those to do with the bottom-line and related issues that matter to corporate and other for-profit organisations the most. However, this traditional emphasis inadvertently rendered some contexts such as the one studied here, difficult to study, either because reliable data for decent formal strategic analysis are not readily available, or established constructs are not amenable to analysis in such contexts. The SAP paradigm therefore provides some impetus for widening the study of organisational settings, as well as other equally important strategising activities that happen within these settings. Overall, the SAP paradigm is more a complementary research paradigm that provides additional tools for working towards a holistic understanding of strategy and strategising within organisations, and less a competing or alternative research agenda to what already exists in strategic management scholarship, as we will see in the discussions that follow.

SAP research differs from early strategy content research, but has some semblance with strategy process research (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Tsoukas, 2010). Strategy content research is geared towards answering the 'whats' about strategy, whilst process research attempts to answer the 'how' questions of strategy (Chia, 2004). The content approach was critiqued for failing to account for the finer micro and emergent aspects of strategising as well as the context of strategy practice (Mintzberg & Waters 1985; Pettigrew, 1997; Webb & Pettigrew, 1999), a shortcoming the process approach was meant to address. Subsequently, proponents

of SAP argue that the process agenda has been unable to fully make up for the existing gaps in strategic management knowledge, especially those to do with the practice of strategy.

However, the relationship between SAP research and strategy process research is still contentious; whilst some scholars suggest SAP research is nothing more and nothing less than an extension of process strategy research (Carter et al., 2008; Mintzberg, 2004), others maintain it is different and better in research philosophy and approach (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2005; Hendry & Seidl, 2003; Johnson, Melin & Whittington, 2003; Whittington, 2002). Nevertheless, for a few dissenting views (e.g. Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007), the SAP agenda has yet to break away entirely from the strategy process school, although such a permanent dislocation is possible and fruitful.

Despite the above disagreements, there is consensus on the primacy SAP places on the 'socialness' in the conceptualisation, data collection, and analysis of the practice of strategy. Aptly, in complementing strategy research that studies the impact of strategy on profit or sales performance figures for instance, SAP framing allows for broader understanding of 'performativity' (Goffman, 1959), which describes the sociology behind economic performance (Whittington, 2007; Cabantous, Gond & Johnson-Cramer, 2010). Sociologically inspired SAP research encapsulates concepts and framework that reflect relatedness, which invariably guide the choice of units of analyses in SAP research. Three broad SAP research elements have been operational in SAP research (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). The first, strategy praxis: includes the actual day-to-day micro-activities of strategy work. A second, strategy practices: involves routines, materials, tools and concepts used for the purposes of strategising, and a third strategy practitioners: entails internal practitioners who do the strategy work, as well as external practitioners like policy makers, consultants, business schools, strategy scholars, and media who indirectly influence praxis and practices (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008). In an appropriate sense, and as later reviews will show, all these three SAP research themes are interrelated, allowing for a better understanding and explanation of strategic action, interaction, and influences at multiple levels of analysis (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski & Fenton, 2006; Whittington, 2007).

Theories of social practice (reviewed below) have been at the centre of SAP research, aiding researchers in carefully navigating the socially embedded terrain of strategy work. These theories have been particularly generous in providing researchers a wide range of choice in

theoretical and analytical frames. Though not meant to be an exhaustive list, the work of popular and seminal theorists such as Heidegger (1962); Garfinkel (1967); Goffman (1969); Vygotsky (1978); Foucault (1980); de Certeau (1984); Habermas (1984); Giddens (1984); Bourdieu (1990, 2004); Granovetter (1985); Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina and von Savigny (2001); and Reckwitz (2002) have been influential in linking strategy work to other social practice concepts in ways that give rise to a deeper understanding and reflection on strategy and strategising. Despite the enormous contribution of these theories to SAP research, some opportunities remain for further studies that draw on them (Rasche & Chia, 2009; Gomez, 2010; Hurtado, 2010). This current research draws from the tenets and assumptions of these practice theories, in particular Bourdieu's, to extend our understanding of strategy as social practice in a non-traditional setting.

### **2.3 THE 'PRACTICE TURN' AND APPROACHES TO STRATEGY-AS-PRACTICE RESEARCH**

Moving away from strategy as something organisations 'have' to a conceptualisation of strategy as something organisations 'do', the SAP paradigm was inspired by the 'practice turn' (Rasche & Chia, 2009). The source of inspiration emanates from the underlying belief in the social and situated understanding of the enactment of practices, and thus strategising. Stirred by an interest to know and interpret practices as everyday interactions and symbolic manifestations in the social world, a family of theories associated with the 'practice turn' have become popular and presented in opposition to earlier variants. Theories linked with the 'practice turn', and which are undergirded by interpretative and classical social constructivist traditions (Rasche & Chia, 2009; Reckwitz, 2002), offer a set of practice theories popularised by theorists from diverse backgrounds in philosophy, sociology, and anthropology (e.g. Giddens, 1979, 1984; Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Taylor, 1971, 1985; Garfinkel, 1967; Schatzki, 1996, 2001). Their works have been influential in SAP scholarship, because they share some common elements pertinent to the understanding of social order (Reckwitz, 2002). Drawing inspiration from intellectual forbears, notably Wittgenstein (1951) and Heidegger (1962), practice theories dismiss the two alternatives, and seemingly opposing views of goal and normative oriented explanations of social order. This perspective largely underpins this thesis.

### **2.3.1 'Practice turn' in social theory**

Goal or purpose-oriented theory suggests that making meaning of social order is achieved by the sum of individual actions combined. Whilst the normative-oriented school argues that the same end may be served, but instead, with recourse to social rules and conventions established by consensus, and which in turn constrain and enable social action and order. In the view of the goal-oriented action theory, an amalgamation of individual conceptions, intentions, and interests is most representative of social order, and thus making meaning of the social world. The alternative view, which was touted as presenting a more vivid sociological perspective to the rather philosophical goal or purpose-oriented explanation, gives primacy to normative rules as guiding principles for intentions, interests, and subsequently action (Durkheim, 1982).

To the extent that meaning is made intelligible through shared socially constructed knowledge structures that are embodied in symbols, things, language and so on, practice theories articulated by the 'practice turn' differ in their explanation of social order, and thus meaning. Insofar as this is the case, actors interpret their social world in ways that give cognisance to symbolic knowledge structures that only act to either enable or constrain behaviour. These collectively constructed and shared knowledge structures thus underlie the interpretations, and meaning agents make of their world, which invariably inform action/inaction (Rasche & Chia, 2009). In essence, practice theories lie somewhere in between the goal-oriented and normative action theories, and draw inspiration from same, since the starting point is neither individual goals nor social norms, but rather collectively laid down knowledge schemes or codes. These schemes or codes arise from social interaction amongst agents, and give rise to often taken-for-granted cues that define what is considered good, desirable, normal or legitimate.

This social interaction therefore becomes critical, and is a starting point in understanding social order in terms of individual and collective action, even in the absence of normative rules. The onto-epistemological shift of the 'practice' turn is therefore intended to situate social order, and its production in the material and symbolic realm. This is a point of departure from the prior interpretative (Schütz, 1967, 1970) and structuralism (Lévi-Strauss, 1963) theories, and also a conceptual distancing from 'intellectualistic' and 'mentalistic' origins of knowing: an explanation of action and social order that locates the social in the mind. Practice theories share with other cultural theories a tenet that cognitive and symbolic



knowledge structures are pertinent to the understanding of the 'social'. Second, symbolic structures that underpin knowledge, action and social order, that other cultural theories have theorised as implicit and cognitive, and residing in the mind, can be rendered more explicit on the outside in the form of signs, symbols, text, discourse, language (Reckwitz, 2002). It is this focus on the human, and embodied socio-material doings, that give impetus to SAP research.

### **2.3.2 'Practice turn' and strategy research**

Having given a background to the 'practice turn' in social theory, the thesis now turns attention to the peculiarities of SAP research, and the ways practice theories provide a suite of options for conducting and interpreting results, whilst pointing to how these are privileged in the current study. According to Feldman and Orlikowski (2011), the 'practice lens' is well placed to uncover the social, technological, and managerial factors underpinning most of the complexity, emergence, uncertainty, and enactment of an organisational phenomenon. Subsequently, like other management and organisations scholarship, such as technology management, accounting, management learning, and marketing, the influence of 'practice lens' on SAP research is growing (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). As an agenda that purports to study strategy and strategising as situated, interrelated and materially-mediated set of practices, SAP lends itself to this 'practice lens', invariably practice theories have become critical in that endeavour.

Three approaches to practice-type management and organisation research have been delineated: the 'empirical', 'theoretical' and 'philosophical' (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). Put another way, practices may be engaged in research either as a 'phenomenon', a 'perspective', or a 'philosophy' (Orlikowski, 2010). Orlikowski and her colleague however, advise that these three approaches are not mutually exclusive, and that scholars may emphasise to a lesser, or greater extent, each of these orientations in their research. The focus, research questions, and methodology used in this thesis tilts heavily towards the 'theoretical', and to some extent the 'empirical', and 'philosophical', these choices are further justified in Section 4.2.1.

For scholars interested in deciphering what strategists actually do, which in most part may be distant from what researchers claim they do (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011), a deep engagement with 'organisational routines', an ethnomethodology genre popularised by Garfinkel (1967) provides the lens to uncover the routines and adaptations of strategists. According to the

tenets of this genre, tacit knowledge, specifications, and prescriptions unfold and become accomplished in an ‘order of doing’. This ‘empirical’ perspective thus empowers the researcher to answer the questions regarding the ‘what’ about human agency, practices and their outcomes. With an interest in actor influences on strategic networking practices in an informal economy setting, an ‘empirical’ approach to studying strategy practice was adopted as one of the perspectives in this research, without necessarily doing ethnomethodology (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

Most SAP scholars design their research with a ‘theoretical’ ‘practice lens’ (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012 ), primarily because SAP gives as much primacy to what strategists do, as it does to how they do it, with whom, and with what. An important point of departure of the SAP paradigm is an understanding of strategy work as socially embedded in a web of actors and structure, away from conceptualisation that limits practice to individual or group praxis (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). A ‘theoretical’ approach to theorising practices, and for that matter this thesis, is primarily geared towards explaining activities and their relationships to context, structure, agency, materials, and history. This approach more or less gives holistic accounts of organisational phenomenon.

This approach is best suited for SAP scholars who aim to understand micro-level psychology of actors, and their interplay with larger and higher level macro-structure within which micro-processes emerge, and how these interactions explain change or stability in micro-level practices, as well as macro-level social structure over time. Bourdieu’s (1990) theory of practice as well as Giddens’ (1984) structuration theories are particularly valuable in explaining this complicity between objective structures and subjective agents (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). SAP scholars interested in theorising how the choices and activities of individual strategists are reflective of extra-organisational strategy practice, and their consequences for strategy practice in time and space, have turned to a host of practice theories that though using different terminologies, conceptualise the consequentiality of actions and practices in similar ways (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). For example, scholars employ the ‘theoretical’ perspective to study actors in fields of practice (Bourdieu, 1990), bundles of human activities (Schatzki, 2005), social structure or systems (Giddens, 1984), as well as their discursive practices in which the field, or system-specific knowledge and power, that explain social order are subsumed (Foucault, 1977, 1980; Fairclough, 2003).

The ‘theoretical’ approach further suggests that organisational phenomena and practices are relational (Feldman & Orlikowski 2011; Foucault 1977), and often defined by manoeuvres for power, resources and available capital, which is a function of agents’ trajectory to the various objective social spaces. Most practice theories (Bourdieu, 1991; de Certeau, 1984; Foucault, 1980; Giddens, 1984) imply the expediencies of power, knowledge, dominance, agency, capital, and their relationality in conceptualisation and praxeology of practice. This ‘core logic’ approach to understanding practices provide frames for SAP scholars who explore the mundane, and often taken-for-granted, yet enabling and constraining effects of the use of materials (Dreyfus, 1995; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2005; Heidegger, 1962), including what Latour (1987, 2005) calls non-human ‘actants’ such as technologies in practice, as well as epistemic objects (Knorr Cetina, 1997, 2001).

From a ‘philosophical’ standpoint, practice theories explain strategy and strategising as part of social reality, by extension, the strategist and his social world are what they are because strategies are practical accomplishments of that reality. Strategy work is not separated from human existence and coping, where a detached individual strategist’s work exists outside the self, but rather strategy work is constitutive of the self and social reality. Compared to the other two perspectives of theorising practice, this ‘philosophical’ approach, presents the most radical methodological and onto-epistemological positioning of practice as lived experience (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Schatzki, 2002, 2005). We recall that most practice theories dismiss ‘either or’ explanations (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011) and treat practices as ‘social becoming’ (Sztompka, 1991), and as ‘the primary generic social thing, instead of individualism versus societism’ (Schatzki, 2001, p. 1). In studying practices therefore, scholars who take a ‘philosophical’ stance on social practices, a perspective that rejects ‘either or’, ‘agency or structure’, ‘objective or subjective’, ‘mind or body’, ‘cognition or action’ make choices from a toolkit of practice theories (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990) to achieve that aim. These dichotomies, from a philosophical perspective do not always reflect the true nature of practices and social reality (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & Rasche, 2010; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

The ‘philosophical’ approach has profound influence on choices that SAP research can make, from what is meant by strategy and strategising, through the identification of the strategist, to how we choose methodologies for studying strategy. These issues are pertinent to methodological and onto-epistemological choices made in this thesis as detailed in Chapter 4. In this study however, the ‘philosophical’ persuasion emanates from a fundamental choice of

practice ontology, aspects of which are consistent with Bourdieu's practice theory that provides the analytical framework for the study. The use of the 'philosophical' approach here is therefore less explicit, as a re-specification of strategic networking and the informal economy phenomena was not at the centre of the research questions. Instead, it is meant to show how SNP in the field are embodied, socio-materially mediated, organised and rooted in history, and also shared by field agents (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

Drawing on a 'practice lens', strategy and strategising can be researched and understood more holistically, unlike the dominant content approach that studies strategy mainly as a cognitive and purposeful exercise of analysis prior to action (Chia & Rasche, 2010). This dominant content approach is likened to a 'building' mode. In this 'building' mode, actors form mental schemes of possibilities in their world, plan goals to be achieved independent of other entities, and then act on those plans only after a careful examination of available options. It turns out too often that social reality is far from this apparent mechanistic explanation of social order, and that practice often involves situated coping. This is a point of departure of the SAP agenda and likened to a 'dwelling' mode (Chia, 2004; Chia & Holt, 2006) that complements the 'building' mode in the creation of strategic management knowledge. More importantly, taking this multi-perspective approach is imperative to uncovering social reality, which invariably bears witness to the socialness of strategy and strategising work.

In the 'dwelling' mode, individual strategists act in a more purposive, routinised, and immanent manner *in situ*, dealing and coping with everyday challenges that are pertinent to success and survival (Chia, 2004; Chia & Rasche, 2010). In most cases, the level of spontaneity and temporariness of practices leave little room for rigorous, purposeful, and deliberate planning to precede practice (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). The mind and the action accomplished are not independent, but instead collectively manifest as longstanding habitus, *modus operandi*, predispositions, styles, entwinement, everyday coping, and 'being in the world' (Bourdieu, 1990; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Heidegger, 1996; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011).

Practitioners are often not fully conscious of the origins of the tacit knowledge they have regarding their own practices (Chia, 2004), since in this absorbed 'dwelling' mode, forethought and reflection are relegated to the background, as practical exigencies are foregrounded. Actors may thus resort to shared interpretations and orientations towards

familiar recipes drawn from their repertoire, therefore reinforcing existing patterns of action, that are representative of the context in a recursive fashion (Jarzabkowski, 2004, Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2002). Through temporary breakdowns or interruptions, practitioners attempt to make meaning of self and their practices, as praxis can easily become trapped by routine (Whittington, 2006). This is when absorbed coping gives way to analysis of practices, intentions, materials, tools, and things drawn from organisational and extra-organisational contexts (Whittington, 2006), and the interrelations between them (Dreyfus, 1995; Heidegger, 1996). Occasionally, improvisation, innovation, or adaptation to practices follows a problem, conflict, 'foreign practice' introduction, or practice failure. This is usually shaped by practitioners' in subsequent micro-level praxis that underlie these practices. This social reality often triggers a continuous tension between recursive and adaptive practices. Of course, the cause and effect of the co-existence of recursive-adaptive coping practices straddles multiple levels and context: individual, organisational, and extra-organisational (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2006).

Drawing a further distinction between SAP research and the strategy content tradition, practice theories give SAP studies the latitude to investigate all strategists behind outcomes, thereby freeing strategy research from the longstanding top management hegemony. Amongst other things, SAP eschews methodological individualism (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) and gives primacy to methodological pluralism occasioned by a need to explore the 'whole and related', which is accorded by a 'practice lens'. Advocates of the 'dwelling' mode (Rasche & Chia, 2009; Chia & Rasche, 2010) strongly maintain that, researchers are best placed to theorise strategy, the closer they get and immerse themselves in the practices of strategy practitioners. This way, the opportunities to appreciate social reality, where the mundane and yet exotic, freewill but deterministic, the objective yet subjective, structure but structured, that characterises social practice, are made intelligible.

Here, the concept of strategic networking practice like any other kind of strategy practice is likened to social practice. It means a kind of strategy work that depends on organisational and other social and institutionalised practices that significantly affects its antecedents and outcomes (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2007). Since the concept of strategic networking practice constitutes, and is reproduced by a pattern of many single, unique, but interconnected activities, actions, and practices (Reckwitz, 2002), it is used here to capture the broad range of the building blocks of the strategic networking practice concept. In this thesis, strategic networking practices thus capture 'accepted ways of doing things, embodied

and materially mediated, that are shared between actors and routinised over time' (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 287). Strategic networking practices therefore embrace the strategy praxis, strategy practices, and strategy practitioners framework outlined in Section 2.2.

## **2.4 MULTI-LEVEL ANALYSIS APPROACH TO STRATEGY-AS-PRACTICE RESEARCH**

The aim of this section is to provide an exposé on the extent to which existing SAP scholarship examines strategy work using a multiple levels of analysis, and how this SAP approach has enhanced our understanding of strategy and strategising. Aside from providing a conceptual basis for the study, research gaps that this study intends to contribute to filling are identified. This section particularly reviews studies of strategy practice focused on various levels, the linkages amongst levels, as well as outcomes for strategy and other social practices at multiple levels of analyses. Unlike traditional strategic management literature, outcomes in SAP is not limited to economic performance; they may refer to consequent individual, organisational, institutional, societal, or strategic process and practice outcomes. Outcomes may be shaped individually or collectively by strategy praxis, strategy practices, the identity of the strategy practitioner, or role-performance by practitioners amongst others (Jarzabskwocki & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

In effect, it is plausible to classify SAP studies based on how strategy practice and outcomes are linked to practitioners, praxis, practices, and generative structures at the individual, organisational or institutional levels (Jarzabskwocki & Spee, 2009), and how these micro, meso, and macro contexts account for strategy practice, processes and outcomes in terms of their recursiveness, adaptation, or stability (Jarzabskwocki, 2004). Previous SAP research that explicitly takes this multi-level focus is limited. However, the few identified in this review provide an organising frame that sketches how existing SAP work may inform the current and future SAP research that foregrounds multi-level analysis of strategy practice (e.g. Jarzabskwocki & Spee, 2009).

Most extant SAP studies examine processes and outcomes of strategy practice as a micro-activity whilst giving little attention to the broader meso and macro-level influences, linkages, and outcomes of the micro details of strategy work they study (Chia, 2004; Duran, 2012; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). These micro-context studies have however contributed to a better understanding of how an individual or a group of individual practitioners' expectations, experiences or strategy practice influence the individual's course of action, as

well as other individuals' or group of individual's strategising activities. It depicts how strategy practices at the individual level influence or has outcomes for other individuals involved in the strategy practice. For example, Samra-Frederick's (2003, 2005) ethnomethodology studies on talk-in-interaction shows how individual top managers' strategy discourse, influence strategists subjective position, and subsequently shape strategic outcomes for all organisational strategy practitioners.

Mantere (2005) also demonstrate how individual and group strategists' expectations and interpretations of strategy, influence their strategic actions and choice without recourse to an overarching organisational strategy. These findings have implications for our understanding of strategy work as an inclusive practice, where individuals who do not belong to top management also attempt to influence strategy through agency (Jarzabskwocki & Spee, 2009). Furthermore, Mantere (2008) found that the strategic role of the middle manager may be enhanced if top management accounts for agency in their role expectations of middle managers. Drawing on Giddens's (1984) structuration theory, it was observed that traditional functional-type role is not reflective of the micro-social contexts of middle managers' knowledgeability and strategising. The study therefore shows that top managers may have to take cognisance of the middle manager as a strategic agent in the assignment of functional roles, thereby accounting for individual agents' biographies in strategy practice.

Some micro-level focused studies also look at how individual or group practices shape the doing and outcomes of organisational strategy. Whittle and Mueller (2010) for instance show how a group of individuals or community of practice (accountants) used management accounting system as a source of power to contest the strategy formulation agenda of an organisation. Managers of a large organisation resorted to accounting practices to imbue a rational and calculative strategy discourse, in ways that had profound implications for strategising within the organisation (Ezzamel & Willmott, 2008). Similarly, in an ethnographic study of a new product development project that has organisation-wide implications, Jorgensen and Messner (2010) found that the diverse individuals involved in the process, used accounting information linked to strategic objectives, to analyse the impact of satisfying each organisational constituent on the larger organisational outcome of the project. Through the creation of board papers of varying content and length by managers, Smith et al. (2011) draw links between micro-level strategy praxis of managers and organisational strategies. Together, these studies reveal the multiplicity of actors shaping the processes and outcomes of strategy practice at the organisational level.

Invariably, the above studies draw on a myriad of practice theories including Latour's (1987, 2005) actor network theory, Foucauldian (1977) discourse analysis, and Schatzki's (2002, 2005) practice theory to explicate how otherwise mundane, and routinised activities like management accounting systems, and accounting practices, are made intelligible in the articulation and enactment of strategy. They further illustrate the influence the accountant as an agent may have on the eventual strategic choices made by organisations. Similar findings on the influence of the micro-processes and activities of strategy work on strategic outcomes of an organisation have been made elsewhere. For example, Regnér (2003) reported that strategy does not develop in similar ways even within the same organisation, instead it is shaped through heuristics in some parts (the periphery) and formal analysis in others (the corporate centre), depending on the location and social embeddedness of the actors. This observation further suggests that actors' historical and real time trajectories in social spaces in the organisation may imbibe them with frames that they bring to bear on organisational strategy practice.

As noted earlier, macro-level analysis have received limited attention from SAP scholars, but have been of particular interest to neo-institutional theorists over the years, especially studies on institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009; Suddaby, Siedl & Lê, 2013). Though treated as alternative approaches to studying organisational phenomena, the SAP and neo-institutional perspectives have much in common, including similar themes (Suddaby et al., 2013). This may be a reason SAP studies and reviews often include works from neo-institutional theory (see Golsorkhi et al., 2010; Jarzabskowi & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Gomez and Bouty (2011) synthesised SAP and institutional theory to investigate how the practices of an individual chef emerged to become an influential practice in the field of haute cuisine. Their work requires exceptional mention as one out of many SAP studies that explicitly focused on how micro-level habitus, capital configurations, and macro-level structures (in effect agency and structure) were complicit in the co-creation of the new practice. Smets, Morris and Greenwood (2012) drawing on institutional theory revealed how mundane activities of individual practitioners could bring about change in institutional logic and practices of international law in Europe.

In one of the early pieces of work applying social practice theory to organisational practices, Oakes, Townley, and Cooper (1998) showed how a dominant practice in the field of corporate strategy (business planning practices) was introduced to influence and change practices in the field of museums in a Canadian province. The introduction of business



planning practices from an ‘economic’ field downgraded the dominant capital in the ‘cultural’ field of museums. These exemplar studies illustrate that multi-level influences and outcomes may vary in locus and impact, and may border on individual agents, organisations, industries, sectors, fields, institutions, or could be far reaching to larger societies. It is instructive to note that whilst neo-institutional theorists may be interested in profound and fundamental institutional changes and influences, a SAP perspective does not necessarily imply change; neither must practices displace established order to become noteworthy, as these influences can be subtle but significant (Durand, 2012).

A related stream of SAP studies are those that attempt to draw linkages between organisational strategy practice and extra organisational phenomenon irrespective of whether the organisational practice exert influences that lead to fundamental shifts in macro-level structures or not. Johnson, Smith and Coding (2010) examined the linkages between what managers do, and their effects on institutions. They show the processes involved in how strategic actors’ (managers’) experimentation with routines led to changes in the dominant institutional regime during the privatisation of British Rail. A cognate set of questions that SAP research may seek to answer is: How does strategy practice of individual practitioners or communities of practice for instance, vary from one institution or field to another? How do individual strategy practitioners adopt and internalise institutionalised strategy practice? Again, the studies reviewed here are not originally focused on answering these questions; however the use and adoption of institutionalised strategy practice, and analytical tools seem to dominate studies that we may classify in this category.

This interest partly stems from arguments about the usefulness, or otherwise of strategy tools to practitioners, given the complexity and messiness of the real world of organisations (Gunn & Williams, 2007; Lozeau, Langley, & Denis, 2002; Wright, Paroutis, & Blettner, 2013). Invariably SAP scholars have predominantly studied the use of strategy tools, whilst relatively fewer studies have concentrated on artefacts, which is an equally important aspect of materiality in strategy work (see Chapter 3 and Section 2.5). These studies empirically investigate how strategists use strategy tools, as well outcomes that the tools have for the practitioners and their organisations. Jarratt and Stiles (2010) found that senior managers use tools like SWOT, PEST, and BCG in three different ways: routinised, reflective and engaged manner, depending on the practitioner and other organisational mediators and structures as the case might be. This kind of study basically examines why the praxis underpinning a

similar set of institutionalised strategy practices may differ from one practitioner or organisation to the other in terms of input and outcome (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015).

A related study (Jarzabkowski, Giuliatti, Oliveira, & Amoo, 2013) found that four educational characteristics of the strategy practitioner: level of formal education, frequency of management training, specificity of strategic management education, and time elapsed since formal education, influenced the adoption of institutionalised strategy tools. Additionally, the socio-structural enablers and constraints to strategic tool use amongst practitioners are foregrounded by the work of Moisander and Stenfors (2009). They attribute the gap between strategy tools produced by field academics, and the intelligibility of same to field practitioners to differences in epistemic culture relating to knowing and learning by the field of strategy academy on one hand, and field of strategy practice on the other. Cabantous et al. (2010) also suggested that rational strategy tools are only made intelligible, practical and responsive to practitioners within an overarching field-specific socio-technical milieu. Again, whilst these extant studies examine strategy tools specifically, their findings provide affordances for a broader understanding of the role of materiality in strategy practice in general (see Dameron, Lê, & LeBaron, 2015; Sections 2.5.3 and 3.2 for a review).

In another strand of research, Lounsbury (2001) employed institutional theory to study institutional sources of practice variation by illustrating how field-level organisations shape the content of organisational practices. A second study found that extra-organisational strategy actors ('Simmelian strangers') have significant influence on strategy work in family businesses, because of their distinct positions that combine dimensions of both family and non-family actors, as well as their assumption of both internal and external actor roles. This combination of distance and closeness of 'Simmelian strangers' compared to other actors engenders better objectivity and improvement in strategic processes (Nordqvist, 2012).

Taking a slightly different perspective, Jarzabkowski, Lê and Van de Ven (2013) showcase how organisations deal with organising paradox occasioned by market and regulatory demands. The implications these have for belonging and performance paradoxes for managers of telecommunication firms undergoing restructuring, in response to changes in government regulatory regime are outlined. They show how the fluid relationships amongst different types of paradox, the cumulative impact of managers' responses to paradox over time, and how the responses to this somewhat extra-organisationally-induced paradoxes, act as generative mechanisms that become embedded and reified in organisational structures. In

effect, the study demonstrates the potential of market and regulatory influences shaping organisational structures via a fluid set of framing, resistance, internalisation, and adaptation practices.

A last strand of studies investigate how social practices in sub-fields, sectors, and industries for instance define, influence, and thus become the basis for far reaching extra-organisational strategy practice. Synthesising neo-institutional and practice theories, Lounsbury and Crumley (2007) developed a framework on how the media, professional, and industry domains co-constructed a new active money management practice in the US mutual fund industry. Oakes et al. (1998) in their widely cited work, speculated that their analysis that demonstrated how business planning in the corporate world (field of large-scale production), was introduced into non-corporate organisations (fields of restricted production) may equally be explained to mean a global trend in modern public governance.

This is because they observed similar practices in other Canadian jurisdictions, the US, Australia, and the UK at the time. The authors found that introduction of the ‘foreign’ practice into the ‘new’ field invariably had implications for local practices, as well the micro day-to-day activities (praxis) of strategy work. This is a result of the fact that managers in the ‘new’ field began to imbibe and work with new sets of logics. Kurunmäki (1999) made a similar observation in the field of healthcare in Sweden where conscious efforts were being made to undermine professional capital by projecting the primacy of financial capital. According to Kurunmäki (1999) this practice was geared towards redistributing power and control, just around that same time Oakes et al. (1998) made their observation.

The ways in which analytical strategy tools, discourse, and artefacts developed by dominant players, or in influential sub-fields such as consulting firms and business schools in the strategy field to become diffused, legitimised and institutionalised in wider fields has widely been cited as holding promise for another type of multi-level SAP analysis (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2004; Whittington et al., 2003; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The new economic order is also another pointer to the increasing significance of this type of SAP research. Arguably, strategy as a field is posited as a creation of post-war Western capitalism (Knights & Morgan, 1991). So, as the world economic balance swings to the East and other emerging economies, the field of strategy could be bracing itself for possible changes and adaptations in the dominant practices and influential strategy practitioners. This illustrates a possible example of the influence of macro-level field of power on strategy practice

specifically (Hardy, 2014), at a broader level however, it demonstrates the influence dominant players, actors, and institutions may have on strategy practice.

#### **2.4.1 Implications of extant strategy-as-practice research for current study**

Calls by SAP scholars notwithstanding, structural and relational linkages and outcomes are not emphasised in existing SAP scholarship. Extant approaches give analytical primacy to agency which somewhat reinforce the concentration on micro-context in most of the extant SAP studies. SAP scholars posit that structural and relationally grounded SAP studies could attend to equally salient macro and meso-institutions and structures that shape strategy work. This could account for the source and nature of agency in situated actions, by linking such influences to agents' socialisation and thus practices (Gomez, 2010; Vaara & Durand, 2012; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

It is instructive to note that previous studies however provide some conceptual foundation for a multi-level analysis perspective. Again, of the various levels of potential influence, macro-level linkages and outcomes have received the least attention from SAP scholars, save for Gomez & Bouty (2011). In effect, bridging of the micro-macro knowledge gaps in strategy work remain to be fully realised, an area the current study aims to make a contribution. For instance, current SAP research has not significantly explicated relational linkages between strategy practice and other social practices at the level of individual actors, businesses, field, institutions, the state, and the larger society in which they are embedded. Consequently, these micro, meso and macro-level influences are not fully accounted for in extant SAP studies. This thesis fills some of this knowledge gap by providing novel insights into how strategy practice is co-constructed in a fluid relationship amongst micro, meso, and macro-level influences (Bourdieu, 2005) in an informal economy setting. In particular and compared to previous studies, a potential SAP research contribution is to illustrate the interplay amongst all levels of practice, thereby providing finer-grained accounts of strategising as a form of social practice. Subsequently this thesis makes an SAP contribution by elaborating existing SAP scholarship (Golden-Biddle & Azuma, 2010).

#### **2.5 INTER-ORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Inter-organisational relationships are long-term explicit and implicit co-operative and collaborative agreements established by firms and organisations, and are often intended for mutual benefits of the partners involved. These relationships are varied in types; popular ones

include strategic alliances, strategic networks, strategic partnerships, and industry clusters. The nature of the relationships is also diverse and includes buyer-supplier, competitor-competitor, producer-dealer, manufacturer-distributor, debtor-creditor relationships (Gulati, Nohria, & Zaheer, 2000; Jarillo, 1988; Lavie, Lechner & Singh, 2007; Poppo & Zhou, 2013; Tan, 2006). Most of these kinds of relationships are considered by transaction cost economics theorists as middle ground between markets arrangements on one side, and hierarchical arrangements on the other (Thorelli, 1986; Hennart, 1988; Parkhe, 1993). According to transaction cost economics theory (Williamson, 1975, 1985, 1991), inter-organisational relationships may be an efficient way to reduce uncertainty associated with market failure, and also reduce costs that come with establishing an internal hierarchy. Granted this, the sum of production and transaction costs will be minimised for all producers, however some proponents raise red flags such as opportunistic behaviour, on the part of partners that might aim to maximise their individual goals, at the expense of collective goals (Williamson, 1991).

A myriad of other pull and push factors account for reasons, intentions and motivations for these relationships. These are portrayed by different, but related research and theoretical paradigms, notably resource dependent, institutional, stakeholder, learning, social network and strategic options theories (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Gulati, 1995). Inter-organisational relationships are tools employed by both resource-abundant and resource-scarce organisations, in attempt to exert control over others, so as to increase their stock and power, or in order to meet their resource needs. There is therefore a resource dependence relationship amongst organisations because their unstable and uncertain environments require such continuous exchanges (Das & Teng, 1998; Mitchell & Singh, 1996; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Whilst resource dependence theory subtly suggests the search for external resources as the main driver, strategy options theorists have observed more competitive, and market domination intentions amongst firms, beyond just a drive for external resources. Strategic options theorists suggest a more ambitious and dynamic kind of strategic relationships that is aimed at a wide range of factors, but not limited to easy, fast and less costly market entry, leveraging internal capabilities, countering competition, and thus improving firm performance (Contractor & Lorange, 1988; Jarillo, 1988; Powell, 1990; Venkatraman, 1991). Driven by a desire to learn from others in order to improve internal capabilities and organisational value, organisations form relationships that are geared towards absorbing, adopting, implementing, and internalising assorted types of knowledge from partners through

inter-organisational relationships (Hamel, Doz, & Prahalad, 1989; Hamel, 1991; Inkpen & Crossan, 1995; Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000). According to organisational learning theorists, these relationships seem to be the only way to tap into superior operational, technical, innovation, technological, or managerial skills since in most cases, these are not available in tangible forms to be bought from the open market (Simonin, 1997).

There are also legitimacy issues that drive organisations to establish relationships with others and amongst themselves. Organisations as a matter of expediency have to respond to a wide range of stakeholder interests and aspirations, as eloquently outlined by the stakeholder theory (Axelrod, Mitchell, Thomas, Bennett & Bruderer, 1995; Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti, 1997), and also institutional pressures for conformity which automatically confers legitimacy and a sense of belonging. This observation has been made by institutional theorists (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott & Meyer, 1983; Zucker, 1977). Suppliers, customers, investors, public interest groups, professional associations, local communities and regulatory agencies, are easily part of an organisation's web of inter-organisational relationships, despite the absence of written contractual agreements in some cases (Dacin, Oliver, & Roy, 2007).

In the case of local communities for instance, the agreements could take the form of psychological contracts that implicitly bind the organisation to particular choices and courses of action. In a similar vein, institutional members expect organisations that belong to their fraternity to embody a unique set of social norms and identity, even if that means taking after already established and binding inter-organisational relationships and agreements. This arrangement might be necessary for increasing visibility, credibility, support, and reputation as the organisation becomes 'socialised' into the institutional structures (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Baum & Oliver, 1991; Dacin et al., 2007; Wiewel & Hunter, 1985).

In what follows, a brief review of strategic network literature is provided in order to develop an organising frame for the various conceptualisations of the strategic network concept. This paves the way for the development of working definition and the identification of research gaps pertinent to the current study.

### **2.5.1 Strategic networks**

Strategic networks have received a lot of scholarly attention in the management and organisation literature on inter-organisational relationships (Gulati et al., 2000; Oliver, 2001; Borgatti & Foster, 2003). As a mode of organisation from a transaction costs theory

standpoint, strategic network arrangements like other inter-organisational relationships are believed to be more efficient than market relationships or integrated hierarchical solutions (Powell, 1990; Richter, 2000; Thorelli, 1986; Williamson, 1991). Network arrangement positions firms better to deal with the costs of uncertainty and inefficient use of core capabilities that characterises either of the other modes of organisation, whilst to a large extent, maintaining the independence and autonomy of partners. The breadth of strategic network research notwithstanding, a consistent conceptualisation is lacking (Doz, Olk & Ring, 2000; Provan, Fish & Sydow, 2007). In fact blurred definitional boundaries exists between strategic networks and other inter-organisational relationships identified above, however a full review is beyond the scope of this thesis. Various types/categories of (strategic) networks are identified in the literature, these are conceptualised differently in terms of expected performance, behaviour/conduct, and structure (Klint & Sjoberg, 2003) as illustrated in Table 2.1.

A first category considers networks as purposeful strategic choice made by firms, and is typically characterised by a set of defined expected performance measures, as well as conduct spelt out in agreements and contracts. This conceptualisation is associated with Jarillo (1988) who coined the term ‘strategic network’ (Ramirez, 1999; Richter, 2000). He aimed to chart a new course for studying the network construct in strategic management, away from organisational theory research that traditionally studied the construct in not-for-profit organisations (Aldrich & Whetten, 1981; Benson, 1975; Provan, 1983), as well as early observations of the relationships between industrial marketers and industrial suppliers (Berry, 1983; Hakansson & Wootz, 1979).

A point of departure for Jarillo (1988) is the conceptualisation of networks as purposeful arrangements by managers aimed at gaining and sustaining competitive advantage, instead of networks as a term for describing business transactions and relationships amongst firms. Subsequently, he defined strategic networks as ‘long-term, purposeful arrangements amongst distinct, but related for-profit organisations that allow those firms in them to gain or sustain competitive advantage vis-à-vis their competitors outside the network’ (1988, p. 32). A tenet of this conceptualisation is the instrumentality of a central, flagship, server, or hub firm that sets up the strategic network, recruits partners, co-ordinates and manages the relationships. This firm takes overall responsibility for the performance and success of individual partner businesses, as well as the network (Hinterhuber & Levin, 1994; Lorenzoni, 1988; Lorenzoni & Baden-Fuller, 1995; Sydow & Windeler, 1998).

**Table 2.1 Existing conceptualisations of strategic networks**

Conceptualisation	Purposeful intent			Competitive intent			Role of agency			Role of structure			Exemplar study
	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L	
Strategic networks as competitive tools	X			X			X					X	Human & Provan (1997); Lorenzoni & Baden-Fuller (1995)
Strategic networks as objective structures of organisational environment			X			X			X	X			New & Mitropoulos (1995)
Strategic networks as portfolio of dyadic relationships		X				X		X			X		Gulati et al. (2002); Larson (1992)
Strategic networks as social networks			X			X		X		X			Polidoro Jr., Ahuja & Mitchell (2011); Sydow & Windeler, (1998)

Key: H means High, M means Moderate, L means Low, X where existing conceptualisations are grounded

A second conceptualisation at the other extreme, and which is not often captured in the academic literature (New & Mitropoulos, 1995) consider networks to be integral to all organisations, and that businesses may not necessarily ‘think’ and act in network terms since they are automatically involved in the networks of their suppliers, customers, competitors, and other organisations with whom they interact either directly or indirectly (ibid, p. 58). Networks therefore make up the objective structures of ‘doing business’ (Ritter & Gemunden; Szarka, 1990; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2011). At best, businesses act to shape their power and influence over others within the network, this conceptualisation is the closest variant to the social network perspective that is now taking shape in the network literature (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Gulati, 1998; Zaheer, Gözübüyük, & Milanov, 2010).

A third conceptualisation which also captures informal aspects typical of networks was largely evident in Mitropoulos’ (1995) study. It unearths a number of issues which are somewhat missing in Jarillo’s (1988) conceptualisation outlined above. It suggests that even though businesses form relationships or networks, they do not always impute conscious networking motive into their inter-organisational relationship practices. Managers viewed their strategic networks as a collection of loosely structured dyadic and two-way links with



various organisations (see Garcia-Pont & Nohria, 2002; Gulati et al. 2002; Gulati, Nohria & Khana, 1994; Klint & Sjoberg, 2003). In contrast to an implicit assumption in Jarillo's (1988) conceptualisation, the concept of networks competing against each other (Cunningham, 1990) is not a feature. This is because managers are not ordinarily conscious of the 'calculations' that go into their networking practices and how their networks are configured (Boyle, 1994; New & Mitropoulos, 1995).

Based on structure (the industry value chain and market positions of the partners involved), strategic networks may be characterised as vertical or horizontal, or both (Hanna & Walsh, 2008). Vertical networks are those amongst specialised independent businesses in an industry value chain, they may also be aimed to either streamline processes along the value chain, or foster greater performance along some predefined measures. The most common examples are those between buyers and suppliers or between clients and contractors in a supply chain (Gulati, 1998; Lamming, Johnsen, Zheng, & Harland, 2000; Klint & Sjoberg, 2003). The Japanese keiretsu is a typical example (Hinterhuber & Levin, 1994; Provan et al., 2007). Horizontal networks on the other hand involve businesses from a similar market or sector, or business providing complementary products or services to each other. Horizontal networks may therefore include competitors who work closely together to produce a product or service, develop or exploit an opportunity, or improve their competitive positions (Burgers, Hill, & Kim, 1993; Klint & Sjöberg, 2003; Lorenzoni, 2010).

Strategic networks therefore encapsulate elements of co-operation, coalitions, collaborations, partnerships, and alliances (Besser & Miller, 2011; Podolny & Page, 1998; Provan et al., 2007). Gulati et al. (2000) for instance defined strategic networks as a set of vertical and horizontal relationships a firm has with its suppliers, competitors, customers, and other organisations within and across industries and countries. In this sense, the strategic network of a focal business encompasses its long-term inter-organisational relationships with one or more organisations, expressly established to gain and sustain competitive advantage or otherwise.

A social network perspective that is akin to an open system approach to studying inter-organisational relationships has taken root as a fourth category. This perspective aims to steer inter-organisational relationship research away from a predominant asocial approach (Gulati, 1998). This perspective advocates for responsiveness to how the social context within which these relationships are embedded, may shape behaviour of the firms, and the performance of

the relationships (Uzzi, 1996, 1997; Gulati, 1998; Sydow & Windeler, 1998; Rowley, Behrens, & Krackhardt, 2000). From a social network perspective, strategic networks are not independent of social networks, requiring analysis at multiple levels such as the interpersonal, inter work unit, and inter-organisational, as well as the whole network (Brass et al., 2004; Das & Teng, 2002).

The underlying assumption of the network perspective is that, economic actions are enabled and constraints by the social structure within which they are embedded (Granovetter, 1985). Thus precursors, processes and outcome of the dyadic links and exchanges that characterise strategic networks may be influenced by the social networks within which they are embedded (Gulati, 1998) and vice versa (Polidoro Jr., Ahuja & Mitchell, 2011). This perspective to studying strategic networks provides affordances for a better evaluation of the strategic benefits of networks beyond sets of single relationships, to a broader network of an organisation's relationships (Gulati et al., 2000; Hakansson & Snehota, 1989; Lavie, 2007). In this regard, strategic networks can be studied within their institutional environment, which opens up possibilities to extend the study of strategic networks beyond direct ties with partner firms, or network of relationships established by a focal firm (Klint & Sjoberg, 2003; Provan et al., 2007; Wassmer, 2010).

Consequently, by drawing on this perspective, a focal organisation's network can be employed to focus the study of 'whole' strategic networks. Arguments for the study of 'whole' networks without reference to an actor or organisation notwithstanding, Provan et al. (2007) concede that an organisation's dyadic relations are the basic units of networks as discussed above. This conceptualisation of networks equally gives cognisance to the influence of social structure and embeddedness on network actions and outcomes, which more or less is the underlying shift that undergirds the 'whole' network approach (Ritter & Gemunden). Aptly, Zaheer et al. (2010) developed a network analysis framework based on three levels: the dyad, the organisational, and the 'whole' network.

In the next section, small business network research is reviewed, in order to highlight extant contributions and identify research gaps. This literature is appropriate since informal businesses, including the participant informal printing businesses, are small businesses. In reviewing this work, the issue of how a practice perspective may provide new insights for extending our understanding of small business networks in particular, and strategic networks generally is discussed. The conceptualisation adopted for studying strategic networks in this

study is then outlined (with reference to Section 2.5.1) after a review of the literature on small business networks.

### **2.5.2 Small business network research**

A small business is defined as an independently owned and operated enterprise that is limited in resources such as employees, revenue, and assets, compared to others in its market and industry (Alvarez & Barney, 2001; Street & Cameron, 2007). As discussed above, networks provide network their members a host of benefits including access to information, resources, emotional support, markets, customers (Brown & Butler, 1995; Gulati Dialdin, & Wang, 2002). Strategic networks are employed by firms to make up for their resource and information deficiencies (Nohria & Garcia-Pont, 1991; Madhavan, Koka, & Prescott, 1998); gain access to quality suppliers, profitable markets and customers (Borch & Arthur, 1995; Brown & Butler, 1995); to establish and grow the venture; and to also provide support in difficult times (Maurer & Erbes; 2006; Arinius & Laitinen, 2011). Invariably networking has become ubiquitous and fashionable amongst small firms and researchers, given how critical it is to business establishment, survival and growth (Jarillo, 1988; Gulati, 1998).

Existing small business network research may be categorised into five broad themes: structure, content, governance, process, and social embeddedness that more or less represent different features of networks (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, 2010). In a related study, Street and Cameron (2007) employed a different set of categories: antecedents, processes, and outcomes in their review of small business external relationships. However, their choice of categorisation was largely for ‘practical reasons’, as they draw on an existing organisational systems framework to manage research traversing many different theoretical perspectives, levels of analysis, and research methodologies (p. 241). Their categorisation may integrated into the arguably more representative network research themes associated with the work of Hoang and Antoncic (2003), and to a lesser extent, Jack (2010) which is adopted in this study. Performance/outcome is omitted since it comes across as a common unit of analysis in nearly all research associated with the above themes. Again, a single study may cover issues that cut across these five themes.

#### ***Structure theme***

Network structure-themed research more or less defines and measures the architecture of networks, and studies how a business’s position in relation to different aspects of network

architecture impacts resource availability, irrespective of the identity of the network actors (Huggins, 2000; Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, 2010). Structure-themed research will therefore include how network size, centrality, extensiveness, and density which are usually studied by quantifying an organisation's network, impact performance measures. Such studies often use large-scale surveys to measure for example, how network structure influence growth, innovation, and access to resources. Network centrality affects small business performance, as it measures the degree to which an actor connects to others in the network via intermediaries (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). Its effects on the performance of entrepreneurial firms (Soh, 2003), as well as venture growth in small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in Singapore have been reported (Lee & Tsang, 2001).

Network size and its effects on small businesses have also received extensive attention. Research reveals that it sustains long-term objectives of the firms but not short-term benefits in small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in some European countries (Havnes & Senneseth, 2001). In addition to other structural themes such as network diversity and extensiveness of ties, network size of UK technology academics impact types of university spinouts (Nicolaou & Birley, 2003a, b), and also the growth of small businesses (Donckels & Lambrecht, 1995). Similar to network diversity, network density is a measure of resource diversity. Dense ties are more likely to offer less richness than less dense ties, because actors' or organisations' contacts are interconnected and closed (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991; Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). Small business owners' involvement in voluntary associations may enhance or reduce network diversity and density, it shows how membership may affect their career isolation or inclusion, and therefore the kind of support their network structure avails (Davis, Renzulli & Aldrich, 2006).

The effect of these structural themes on performance and outcomes is not straightforward however. For example, larger network size and diversity may increase network legitimacy, and reduce costs that accrue from resource pooling, but at the same time, increasing numbers and diversity may subject the network to higher opportunism risks (Bennett, 1996; Phillipson, Gorton, & Laschewski, 2006).

### ***Content theme***

This stream of the extant network research studies the content of networks in terms of types and flow of resources amongst actors in the network. These resources include tangible and intangible varieties, and are available in a business's network to varying degrees as a function

of a number of factors such as strength of ties, stage of business development, and types of ties in terms of formal versus informal; social and economic; internal or external (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, 2005). Some useful findings have emerged from this content-type network research including an appreciation of which kind of network ties are most appropriate for particular resource needs. Additionally, organisation types, organisational stage of development, and organisational circumstances, may inform choice of network that promises specific bundles of content. Invariably networks possess varying contents, and thus deliver different sets of opportunities.

Content type research therefore enhances our understanding of networks beyond numbers, size or architecture, and provides perhaps pointers to the specific kinds of actors and relationships organisations should pursue. 'Network ties provide the conduits, bridges and pathways to opportunities and resources, but the characteristics of the ties influence how they are identified, accessed, mobilised and exploited' (Hite, 2005 cited in Jack, 2010: 126). Ties differ by purposes, positive association exist between the type of ties used, their purposes, and performance amongst entrepreneurs (Chell & Baines, 2000). Effects of network ties also differ by type, as internal, more than external networks create competitive advantage, innovation, and efficiency, and thus business survival (Littunen, 2000). Networks also have 'capability substitution' value, as network ties may be exploited to make up for resource and competence deficiencies (Grandi & Grimaldi, 2003).

In China, personal relationships, social capital, and strong ties influence investment decisions of venture capitalists (Batjargal & Liu, 2004). Weak ties are equally salient for technology innovation (Julien, Andriambelolon, & Ramangalahy, 2004). In revealing the salience of the content of a small businesses' network, Lee (2001) shows how technology venture start-up performance, may be predicted by external links to venture capitalists. Furthermore, reputation and legitimacy (Dacin et al., 2007) and signalling (Zaheer et al., 2010) are critical for small businesses, as much as they are for large firms, subsequently these have accounted for quite a large number of the networks formed by small businesses.

Businesses may leverage multiplex relationships in their search for performance-enhancing networks, where a single relationship may provide myriad resources. In multiplex relationships, tangible and intangible resources like information and knowhow flow from personal, business, and other social trajectories of a network partner. Extra resources associated with multiplexity are often made available automatically. Thus, benefits that

accrue to small businesses may vary by not only network size or diversity, but also the content of a network relationship. A combination of normative, information, advice, economic/barter exchanges has been found in multiplex relationships of small businesses studied in Scotland (Shaw, 2006), similar to a bundle of friendship, information and business exchange, in those of small manufacturing firms (Human & Provan, 1997). Another content-type research is the nature of relationships. Simultaneous co-operation and competition relationships are popular amongst small business networks, and studies show they have positive effect on firm performance (Bengtsston & Kock, 1999; Fuller-Love, 2009; Miller, Besser, & Malshe, 2007; Morris, Kocak, & Ozer, 2007; Hanna & Walsh, 2008; Shaw, 2006).

### ***Process theme***

Some scholars argue that network relationships are not static; in fact networks are organic forms that interact, evolve, and change. Networks of young firms change and evolve in time and space (Schutjens & Stam, 2003), similarly Elfring and Hulsink (2007) show that initial founding conditions, as well as later post-founding developments influence tie formation processes. These finding arguably signify the importance of network process research, and invariably provides impetus for another strand of evolutionary perspective on network research (Arenius & Laitinen, 2011; Drakopoulou-Dodd, Jack, & Anderson, 2002; Hite, 2008; Jack, 2010). The process theme is considered an important addition because structure and content type network research are somewhat limited in their ability to adequately uncover network formation, operation, management, behavior, interactions, and adaptation (Caviello, 2005; Jack, 2010; Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). Its value notwithstanding, the paucity of process-type small business network research has been acknowledged as a major limitation to a holistic network theory (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Jack, Moulton, Anderson, & Dodd, 2010).

Consequently, greater integration between the unanswered ‘how’ (process-type) questions and the answered ‘what’ (structure and content-type) questions have been suggested as the way forward for network theory building (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). As Jack et al. (2010) argues, scholars need to deal with a research dilemma, which is whether to study ‘networks’ or ‘networking’? Hoang and Antoncic (2003) further suggested that by virtue of the units of analyses and data analysis techniques, which generate network maps, through counting and situated connections, prior research work has largely studied ‘networks’, yet these studies tell us little about the process of ‘networking’. In a related critique of prior network research, O’Donnell, Gilmore, Cummins, & Carson (2001) and O’Donnell (2004) identified certain

research domains that remain relatively unexplored; amongst these are the process of networking; networks in practice; and the skills of networking.

Granted these, networks can be subjected to deliberate design, to the extent that managerial action can influence desired networking practice (Madhavan et al., 1998). Hence making network theory operational and practical helps entrepreneurs develop networking strategies (Provan & Milward, 1995). For instance, in a recent study of members of a local enterprise support agency (Jack et al., 2010), members of the agency perceived 'networking' to include mundane things like name badges, membership cards, membership directories, notice boards and bigger scale events and materials like dinners, candles, wines, cheese. These 'symbols' and 'artefacts' facilitated networking, however network scholarship is yet to delve deeper into their implications for the process of networking.

Existing network research has covered some ground in the search for insights into the network process theme; however the relatively few studies tend to concentrate on change and evolution, especially in relation to the stages in the entrepreneurial process. For example Jack, Dodd, and Anderson (2008) reported how networking is enacted with environmental changes. Such changes often bring about network redundancy and inefficiency, since it becomes difficult to cut off dependent ties overtime (Steier & Greenwood, 2000). Steier and Greenwood (2000) concluded that some network redundancy may be preferable to pure efficiency, since it may be difficult to cut off robust/dependent ties as new ventures evolve.

On another hand, ties entering the network through personal relationship may evolve more quickly toward full embeddedness (Hite, 2005). Such informal networks are equally important in network evolution, since they act as some sort of precursors that facilitate formal relationships (Huggins, 2000). Studies also show that firm growth is associated with evolving network governance arrangements (e.g. Larson, 1992). Lechner and Dowling (2003) however argue that network evolution may be radical. They found that high-growth small businesses have relational mix that changes with business development; this is because the purposes for inter-organisational relationships may differ, and each purpose requires a different network repertoire.

### ***Governance theme***

Networks border on firm boundary decisions, and governance choice is fundamental to understanding firm boundaries (Yang, Lin, & Lin, 2010), and the coordination of network

exchanges. Invariably, network research has studied governance choice from a perspective of risks, uncertainties, and sustainable advantages (Steensma & Corley, 2001). Transaction cost economics theorists (Williamson 1975, 1985, 1991) present networks as a middle-ground governance choice that optimises markets arrangements on one side, and hierarchical arrangements on the other (Hennart, 1988; Parkhe, 1993; Thorelli, 1986). Despite being a popular theory in the explanation of inter-organisational relationships generally, concerns have arisen about risk of competition instead of cooperation, as well as ‘free-riding’, and learning races at the expense of collective interest (Agarwal, Croson, & Mahoney, 2010; Khanna, Gulati, & Nohria, 1998). This has led to a configuration of governance structures that firms employ to reduce such risk and uncertainty, whilst they aim to maximise the benefits from the relationship.

Studies show that at one end of a continuum, networks employ hierarchical, contractual and market-based governance arrangements aimed at pre-empting appropriation intentions, by means of bureaucratic controls, monitoring and economic incentives (Agarwal et al., 2010; Gulati, 1998). At the other end where there is greater embeddedness, and lesser concern for appropriation (Uzzi, 1997; Gulati, 1998), more open-ended and trust-based arrangements are drawn upon. Trust is accorded because network partners expect there will be no opportunism, and that others will not exploit their vulnerability. Here, network partners tend to rely more on complementarity, reputation, fine-grained information exchanges, reciprocity, informal arrangements, and less on hierarchical and administrative controls and price mechanisms (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Becerra, Lunnan, & Huemer 2008; Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Larson, 1992; Powell, 1990; Uzzi, 1997).

Governance structures based on economic incentives alone are sub-optimal due to lack of trust, co-ordination costs, and bounded rationality (Agarwal et al., 2010). Elsewhere, strong communication was ‘enshrined’ in the working accord designed for the network, as a means to build trust, and to manage practical challenges of coordination amongst small business (Hanna & Walsh, 2008). In another case, Larson (1991) show how small entrepreneurial businesses partnering with larger formal ones, played down the role of formal written contracts. The partners use implicit and explicit rules during a trial period to evaluate and build trust; these provided the foundation for later integration of partners and the preservation of the partnerships. This observation ties closely to how governance by trust amongst small US clothing businesses, provided affordances for particular network exchanges that were not possible in an arm’s-length arrangement (Uzzi, 1997). Compared to their larger counterparts,



small businesses are more embedded in networks, and have lesser concern for appropriation, thus they often employ more open-ended, trust-based arrangements, and social controls (Larson, 1991; 1992; Miller et al., 2007; Uzzi, 1997).

### ***Embeddedness theme***

Economic action is embedded in personal and social relationships that actors have with others, and vice versa (Jones et al., 1997; Jack & Anderson, 2002). Social embeddedness has therefore become synonymous with the study and understanding of network ties and relationships, following Granovetter's (1985) introduction of the concept into the study of social aspects of economic exchanges.

Studies on small business networks have been approached from a wide range of theoretical perspectives (Shaw, 2006; Street & Cameron, 2007). Most of these approaches to small business network studies share commonalities with those of large businesses (see Street & Cameron, 2007 for a review). Perspectives that are relatively more inclined to small business network research are those of embeddedness and social networks. This is because they foreground the nature and level of complexity and subtlety in the differences amongst the small business owner, his/her embedded social relationships, and the business. This intricacy suggests that compared to larger businesses, small business owners could favour economic and non-economic goals concurrently (Shaw, 2006; Uzzi 1997). Embeddedness is particularly important to entrepreneurial and small business networking, because of their peculiar needs and environments in which they operate (Johannisson, Ramírez-Pasillas, & Karlsson, 2002).

Arguably, the social capital that flows from embedded networks is employed to ameliorate financial capital deficiencies which often limit resource acquisition (especially acquisitions pertaining to pure economic market exchanges). For example, barter exchanges amongst small firms in the UK accorded a wider range of resources to network partners (Shaw, 2006). This kind of socialness in exchanges incorporates an element of trust, and have delivered economic outcomes (Baron & Markman, 2003; Dakhli & De Clercq, 2004). Social capital may therefore have structural connotations, as studies show it is a process rather than a thing, and that the process creates the condition for social capital to materialise (Anderson & Jack, 2002). Baron and Markman (2003) also noted that social capital assists in gaining access to persons important for success, however social competence influences the outcomes.

Embeddedness may thus define the structure upon which networking is done, however, pressures for change and continuity usually co-exist (Johannisson et al., 2002). Being embedded in the social structure by perpetuating the structure through new ties sustains business environment; creates opportunities; and improves business performance (Jack & Anderson, 2002). However, compared to pure economic networks, socially embedded networks may stifle learning and innovation (Minguzzi & Passaro, 2001). Again, embeddedness in residential area social ties has been shown to limit entrepreneurial opportunities (Arenius & De Clercq, 2005). Similarly, though socially embedded ties positively affect competitive advantage, they can derail performance beyond a threshold (Uzzi, 1997).

The impact of other structural, social, and cultural factors on small business networks and performance has received scholarly attention. Fuller-Love (2009) found that socio-cultural factors broadly matter to establishing and maintaining formal and informal networks, but their effects may be complex, mixed, and indirect (Besser & Miller, 2011). The Scottish context for instance, which is characterised by a small economy contributed to the pattern of networking observed amongst small businesses (Shaw, 2006). Industry, state policy, and regulatory influences are other domains of investigation (Hanna & Walsh, 2008; Kingsley & Malecki, 2004; Masurel & Janszen, 1998; Phillipson et al., 2006). Camuffo (2003) take a much broader view of structure to reveal how globalisation and technological changes impact traditionally enduring, socially embedded, and localised small business networks in an Italian cluster.

Network structure, content, process, performance, and the individual and organisational context are other areas of inquiry. Business owner/manager and network actor factors impact level of networking (limited or extensive); networking proactivity (reactive or proactive), and strength of network tie (weak or strong) of small business networks (O'Donnell, 2004). Business owners and managers have also employed their personal networks to increase the network size of their businesses (BarNir & Smith, 2002; Ostgaard & Birley, 1994), whilst country of origin, ethnicity, and gender effects on networks have also been found (Blisson & Rana, 2001; Drakopoulou-Dodd & Patra, 2002; Grossman, Yli-Renko, & Janakiraman, 2012; Katz & William, 1997). In terms of organisational context, size, stocks of capital, and capabilities may influence networking propensity and benefits (Ahuja, 2000; Sulej, Stewart, & Koegh, 2001).

### **2.5.3 Implications of extant small business network research for a strategic networking as practice perspective**

In a study of approaches to network research published in high impact entrepreneurship, management and organisation journals, Jack (2010) suggests that the understanding and study of the network concept is incomplete, and partly attributed criticisms about the oversimplification of the concept to a preference for more quantitative approaches by network scholars. Though quantitative techniques have been instrumental in highlighting the ‘whats’ about networks, the result has been a focus on the ‘structural’ aspects and ‘measurement’ of networks (Havnes & Senneseth, 2001; Huggins, 2000; O’Donnel, 2004), to the detriment of other equally relevant aspects of networks such as ‘what really happens in networks’ including the ‘on-goings’ in network relations, activity, evolution, change and development overtime, which a qualitative approach is best placed to uncover (Jack, 2010).

Jack’s (2010) review reveals that the status quo has not changed much since Hoang and Antoncic (2003) lamented the need for qualitative process-oriented research to complement existing quantitative approaches, and also since O’Donnel, Gilmore, Cummins and Carson (2001) and Coviello (2005) advocated for qualitative research that addresses certain research areas that remain relatively unexplored. The process of networking, including formation, behavior, and networking skills are some of the areas identified as needing network research attention, as the process theme reviewed above conveys.

Despite the fact that network research dates back to 1930s (Jack, 2010), gaps still exist that qualitative and social anthropological approaches can fill (Huggins, 2000). It is believed that qualitative approaches can complement quantitative ones in an effort towards a fuller appreciation of network theory (Jack, 2010). A typical concern for instance is the need for context-rich explanations of networking, in terms of formation, dynamics, relations and behavior. Furthermore, since networks are conceptualised as involving a set of actors, links and relationships (Nelson, 1988; Hoang & Antoncic, 2003), contextual factors such as social norms, values, embeddedness (Davidson & Honig, 2003; Parkhe, Wasserman, & Ralston, 2006), as well as national, local and indigenous cultural factors (Anderson, Jack, & Dodd, 2005; Klyver & Foley, 2012) have been found to be important in understanding network activity.

However, network scholars have yet to fully incorporate social contexts that are important for a better understanding of networks of small businesses in this manner. Field-based qualitative

approaches enable context to be factored into network research to a greater extent (Hite, 2003; Jack & Anderson, 2002), thus providing a fuller understanding of how networks operate, are formed, created, governed, maintained, and utilised (Chell & Banes, 2000; Jack, 2010). Opportunities therefore exist for this type of network research, the vast literature on networks notwithstanding, a network theory is far from fully developed since “a cohesive body of network knowledge is still forming” (Jack, 2010: 134). Invariably, researchers have to vary approaches depending on the problem to be addressed, so that a more complete understanding of the concept can be reached.

Furthermore, most network research on small and entrepreneurial firms conceptualise social embeddedness as an opportunity that provides resources for socially embedded firm, save for few studies that warn of the possibility of embeddedness liability (Minguzzi & Passaro, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Romo & Schwartz, 1995; Uzzi, 1997). This conceptualisation somewhat reduces the potential of network research to contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of socio-cultural context, which might constrain choice, provide impetus for action, or maximise benefits (Borch & Arthur, 1995; Jack & Anderson, 2002; Parkhe et al., 2006). For instance, network content research has been criticised for relying on weak or strong dichotomy in explaining network strength, when tools that explore human interactions like those of social anthropology come in handy for explaining a lot more than frequency of contacts and emotional intensity (Hite, 2003; Kim & Aldrich, 2005). Additionally, qualitative techniques which have not been employed much in content research were employed to trace environmental interactions of actors, and how they explain why informal network ties maybe preferred to formal options, and vice versa (Birley, 1986; Jones et al., 1997; Nelson, 2001).

Process-type network research is also unable to fully explain the practice of networking, as their networking descriptive value is somewhat limited, when compared to the affordances social practice theory and interpretive approaches may provide, save for Anderson, Dodd, and Jack (2010) who studied entrepreneurial growth process using a Bourdieusian concept. Despite the fact that research in this process stream constitutes the highest proportion of qualitative studies (see Jack, 2010), their approach is unable to fully address the concerns for the social context. For example, the underlying enablers and constraints to why particular processes of creating, governing, using and changing networks are preferred, and how these are achieved in practice (Hite, 2005; Scutjens & Stam, 2003; Yli-Renko & Autio, 1998).

The efforts by social and embeddedness-related network researchers notwithstanding, some gaps remain; and the current study aims to contribute to addressing some of them. For example, Drakopoulou-Dodd, Jack, & Anderson (2006) lamented the continued paucity in social context-related network research despite the many calls for it. They argue that contextual factors like culture, socialisation, embedded norms, and practices are many and varied, and therefore provide vast opportunities for further studies. Particularly, this thesis seeks to amplify the social accounts that the social network perspective brings to bear on the understanding of networking as strategy practice. Consequently, this thesis employs an appropriate theoretical lens to study the ‘networking’ concept. Compared to ‘network’ concept, ‘networking’ has received lesser attention amongst scholars (Shaw, 2006).

It was noted in Section 2.3 that the SAP paradigm provides for an alternative view to Jarillo’s (1988) conceptualisation that privileges a ‘building mode’ of strategic networks as characterised by planned, purposeful and goal-oriented action (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & Rasche, 2010). Whilst this ‘building mode’ seems to be the dominant tradition in the study of strategic networks (New & Mitropoulos, 1995), a practice perspective to studying strategy as something organisations ‘do’ rather than ‘have’, capture the social, relational and contextual dimensions of strategising (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Invariably, this paradigm accounts for the purposive and unconscious aspects of local strategising which is the ‘dwelling mode’. A ‘dwelling mode’ is therefore expected to complement the dominant ‘building mode’ in the production of strategic management knowledge (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & Rasche, 2010). Bourdieu’s (1990) theory of practice that informs analysis in the current study supports such alternative approaches to constructing the concept of strategy, strategy making, and strategy research from an SAP perspective (Grand, Ruegg-Sturm & Von Arx, 2010).

A practice perspective is thus employed in this study to inform the network literature (Golden-Biddle & Azuma, 2010), but more importantly, to contribute to filling some of the gaps identified above. Granted this, the current study includes all forms of long-term inter-organisational relationships that are pertinent to the success and survival of a focal firm as strategic networks (see also Miller et al., 2007). Furthermore, in view of the goals of the current research that aims to explicate a practice perspective, conceptualisations of the strategic network construct that give primacy to both agency, structure, and modus operandi or style of engagement (Chia, 2004) are adopted for this study (see Section 2.5.1 and Table 2.1). In this regard, the thesis treats strategic networks of the informal businesses as portfolio of dyadic relationships embedded in larger social networks. The SAP research paradigm

acknowledges the roles, influences and constraints that a multiplicity of factors and actors may have on strategising and its outcomes (Johnson et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski et. al, 2007). Consequently, we are able to explore how social structures, which underpin the context of strategy practice, may predispose strategists' networking actions and decisions (Gomez, 2010; Whittington, 2006) in departure from extant strategic network studies that privilege agency and purposefulness (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007). Additionally, as mentioned above, this conceptualisation accounts for the fact that the small business owner, his/her embedded social relationships, and the business are intricately linked (Shaw, 2006; Szarka, 1990). Further, bearing witness to Bourdieu's concept of fields (Chapter 3), the strategic networks of the informal printing business field spans a wide array of horizontal and vertical relationships with customers, competitors, suppliers, contractors, and related organisations. Consequently both horizontal and vertical networks are included in the conceptualisation of strategic networks adopted in the current study.

Again, unlike previous network research that in most part did not account for socio-materiality, strategic networking may require the use of socio-materials such as objects, technology, materials, and space. SAP research has characterised strategy as materially-mediated since strategy work is dependent on these artefacts (Denis, Langley, & Rouleau, 2006; Orlikowski, 2010; Werle & Seidl, 2015; Whittington, 2007). Through situated field practice, strategic networking artefacts may gain meaning from the way they are used, thus providing affordances for an enhanced appreciation of the outcomes materiality may have for situated SNP (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Kaplan, 2011; Orlikowski, 2007; Suchman, 2007). For example, the material and physical nature of the built environment in which strategy happens may enable or constrain particular types of strategy practices (Dameron et al., 2015). Granted this, spaces may be symbolic and signify identity, history and philosophy, much as they may be social, and thus influence actors' actions, interpretations and beliefs. Also, they may simultaneously act as products of strategy (Dameron et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008).

Given the above, it is argued that extant network studies somewhat treated context subtly, thereby missing other important issues of what context contains, and what its affordances are (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). So, while these previous network studies together represent significant body of knowledge on small business networks, the generative mechanisms that describe how actors adopt and internalise strategising practices, and how this predisposition may be traced to these network features, choices, and outcomes are under explored

(Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). This suggests that a practice-based, micro-activities research on strategic networking, which is theorised to capture these, is particularly relevant to advancing network theory.

The informal economy, a research setting that remains under-explored in management and organisation scholarship, provides fruitful opportunities for this ‘extended’ context-specific type networking research that the network scholarly community advocates for (Jack, 2010). Practice type perspectives are becoming popular in management research (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011) because they have the power and capacity to elucidate how strategy making is enabled and constrained by past and prevailing organisational, institutional and societal practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Given a practice paradigm which is amenable to qualitative and anthropological approaches, the ‘doing’ of strategic networking by informal printing businesses can be investigated, in order to complement existing knowledge on small business networks.

## **2.6 THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

### **2.6.1 Background, definitions and significance**

The informal economy is a key contributor to the provision of essential products and services, and employment generation (Chen, 2006). Informal economy businesses may also be essential to the competitiveness of formal firms and regional economies, through their involvement in supply chains and strategic networks (Blunch et al., 2001; Jones et al., 2006). These trends are integral to contemporary neoliberal capitalism and globalisation, as large multinational enterprises strategise to save costs and maximize return on investments, through the use of cheaper inputs and more flexible employment arrangements, often brokered by smaller informal businesses and agents (Jones et al. 2006; Kar & Marjit, 2009; Piore & Sabel, 1984; Portes et al., 1989).

Early theorising described the informal economy as a transient economic phenomenon of less developed economies that was destined to disappear when development catches up with those economies (Lewis, 1958; Tokman, 1978). Unlike the formal economy, the informal economy is not properly registered, recorded or enumerated, with businesses operating off-the-books and failing to pay taxes or comply with labour and employment laws (Chen, 2006; Gërkhani, 2004). Atypical resources and management practices are two other defining characteristics of businesses operating in the informal economy (Blunch et al., 2001; Godfrey, 2011).

In developing economies, the informal economy has increased in size from about 37% of gross domestic product (GDP) in the 1990s to approximately 50% by 2010 (Charmes, 2012). In developing economies informal economy employment provides livelihood for many, out of the reported informal economy working populations, 70% in Sub-Saharan Africa; 60% in Latin America; and 59% in Asia are self-employed/owner labour, whilst informal jobs constitute 30% to 40% of wage employment. If agriculture is included in the estimation, informal employment constitutes about 90% of the economy in these regions (Schneider, 2011). The informal economy has a growing and disguised character in developed economies (Blunch et al., 2001; Chen, 2006, 2012), and accounted for an average of about 16% of GDP of developed countries in 2012 (Schneider, 2012). In advanced economies, the importance of the informal economy as an employment alternative is often highlighted during world economic and financial crises when the informal economy acts as a buffer for jobs, allowing labour to move between the informal and formal economy (Horn, 2009; Schneider, 2012).

The informal economy has been defined in variety of ways (Bruton et al. 2012), and is fraught with terminologies from early studies by anthropologists, sociologists and economists such as: 'underground', 'black', 'hidden', 'irregular', and 'criminal' (Feige, 1989; Gërkhani, 2004; Henry & Sills 2006; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Schneider, 2000; Smithies, 1984). The literature tends to use the terms sector and economy interchangeably and popularly defines the sector to include businesses that are characterised by partial or non-compliance to business, tax and employment regulations, but produce and sell legal goods and services (Hart, 2006; Godfrey, 2011; McGahan, 2012; Williams, 2006). The notion of the informal economy also encompasses informal employment arrangements by formal businesses, including precarious work that is often is characterised by low wages (below minimum wage in some cases), uncertainty, and insecurity, lack of protection and explicit contract, and lack of, or limited access to exercise union and working rights (ILO, 2012).

These definitions, which are rooted in formal regulation compliance by firms, present a paradox that management scholars could help resolve (McGahan, 2012). In addition, as a result of the renewed interest in the study of the informal economy in both developing and developed economies (Chen, 2006), an increasing number of empirical studies have revealed the highly heterogeneous nature of the informal economy (Blunch et al., 2001; Feige, 1990; Devey, Lebani, Skinner, & Valodia, 2008; Jones et al., 2006; Leonard, 1998; Williams, 2004; 2005). For instance consider small informal shops selling legal products at unlicensed



locations (Cross, 2000; Cross & Johnson, 2000), pirated products that violate the intellectual property laws or controlled products such as alcohol (Hart, 2006; Portes et al., 1989).

The informal economy outcome resulting from these activities is different from a truly ‘underground or criminal’ economy that involves the trading of an illegal product such as crack (Cross, 2000). Although the former cases may be considered as legitimate examples of informal economic activity (Webb, Tihanyi, Ireland, & Sirmon, 2009), there are clearly varying degrees of regulatory legitimacy between them. All three activities, despite their economic value, are ‘strictly’ illegal (Cross, 2000). Additionally, there are informal, yet legal businesses that due to their smallness or sales revenue are not required to formally register, pay taxes or adhere strictly to certain labour or licensing regimes (Blunch et al., 2001; Holt & Littlewood, 2014; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Schneider, 2000). In these cases, legality fails to define or explain how the informal economy differs from the formal one, as the concept is beset with many different typologies (Blunch et al., 2001; Bromley, 1978; Cross, 2000; Webb, Bruton, Tihanyi, & Ireland, 2013; Webb, Ireland, & Ketchen, 2014).

### **2.6.2 Theories of the informal economy**

Studies on the characteristics, participants, causes, and nature of the informal economy have over time been synthesised into three main theories by informal economy scholars (e.g. Chen 2006, 2012; Williams, Nadin, & Rodgers, 2012). Whilst the marginal or modernisation theories primarily attribute the informal economy to survival and marginal activity, the neoliberal and legal schools point to state regulation for explanation, and structuralist theories, including postcolonialism attribute the phenomenon to the nature of modern capitalism. Though discussed and sometimes studied in isolation, in reality, the complexity of the informal economy phenomenon is best understood by appreciating and drawing on all these theories in a complementary fashion.

#### ***Marginalist, modernisation, and dualist theories***

Hart (1971, 1973) first introduced the term ‘informal sector’ in anthropological research on income earning strategies amongst poor city dwellers in Accra, Ghana (Gandolfo, 2013). Hart’s (1973) work marked the beginning of the Third World dual economy theory that differentiated regular and permanent paid labour from small self-employed labour. The latter, in particular, is characterised by irregular wage regimes that fall into the informal economy category (Bromley & Gerry, 1979). The informal economy is also characterised by more or

less subsistence economic activities, low levels of technology and low levels of bureaucracy unlike the advanced formal economy resulting from foreign influence (Blunch et al. 2001; Bromley 1978; Hart 1973). Off-the-books transactions, low levels of productivity, low income, and underemployment are other features (Blunch et al., 2001; Chen, 2006).

So-called ‘marginalists’ (Chen, 2006) contend that the informal economy is nothing more than a survival sector for excess labour that the formal economy is unable to absorb. The informal economy is therefore often conceived as a marginal economy (Blunch et al., 2001; Castells & Portes, 1989; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987), that is only able to cater for subsistence levels of economic activities and income (Meagher, 1995). According to this school of thought, the informal economy is residual and will eventually become formalised with economic development rather than grow. However, later observations demonstrate that this might not necessarily be the case. Explaining informality solely from a macro-level perspective falls short of other possible and significant influences on the drivers and decisions on informal economy participation. Evidence suggests more technologically advanced and better organised economic activities that are far from marginal, take place in the informal economy (Jones et al., 2006; Kar & Marjit, 2009). Supporting these observations, other studies show that institutional norms and exigencies (Karunakaran and Balasubramaniam, 2012), group interests (Webb et al., 2009; Webb et al., 2013) as well as social stratification could provide further and alternative explanations to informal economy participation other than subsistence motives.

### *Neoliberal theories*

Neoliberal theories consider the informal economy as an incubator for entrepreneurship, with the potential to contribute long-term economically (De Soto, 1989). Neoliberalism attributes the phenomenon of the informal economy to a natural and strategic cost-cutting response by small indigenous entrepreneurs to excessive state regulation (Maloney, 2004; Packard, 2007). The neoliberalism school concludes that labour and businesses voluntarily exit the formal economy in order to subvert costs of over-regulation, such as income and corporate tax payments, business registration, minimum wage payments, social security contributions and so forth (De Soto, 1989, 2001; Cross & Morales, 2007; Biles, 2009).

Again, this perspective incorporates drivers at two levels: the state at the macro and the individual participant’s response at the micro level. It assumes all individuals will respond the same, and without recourse to groups or communities to which they belong at the meso-level.

More recent work has found however that these assumptions are unable to fully explicate informal economy activities. For example in a UK study, Jones et al. (2006) concluded that state regulations are not necessarily the sole reason why businesses operate informally as participants responded differently to these regulations. Similarly, De Castro, Khavul, and Bruton (2014) observed that some street vendors in the Dominican Republic prefer to operate informally, not because of burdensome regulations, but because they cannot see any tangible benefits from formal institutions.

Some have attempted to explain these rather diverse responses to state regulation by foregrounding group or meso-level drivers, while relegating micro and macro level explanations to the background. They argue that, for some groups (representing common interests and institutions), informal economy activities are a response to opportunities created by inefficiencies of formal institutions (Webb, et al. 2013), institutional incongruence (Giudici, Ireland, Tihanyi, & Reinmoeller, 2013) or institutional ambiguity (Garcia-Rincon, 2007; Roever, 2006; Webb et al., 2009). These inefficiencies, ambiguities and incongruence lead them to find other legitimate (internally-defined) means to meet their needs outside the formal and legal regulatory framework (Feige, 1990; Meagher, 1995; Webb et al., 2009).

### ***Structuralist theories***

New forms of formal-informal firm relationships have emerged as a result of increased outsourcing and subcontracting to smaller informal businesses, leading to the growth of ‘sweatshops’ (Jones et al., 2006; Rodrik, 1997), and off-firm, irregular, non-standard, temporary, hourly-paid, part-time jobs (Chen, 2006; Henry & Sills, 2006; Williams et al., 2012). Together with critiques of globalisation (Harvey, 2005, 2006; Held & McGrew, 2007; Hudson, 2005; Portes & Roberts, 2005), these observations represent the basis for the application of structuralist theory, focusing on structural, unequal and hierarchical modalities of exchange between informal and formal economies (Chen, 2012; Jones et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2012).

The informal economy now includes more technologically-advanced and sophisticated informal activities undertaken at home or in small manufacturing and service operations, unlike ‘traditional’ jobs such as hawking that marginalist arguments usually portray (Blunch et al., 2001). This observation further suggests that the informal economy may have assumed many new and sophisticated forms, and provides a pointer to potential new understandings of the phenomenon. McGahan (2012) notes that in responding to overtures from large formal

firms in these structural relations, both informal and formal firms co-evolve capabilities. Modern day international trade and economic discourse, that advocates trade liberalisation, openness, lower tariff, and non-tariff barriers is pushing this institutional agenda further, by increasing domestic competition and promoting informal economy participation in developing countries (Breman, 1999; de Oliveira & Roberts, 1994; Goto & Endo, 2014; Kar & Marjit, 2009; Verick, 2006).

Structuralist theories incorporate macro and global drivers that explain, and reflect more recent developments in globalisation, and its impact on the sector. However, these theories do not completely account for a number of other observed forms of informal economy activities, and thus are unable to paint a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon. These developments notwithstanding, large informal economies still abound in formerly protected economies that are in transition. For example, the informal economy in Eastern European and Central Asian countries record a weighted average size of 41.1% of official GDP (Schneider, Buehn, & Montenegro, 2010). Therefore, other influences: national culture, individual agency or group-level occupational choices or circumstances may account for informal economy activities that remain unexplained by structuralist theories.

### **2.6.3 Relationship between formal and informal economies and businesses**

Closely related to the debate on theories on the informal economy is the nature of the relationship between formal and informal economies. Discussions have centered on informal and formal employment relationships, as well as informal and formal business relationships. Some argue that a thin line separates formal and informal economic activity since their activities are closely interlinked (Hart, 2006; McGahan, 2012; Smith & Stenning, 2006). Marginalist arguments do not perceive any business linkages between businesses in the two segments since they assume in principle that informal businesses are ‘on stand-by’ waiting to be converted into formal firms. Similarly, this perspective characterises informal economy employment arrangements as meant for subsistence until the opportunity for a superior formal alternative arises through economic development. Invariably, modernists theorise informal businesses as an autonomous self-contained segment of the business population that are not integrated with formal firms (Mazumdar, 1976; Tokman, 1978), whereas structuralists conceive informal businesses as fundamentally linked to formal businesses though in a subordinate role.

More often than not, larger formal businesses subcontract to smaller businesses and workers in the informal economy. In these relationships, the informal businesses and workers are expected to deliver low-cost supplies, inputs and services with speed and flexibility so that the competitiveness of the formal firm is enhanced. Neoliberals however seem to suggest an autonomous relationship between the two, with one replacing the other, but to different extents depending on the types and levels of state regulation. Hence the formal regulatory framework mediates the movement of formal businesses and labour into the informal economy and vice versa in a way that privileges one form over the other at any point in time.

Strategic networks that exist between formal firms and informal businesses can be invisible in many cases (Chen, 2006). Through informal supply chains, informal workers and businesses serve as suppliers of raw materials and inputs in vendor-merchant-retailer-wholesaler relationships that end up with a formal firm (Gowan, 1997; Holt & Littlewood, 2014). Similar observations have been made in the case of informal businesses and participants who act as sole distributors or agents of finished products of formal firms (Portes, 1994; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987). Informal businesses in some cases produce exportable intermediate goods in subcontracting arrangements with formal firms who only add value to the finished goods by attaching a brand name (Kar & Marjit, 2009). These formal-informal business relationships in some instances assume multinational and global dimensions and involve large transnational manufacturing corporations whose value chains include formal national firm contractors, small informal business subcontractors and homeworkers lower down the chain (Losby et al., 2002; Sassen-Koob, 1989).

The relationships between principal contractors, informal subcontractors and labourers may allow formal firms to 'buy' from more efficient and specialised suppliers, whilst maintaining a smaller number of regular and permanent staff on their payroll (Raijman, 2001; Stepick, 1989). Some suspect formal firms use informal relationships to manage risk at the expense of informal businesses. For instance, formal firms often avoid bad publicity by 'buying' from small informal businesses that operate sweatshops (Jones et al., 2006), and, in some jurisdictions, also deferring non-wage related costs to the informal businesses (Brusco, 1982). Costs associated with rejected goods and delayed payments may also be borne by informal businesses (Chen, 2006).

Informal businesses may serve markets that are either not accessible to formal firms or for which formal firms lack capabilities and competitiveness. Hart (1973) and Jones et al. (2006)

identified informal businesses that occupy niche market positions and thus have competitive advantages unavailable to formal firms. As a result of non-compliance cost advantages, informal businesses have been associated with relatively low priced and high quality goods and services (Blunch et al., 2001; Smith 1987). For example, some immigrants in the informal economy provide foreign cuisines in niche markets of the European catering and restaurant industry (Hall & Rath, 2007; Jones et al., 2006). Alternatively, some formal firms provide a 'lifeline' for informal economy activities through the provision of inputs, supplies, services, capital, support, technology, and tools (Morris Pitt, & Berthon, 1996; Ratner, 2002) as well as creating demand for their services. The informal economy and businesses therefore have a complex set of autonomous, integrated, complementary, and subordinate relationships with the formal economy and firms, which are usually mediated by the political and regulatory framework across time and jurisdictions, competitive environment, market structure, and economic conditions.

#### **2.6.4 Management and organisational practices in the informal economy**

##### ***Human resource and organisation***

Most businesses in the informal economy may not be capable of using normative management tools and concepts effectively, because of possible deficiencies in organisational and knowledge structures, and resources (Bruton et al., 2012; Godfrey, 2011). Institutional norms may act as disincentives for the use of formal planning tools and concepts in those organisational fields (Puffer & McChartey, 2011). Typically, education level of participants in the informal economy are low (Debrah, 2007; Devey et al., 2008; Morris et al., 1996) with a majority of participants having if at all only basic education (Blunch et al., 2001). A significant and positive correlation was found between higher education and formal jobs, meaning people with lower levels of education were more likely to participate in the informal economy (Gallaway & Bernasek, 2002; Marcelli, Pastor, & Joassart, 1999; Nelson, 1999). However, highly-educated participants were found in some developing countries (Adom & Williams, 2012; Lubell, 1991; Siqueira & Bruton, 2010).

It has also been observed that skills and human capital development from formal providers is rare as on-the-job training of employees which usually takes the form of apprenticeships is predominant (Blunch et al., 2001; Fajana, 2008; Lubell, 1993). This reflects the general human resource management practices in the informal economy, again labour laws and standards are often side-stepped by employers, leading to long periods of casual work with

poor wages which are often lower than the national minimum wage. Employers also fail to pay social security contributions and fringe benefits, a situation aggravated by the non-existence of written contracts and labour unions (Fajana 2008; Chen, 2012).

Characteristically, record keeping practices are generally poor. Businesses often keep separate sets of records (Dyer & Mortensen, 2005), assuming they choose to keep records. A lot of cash transactions, and, to a lesser extent, barter transactions (Gaughan & Ferman, 1987; Meagher, 1990) have been reported in the informal economy relative to cheque and 'on accounts' transactions. These practices reflect the general lack of formal documentation, which subsequently acts as an obstacle to securing capital from formal institutions such as commercial banks (Siqueira & Bruton, 2010). Informal businesses therefore often resort to informal sources of credit with arrangements based on trust (Quasem, Mondal, & Mahmud, 1998; Bruton et al., 2011), or to microfinance enterprises with less stringent terms and conditions in order to acquire stock (Adams & Fitchett, 1992; Buckley, 1997). Evidence also shows that owners of informal businesses in most instances rely on equity from personal savings and credit from family and friends for start-up capital, in 84% and 82% of cases in New Dehli and Bangkok respectively (Lubell, 1991, 1993).

The lack of identifiable business assets, especially in developing countries (Webb et al., 2014) is yet another feature of the informal economy. Interestingly, even physically located participants tend to lack ownership or title to the properties from which they operate (Godfrey, 2011; Tokman, 1990). Invariably, businesses in the informal economy fail to attract highly-skilled human resources and therefore lack the capacity, and also context for planning and executing formal management models to the letter. These limitations notwithstanding, studies suggest that participants make sense of business goals, growth, opportunities and strategies (Hiemstra, van der Kooy, & Frese, 2006; Morris et al., 1996). For instance, Jones et al. (2006) found varying degrees of competitive and market positioning strategies amongst informal businesses in the catering and clothing sectors in the UK.

### ***Marketing practices***

Preference for short term planning horizon in the informal economy is also apparent in the marketing of goods and services. Marketing in such small businesses is often characterised by informal and unplanned activity that relies on the intuition and energy of the owner (Blankson & Stokes, 2002). Similarly, Carson (1993) argues that small firms hardly find market orientation and planning useful, since they seem not to appreciate its impact on

performance. According to Harris and Watkins (1998) ignorance, lack of differentiation, lack of resources, satisfaction with the status quo, as well as short-term thinking explains this finding best. Distribution channels are mostly localised and promotion kept invisible as much as possible, in order to avoid state regulators (Losby et al., 2002). This observation however might not be the case universally, as the choice to be modest could equally be for other reasons, such as capability deficiency.

Invariably, less costly and less sophisticated marketing strategies like word-of-mouth, personal selling, direct marketing, cultural marketing and relationship marketing targeted at price-sensitive customers are popular in the informal economy (Varcin, 2000; Losby et al., 2002). For instance, price negotiations between buyer and seller are a common feature, unlike in the formal economy where prices are normally specified and indicated by the seller (Dana 2010). A satisfactory negotiated transaction potentially means a long-term social and economic relationship that is not solely customer-orientated as is typical of normative relationship marketing (Evans & Laskin 1994; Webster 1992; Zineldin 1998).

### *Operations and strategy*

Informal businesses deal with management imperatives in unconventional ways. Aside from economic and social considerations, ethnic and religious factors have been found to influence management decisions (Bromley & Birkbeck, 1984; Varcin, 2000). Whilst not creating the impression of a lack of drive and ambition (e.g. Morris et al., 1996), informal businesses may prefer to remain as small establishments because of inherent advantages of low visibility and ease of relocation, displacement, folding-up and re-opening (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Sassen-Koob, 1984). Informal businesses also tend to operate in industries or sub-sectors of industries, such as retail or services, that are characterised by small-scale; low levels of skills, technology and capital requirements; simple or no division of labour; labour intensity and little differentiation in the ownership of factors of production (Blunch et al., 2001; Gërkhani, 2004; Losby et al., 2002; Morris et al., 1996; Tokman, 1990). Participation in construction, production, manufacturing, transport and wholesaling is less prevalent relative to retailing, but varies across regions and countries (Blunch et al., 2001; Morris et al., 1996). They also tend to be in non-precision, repair and assembly-type activities (Losby et al., 2002).

Characterised by low capital requirements, lack of economies of scale requirements, and undifferentiated commodity-like and unregulated markets, barriers to entry into the informal economy are low which invariably increases ease of entry (Porter, 1985). However, a number



of curbing strategies have been identified, some of which cannot be easily explained by rational economic models of competition because of factors such as size, culture, and institutional considerations that inform competition decisions (Varcin, 2000). Studies in Turkey and Mexico have shown that unlike a few maximum profit-seeking traders who strategise like ‘small capitalists’, not all market traders act to maximise individual profits, because they feel the need to moderate competition in order to enhance lasting social relationships amongst competitors (Beals, 1975; Varcin, 2000). Similar findings come from informal bed and breakfast operators in New Zealand who engage in the accommodation sector to fulfil social and lifestyle needs (Hall & Rusher, 2005).

Collaboration, which is a common feature in the informal economy, is often leveraged to achieve collective rather than individual goals. For instance, Varcin (2000) found that market traders in Ankara, Turkey achieved a number of group competitive advantages. They erect barriers to entry against non-members, gaining economies of scale (through coalescing), by combining capital and other productive resources, or specialising and fixing prices through collusion. These kinds of informal strategic networks built on trust, and involving implicit, and ‘open-ended’ contracts are found to be a better way to enhance resource flows, in some instances than legally binding, short-term opportunistic relationships, and bureaucratic governance mechanisms which have higher transaction costs (Larson, 1992; Dyer & Singh 1998; Powell, 1990).

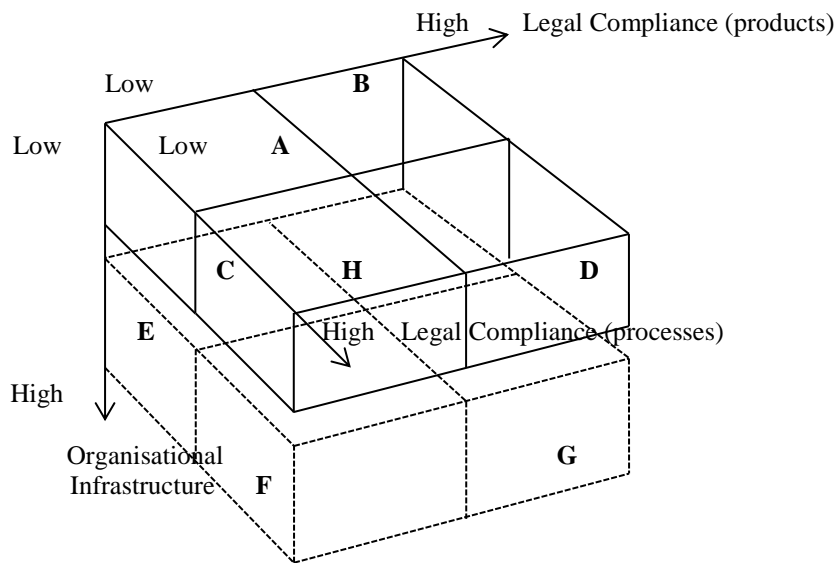
### **2.6.5 Implications of extant informal economy literature for a practice perspective**

Consequent to the heterogeneity of the informal economy (e.g. Williams, 2004; 2005), as well as the seeming conceptual difficulty in telling formal businesses from informal ones (e.g. McGahan, 2012), an attempt was made to develop a model that reflects this heterogeneity, whilst bringing more clarity to bear on the formality-informality of businesses. This clarification is pertinent to the current study, because an important aspect of the social practice theoretical framework employed in the study required an analysis of how differences in informality may account for SNP by the informal printing businesses and their agents. Additionally, by this effort, the study aims to contribute significantly to the informal economy literature, aside from SAP and network literatures.

### *A model of business (in)formality*

Theories of the informal economy identify management practices and resources that are characteristic of informal businesses (Blunch et al., 2001; Godfrey, 2011; Jackson, 2012; Vacin, 2000). Despite the promise of an alternative or complementary managerial conceptualisation, to the more popular legal and legitimacy-based one, management and organisation definitions have not received appropriate attention. Nonetheless, these two broad dimensions may serve as proxies individually and/or collectively for defining the boundaries of the phenomenon. Organisational infrastructure such as the production and public reporting of regulatory and other public documents; clear definition of strategy, mission and vision statements; existence of generic organisational roles and governance structures; as well as extents of unionisation, organised labour membership, and collective bargaining agreements can be conceptualised as an organisational frame for defining criminal, formal, and informal businesses. For example, Fajana (2008) suggests a number of reasons why informal business employers and employees are less likely to embrace and attract organised labour compared to formal businesses.

Figure 2.1 thus builds on previous models and frameworks such as Godfrey's (2011) 2x2 model where bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic governance is assumed to depict the degree to which firms organise internally in order to meet external legal and regulatory requirements. The model extends Godfrey's governance dimension and include a wider set of managing and organising tools firms employ. In developing Godfrey's (2011) and other previous work (Giudici et al., 2013), a point of departure is to steer away from a *solely* legal-compliance and legitimacy conceptualisation. In responding to Godfrey (2011), this model therefore includes a wider range of measures as an important step towards the dissolution of the 'formal-informal' boundaries, culminating in the identification of businesses along a 'formal-informal' spectrum. For example, McGahan (2012) observed that some non-complying firms can be highly structured as complying firms.



**Key**

- A: Loosely-structured criminal businesses
- B: Loosely-structured informal businesses
- C: Loosely-structured criminal businesses
- D: Loosely-structured formal businesses
- E: Highly-structured criminal businesses
- F: Highly-structured criminal businesses
- G: Highly-structured formal businesses
- H: Highly-structured informal businesses

**Figure 2.1 A conceptual model of business (in)formality** (Source: Author)

Figure 2.1 thus conceptualises criminal, formal and informal businesses in a three-dimensional model framed around organisational infrastructure, level of legal compliance in the organisational processes and structures employed in their operations, and level of legal compliance of the goods produced or sold. The model builds on, and encompasses previous two-dimensional models, that were developed to differentiate criminal, formal and informal businesses (see Giudici et al., 2013; Godfrey 2011; Webb et al., 2009). Eight forms of business organisation represented by positions A to G on a three-dimensional space are identified. There is convergence on businesses classified as criminal in previous models (Giudici et al., 2013; Webb et al., 2009). They include here, any businesses (positions A, C, E, and F) that are low on legal compliance of products irrespective of level of legal compliance of processes and organisational infrastructure. This classification is inherently

based on the increasing consensus in the informal economy literature that businesses classified as informal do not deal in illegal products (e.g. Godfrey, 2011; McGahan, 2012; Webb et al., 2014). Businesses located in these spaces are similar to those engaged in ‘renegade’ economic activities (Giudici et al., 2013), and those that are illegal in their ‘ends’ depicted in Webb et al. (2009). ‘Legal compliance to processes’ is emphasised in this discussion to situate the work in line with previous studies, which have brought some closure to discussions on ‘legal compliance to products’ type classification of formal-informal businesses.

Unlike previous models, this model delineates four other classifications, which not only differentiate formal and informal businesses, but also depict varying levels of informality within existing business. It further takes cognisance of observations from informal economy studies, by accounting for whole or partial stages of transition of businesses between formal and informal economies. By extension, businesses may occupy different positions at different times contingent on how they respond to changing state laws and regulations (external), how organisationally flexible (internal) they choose to be, or choices they make based on cost-benefit analysis (internal and external) of formal and informal arrangements at any point in time (Chen, 2012).

Loosely-structured informal businesses (position B) will include those most studied in the informal economy literature, especially by social science scholars (Godfrey, 2011), and often shown to engage in survival, unorganised, less sophisticated and relatively less technologically advanced activities (Hart, 1973; Holt & Littlewood, 2014). Highly-structured informal businesses (position H) on the other hand may include businesses that are relatively better organised and structured, are relatively more technologically advanced, have relatively better and formally educated, trained, and experienced owners and managers. Some family businesses and formal businesses that deliberately, selectively, or inadvertently slip down the legal compliance scale overtime (or intend to become informal with time) may end up in this largely under researched position (see Uzo & Mair, 2014 for an exception). These two separate categories provide a finer-grained conceptualisation compared to previous models (Giudici et al., 2013; Godfrey 2011; Webb et al., 2009), that classify businesses with these two different sets of characteristics into one generic group.

Position D is occupied by loosely-structured formal businesses. For example, an area yet to receive much research attention is where an informal business intends to formalise by first

becoming fully compliant, but only establish bureaucratic structures incrementally, as it seeks to continue enjoying advantages from informal internal arrangements. This classification also depicts traces of post-bureaucratic (Grey & Garsten, 2001; Moisander, 2009) legally-compliant formal businesses, that have established, and are open to flexible informal internal arrangements, atypical of formal normative organisational and administrative principles and procedures (Lazzarini, Miller & Zenger, 2004; Poppo & Zenger, 2004). Semi-formal relational economy organisations (Godfrey, 2011) fit into this classification, but importantly this model modestly extends Godfrey's (2011), by heeding his call for ways to decipher informal-formal bundles of varied work arrangements and elements, from which most effective organisational configurations may be chosen. Highly-structured formal businesses found in position G, obviously are the most researched in management studies (Godfrey, 2011), and are also presented as the 'ideal' form of organisation (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977), and thus point of reference, and source of comparison in informal economy studies.

A second observation from the review of previous informal economy literature is that, informal economy activities now include more technologically-advanced manufacturing and service operations (Adom & Williams 2012; Jones et al., 2004, 2006; Lee & Hung, 2014; Siqueira & Bruton, 2010), unlike unsophisticated operations such as street-vending, hawking and shoe-shining identified in earlier studies (Hart, 1973; ILO, 1972), and that arguably dominate academic and public perception of the sector. This has led to a renewed interest in the informal economy, through the application of a number of conceptual treatments (e.g. Leonard, 1998; Schneider, 2000, 2011, 2012; Williams 2004, 2005, 2007).

Despite its contributions, and this heightened scholarly interest, management scholarship on the sector remains incommensurate with its importance (Bruton et al. 2012; Webb et al., 2014). For example, strategic management scholars have overlooked the way informal businesses strategise and organise their businesses based on informal arrangements. Subsequently, this dearth in knowledge offers research avenues that could trace the origins of their atypical capability bundles, and how these are configured without the benefit of guiding normative management tools and frameworks taught in business schools. Following this, the researcher argues that the informal economy presents opportunities for new contributions to knowledge, given these peculiar characteristics of the setting and participants, and the consequence these may have for shaping their strategising practices.

Studies suggest that beyond themselves, informal businesses form strategic networks with formal organisations (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Holt & Littlewood, 2014). However, gaps remain for a practice perspective on strategic networking, as previous studies have yet to adequately account for this aspect of informal business networks. Research on the ‘doing’ of strategic networking which encapsulates the role of situated and contextual knowledge, interpretations, assumptions, artefacts and capabilities may therefore offer new insights.

Finally, because of conceptual and definitional inconsistencies alluded to above, researchers often resort to working definitions depending on the problem at hand (Feige, 1989, 1990; Gërkhani, 2004). This study therefore defines the informal economy and informal businesses to include small owner/manager self-employed businesses that are characterised by partial or non-compliance to business, tax and employment regulations, but produce and sell legal goods and services, and employ atypical capabilities and management practices (Blunch et al., 2001; Godfrey, 2011; Hart, 2006; Williams, 2006).

## **2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter reviewed the three main bodies of literature that underpin the current study: SAP, network and informal economy literatures aimed at positioning the study, identifying research gaps, and highlighting potential contributions. It indicates that the ‘practice turn’ and the SAP perspective provide better affordances for studying the informal economy setting, compared to the traditional strategy content approach. In addition, it argues that although some strides have been made in the structural and relational linkages and outcomes of SAP scholarship, some research locales remain underexplored. More so those that showcase the interplay amongst micro, meso, and macro levels of practice; the chapter further outlines how the current study aims to contribute to filling this gap.

The chapter also makes the point that inter-organisational relationships such as strategic networks are critical to businesses of all type, and despite many varied terminologies, a working definition was proposed for the current study. The chapter situates the study primarily within the small business network research, and further illustrates that current small business network research coalesce around five themes. However network scholars lament the overreliance of extant research on quantitative approaches, that more or less assume social context away, or at best treat context subtly, leaving equally important aspects of networks that border on the ‘on-goings’ of networking activity and their generative mechanisms under-researched. Some scholars argue that fieldwork-type qualitative research

methods are better placed to fill these gaps (Jack, 2010). Additionally, the chapter highlights how a practice perspective that treats social context more intensively and extensively may provide the key for this kind of research project, which the current study has taken up.

The informal economy which provides the setting for the current research was introduced with particular emphasis on its broad contours, in light of the study's theoretical framework. The fact that management and organisation scholarship on the phenomenon is limited despite its significance is also emphasised. Avenues for research, especially for this current SAP-type study are outlined, including a construction of a working definition. The potential of the phenomenon to provide new insights on strategic networking, and strategising practice more generally are presented. The theoretical framework for this study is discussed in the chapter that follows (Chapter 3). Whilst Chapter 2 problematises strategy and network literature as inadequate amongst other things, Chapter 3 uncovers the ways an alternative practice framework may address these. It does so by incorporating a different and enhanced notion of context (drawing on Bourdieu's practice theory) that is pertinent to illuminating interpretations and insights that the literature has overlooked (Golden-Biddle & Azuma, 2010).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A BOURDIEUSIAN FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING STRATEGIC NETWORKING PRACTICES**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter first reviews the literature on Bourdieu's (1977, 1990, 2000) theory of practice, in an attempt to illustrate how Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field, may be harnessed as analytical and interpretive tools, for investigating strategy practice generally, and SNP in particular. Second, a Bourdieusian theoretical framework for studying SNP is developed, the informal economy is constructed as a field of practice, within which social practices (including strategic networking) are enacted as a logic of practice. Whilst a general review of the informal economy phenomenon is presented in Chapter 2, the review in this chapter is to illustrate how Bourdieu's theory of practice will be incorporated into the investigation of SNP in the informal economy. Overall, the aim of this chapter is to showcase the affordances Bourdieu's concepts and his logic of practice framework provide for a richer understanding of strategy practice broadly and SNP specifically.

#### **3.2 BOURDIEU'S LOGIC OF PRACTICE FRAMEWORK**

Bourdieu's (1990) practice theory has drawn a lot of attention from SAP scholarship, as a tool very much suited for the SAP agenda (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Gomez, 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Whittington, 2003). It has equally attracted interest in other management and organisation research (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005); particularly amongst scholars studying communities of practice and their relation to learning and knowing (Brown & Duguid, 1991, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Nicolini, 2007, 2009, 2011), and corporate social responsibility (Van Aaken, Splitter, & Seidl, 2013). Borch and Arthur (1995) suggested that strategic management scholars should draw inspiration from disciplines that have trajectories with human interactions, social structures, and institutions such as organisational psychology, sociology, and anthropology in designing research framework for the study of strategic networks in small firms.

Bourdieu's practice theory (1990) has been described as a meta-theory that has tremendous potential for enriching our understanding of strategy practice and the related concepts of habitus, capital and field, as a system or logic of practice (Gomez, 2010; Hurtado, 2010). For



example, Gomez and Bouty (2011) investigated the role of agency, capital, habitus, and the field in the emergence of an influential practice. They showed how implicitly, micro-level habitus and capital, and the macro-level field co-created a new practice through agency. Bourdieu's logic of practice framework is therefore appropriate for studying micro-macro level strategy practice and their linkages in SAP research where actor(s), local practices, and the field, are co-constructed in a fluid relationship (Golsorkhi et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Durand, 2012; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

### **3.2.1 Habitus**

Bourdieu (1990) refers to human actions in his logic of practice as something that people do in the social world they belong to, to the extent that the very basic human tenets and activities such as what to eat, when to eat, and how to eat, are underpinned by a logic of practice. Invariably, practices are a function of beliefs, history, and disposition, socially embedded, and often constituted in what is referred to as habitus. Habitus develops as an individual or group's tendencies for, or dispositions to particular courses of action or inaction, devoid of conscious and cognitive analysis (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Rasche & Chia, 2009). Habitus is embodied in individuals by virtue of their trajectory with social structures, yet may be shared with groups or classes of individuals who collectively, but tacitly, enact a learned set and codes of behaviour. In a study of top management teams' strategising in a UK university, Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) found evidence of habitus where managers demonstrated shared interpretations, and orientations towards familiar recipes, therefore reinforcing existing patterns of action which are representative of the context. The habitus of a social group or a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is therefore different from that of another, since social practices that result from habitus are differently constituted.

They are constituted by both the existing structure into which agents are socialised, and the concurrent structuring that agents have initiated and allowed (Bourdieu, 1977). In this sense, SNP are not likely to be universal; they are most likely to be mediated by the habitus of the groups concerned. Furthermore, the most meaningful set of SNP are described best by the stakes and interests, that is projected by the habitus of the group, which invariably is a subject of perceptions, interpretations, assumptions and capabilities. They are embodied schemas that are comprehensible (Golsorkhi et al., 2010), since agents may employ them in the achievement of the wide range of strategic networking tasks of decision-making, formation and opportunity-seeking for instance (Bourdieu, 1977). However, agents are rarely conscious

of their particular dispositions in the performance of such social practices (Rasche & Chia, 2009), as dispositions become immersed in history, internalised and seemingly deterministic (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). Subsequently, a practice sense develops which reflects a sense of belonging to a space or position in the social world. Granted this SNP can be studied as representations of a particular social world in which the informal economy and its participants are immersed.

### **3.2.2 Capital**

The logic of practice is better understood if individual and collective social positioning and capital configurations are also accounted for, since practices of social and economic groups are a function of the types and volumes of capital they possess, or can access individually and collectively. In Bourdieu's (1990) theory, firms and agents may have access to, and control a set of economic, cultural, and social capital in field-specific SNP. These assorted types of capital accumulated by individuals within firms, may also vary in amounts and composition at different points in time. Invariably, capital is a source of power that is contextually situated, so what constitutes capital within a group, may not be in the other because the habitus which is an enactment of the coping strategies may be different. Additionally, the value placed on particular types of capital are not necessarily the same for the different groups, and time frames (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Entwistle & Rockamora, 2006; Hurtado, 2010).

An important dimension of Bourdieu is that social and cultural forms of capital for instance are non-economic, but are valuable kinds of capital that bestows on group members, a host of tangible and intangible benefits (Allan, 2006). Social capital may include a network of social relations, but more importantly the power and resources that flow from this network of relationships (Everett, 2002; Hurtado, 2010). Cultural capital may exist in embodied, objectified and institutionalised forms that are deemed valuable within a group (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; Scott, 2012). The embodied dimension of cultural capital is manifested in knowledge, abilities and wherewithal; objectified is made intelligible in objects, instruments, machines, and 'things'; whilst the institutionalised is represented in officially acclaimed and guaranteed set of competence, often symbolised in for instance, academic training, qualification, and certification that attests to a specific 'cultural' competence (Everett, 2002; Scott, 2012).

The type and amount of capital agents command therefore influences their position; in other words, their social and symbolic space and this may determine whom agents network with, how they form the networks, where the networks are formed, and the motivations for the network. Business dinners (Sturdy, Schwarz & Spicer, 2006) for instance are typical occasions and opportunity for strategic networking; however this opportunity might be limited or open depending on agents' social, cultural or economic capital. Taking another perspective, Hurtado (2012) argues that linguistic capital, considered a form of cultural capital, maybe critical in strategic networking because of its persuasive communication value. Anderson et al. (2010) reported how the social capital of two entrepreneurs in the petroleum industry in Scotland, opened doors that connected them to the masters of the petroleum universe. In a similar vein, Gomez and Bouty (2011) underscored the role of media coverage capital on a strategist's introduction of a new field practice.

Granted this, social, relational, emotional, and other forms of cultural capital that have equally found to be sources of power in groups where trust and informal relations are very much valued (Anderson & Jack, 2002; Kyriakidou & Özbilgin, 2006; Thomson, 1998). In another study, Ahuja (2000) found that stocks of technical (innovative) and commercial (marketing) capital available to a firm increases its attractiveness to potential network partners, and thus enhances opportunities for collaboration. Gomez and Bouty, (2011) also identified a complex set of individual and collective technical, social and economic forms of capital for a group of elite restaurants. Three-star accredited chef was mentioned as a particular symbolic capital that attracted business. Any of the other forms of capital becomes symbolic when it is accorded esteem, honour, legitimised, and consecrated by relevant actors as valuable (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Everett, 2002). Invariably symbolic capital possesses the power to define and set standards for the group and field (Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo et al., 1995; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Vaughan, 2008), and therefore SNP of the field under study here.

So while capital that emanates from higher levels of formal education, knowledge, skills, and experience might count as symbolic capital within a social or economic group, because of its overall bearing on networking opportunities and practices, the reverse might be true, and reflects almost unnoticeably in the habitus and internal orientation of another group (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). An alternative explanation could be that, different groups interpret this aforementioned set of capital differently, a cognition that reflects their habitus. Just as strategic networking opportunities and practices may be enabled and constrained by different

forms of capital, Özbilgin & Tatli (2005) indicate the pivotal role embodied forms of cultural capital for instance, can play in the decision heuristics employed in the accomplishment of particular SNP.

SAP research has noted the importance and role of technological and other forms of material capital such as computers, software, building spaces, and smart phones in strategy work (Dameron et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski, Spee & Smets, 2013; Levina & Orlikowski, 2009; Molly & Whittington, 2005; Orlikowski, 2007). These technologies and their deployment are increasingly becoming critical to inter-firm business transactions. Transactional technologies and platforms like electronic data interchange are capability-based capital that firms usually develop with their network partners to enhance operations, optimise inventory costs, and maximise customer service and experience. These are particularly critical in manufacturer-supplier relationships (Doz, Olk, & Ring, 2000; Madhavan et al., 1998). Invariably, technologies can be employed as firm or group-specific capital for networking with other firms in various relationships.

Orlikowski (2010) posits that technology for instance, and strategy practice are no longer separable, the boundaries are subtle, and the relation very dynamic and fluid. Technologies-in-practice which are structurally produced through agency and habitus have become part and parcel of strategy work (Orlikowski, 2000, 2010), and a shared socio-material world (Suchman, 2007). Similarly Dameron et al. (2015) explicate the central role of varied forms of materials (in economic and cultural forms) to strategy and strategising. Consequently, SNP may be dependent on the amount and types of technological and material capital that agents control or can develop. These forms of capital may therefore be unique or symbolic in some sectors, industries, or fields of practice, which invariably shapes strategising practices including SNP.

Capital has currency and is hence transformable from one form to another at varied rates of convertibility. It is also subject to attrition and liquidity (Everett, 2002, p. 64). Cultural capital is considered as relatively more enduring, by virtue of the process through which they are acquired. Whilst economic capital is the most convertible, and though easier to accumulate, it is also the most susceptible to attrition (Bourdieu, 1985; Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Everett, 2002; Hurtado, 2010). Furthermore, individuals possessing a good amount of one form of capital, especially economic capital find that they possess, or have access to good deal of other forms of capital (Everett, 2002). This way of conceptualising capital provides

tools for understanding interests and stakes of potential network partners, their stocks of capital, and the form exchanges in the networks are most likely to take.

### **3.2.3 Field**

The last related concept of Bourdieu's logic of practice is the field, which is conceptualised as a higher-level phenomenon within which the connected social structure and systems of dispositions, habitus and capital are represented (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). The notion of a relational system is flawed if the field that moulds, and which in turn is constructed, by agents' habitus and capital is isolated from the concepts of habitus, capital, agency and dispositions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The larger social world is made up of a constellation of micro-worlds called fields (fields are examples of the collectives hitherto referred to as groups above). Industries, sectors, politics, academy, competitive markets, and national economies have been cited as typical examples of fields (Gomez, 2010; Splitter & Seidl, 2011).

However, it is important to re-echo Bourdieu's point of departure from other definitions of organisational groupings, which stipulates that the above examples are taken as starting points in identifying organisational fields, and that a field for example, must include all organisations and actors that have anything to do with each of the above socially-structured spaces (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Hardy, 2014). Splitter and Seidl (2011) employed Bourdieu's logic of practice framework to conceptualise strategy scholars and strategy practitioners as belonging to two different fields. They argued that the reason for the incessant gap between strategy research and management praxis, despite scholars' genuine effort to bridge it is because agents from the two fields have two different sets of habitus, and thus emphasise two different sets of capital. These influence their dispositions, which then explain differences in notions about strategy and strategising.

A field may be conceptualised as structured spaces organised around a specific type or combinations of capital, and are often characterised by struggles for stake, resources, access and power amongst agents (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005; Gomez & Bouny, 2011). Fields may be characterised as 'restricted', 'generalised/large-scale' or 'nested' depending on the dominant type of goods produced, and the dominant logics at play in the field, these could either be cultural, economic or a combination of these (Anheier et al., 1995; Oakes et al., 1998; Bourdieu, 1985; Everett, 2002). The informal and formal economies may represent two segments of the 'economy' that occupy two different fields of production: restricted and

large-scale respectively (Anheier et al., 1995). The extent to which logics in the field of large-scale production filter into restricted fields vary, and are reified in the degree to which restricted field-specific criteria guide production, as well as how this is evaluated by relevant field actors (Oakes et al., 1998; Everett, 2002).

Though capital is valuable to every kind of field, there are also some ‘disinterested’ fields (Gomez & Bouty, 2011), and by extension practices within fields, where power and capital accumulation manoeuvres, and struggles, are virtually non-existent or minimal. The intellectual field of artists, academics, scientists, and writers have been cited as examples (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). However, Splitter and Seidl (2011) cited the struggle for scientific authority in the field of academy to illustrate limited examples of ‘disinterested’ fields. A reason for the manoeuvrings or competition for capital amongst agents is because, capital is not evenly distributed in composition and volume within and across fields, so agents through power struggles and exchanges, aim to reconfigure, increase, or supplement their stocks of capital (Bourdieu, 2000). These kinds of exchanges may be foregrounded in the case of strategic networking. They may play out amongst individual agents, who use their position and power in the social world as symbols of control over some sorts of capital, to influence courses of action, such as SNP within fields. These tendencies may not be apparent to outsiders, and even actors themselves in some cases, yet are crucial to the functioning and day-to-day practices of the focal field (Gomez & Bouty, 2011), since exchange and rewards within fields are often governed by unwritten existing ‘rules of the game’, conferred and defined by the habitus of field actors (Hurtado, 2010, p. 54).

The power struggles and manoeuvring can be complex when agents’ trajectories span fields, this is because agency is heightened due to an increase in stakes resulting from of a wider set of capital, habitus, scripts, and logics of practice that are brought to the game (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). As noted above, field-specific symbolic capital may confer symbolic power that goes to define, and underlie these stakes, for as long as social agents perceive it, know it, recognise it and appreciate it (Bourdieu, 2000). In this sense, an appreciation of the logic of practice of a field is critical to understanding broader assumptions, practices, and rules of engagement in strategic networking amongst agents.

Strategic networking requires the use of objects, materials and strategy tools (Suchman, 2005; Whittington, 2007). SAP research has characterised strategy as embodied and materially mediated since strategy work does not happen in a void. Strategic networking for instance is

dependent on socio-materials and objects. For instance, the use of PowerPoint (Kaplan, 2011), white boards, flipcharts, cubes (Molloy & Whittington, 2005; Whittington et al., 2006); numbers, academic, and consulting tools (Denis et al., 2006; Jarratt & Stiles, 2010; Seidl, 2007) in strategy work.

The affordances technology and material artefacts provide as sources of capital or resources in the practice of networking have been outlined above. However, the practice and use of these objects, materials and technologies by agents for strategic networking is a matter of individual and collective predisposition shaped by the habitus of agents and the field concerned. Through situated field practice of strategic networking, material artefacts may gain meaning from the way they are used (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Schatzki, 2006) and investigated (Werle & Seidl, 2015). In this sense, material objects like desks, telephones, forms, computers, tools, and other technologies identified above may be considered as epistemic objects (Carlile, 2002; Knorr-Cetina, 2001) because they are ‘knowledge objects’ (Werle & Seidl, 2015, p. S70). They are not inherently, the accoutrements of strategy work, but rather the sort of interpretations, and use to which practitioners put these artefacts in their context of strategy work, may give them symbolic value. Invariably practitioners in different fields, and at different times, may give varied situational meanings to the same set of material artefacts for strategising and organising (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). By this same logic, agents may employ different sets of material artefacts and technologies, for similar strategy work that they find best suited for their knowledge properties and context (Whittington et al., 2003; Whittington, 2006).

According to Rasche and Chia (2009), material objects are extremely important for the study of SAP, especially the collective background interpretations. They argue that SAP research has shown how material objects that facilitate strategy work, can act as symbolic artefacts, however, they suggest that objects that limit strategy work need equal attention. If this logic is anything to go by, we can argue that material artefacts may be used to a greater, or lesser extent by different fields, depending on whether they facilitate or limit strategy practice as prescribed by their existing habitus and dispositions. For instance, Heath and Luff (2000) gives an account of why a newly introduced computerised record system did not facilitate the work of doctors. This is because doctors’ work sometimes requires confidential sharing of crucial patient information that is critical to the patient’s care, but not appropriate for official records. This scenario according to Rawls (2008, p. 715) was referred to as ‘bad organisational [field] reasons for good records’.

### **3.2.4 The generative dimension of Bourdieu's framework**

It is imperative to reflect on the generative nature of Bourdieu's framework, as part of any attempt to apply it as a guiding framework. Although practice, dispositions and capital are more or less governed by the habitus and the field, they are not deterministic (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Agents have voluntary action and the existence of a particular habitus in a field may be explained by the actions of agents, which in turn, is constructed by the existing dispositions of agents, and the different forms of capital at play in the field. In essence, through the struggles, manoeuvrings, competition, and even collaboration for different types, volumes, and composition of capital available within and across fields, agents may regenerate and restructure field-specific habitus, as well as the underlying field structures (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Özbilgin & Tatli 2005). The extent of generative action that an agent may bring to bear is reflective of his or her stocks of capital as well as the transformative, allocation and distributive strategies employed. Again in an organisational context for instance, Özbilgin & Tatli (2005) illustrate how practices and habitus are consciously and unconsciously constructed, and enacted by agents, depending on how much they conform or negate existing practices, as well their involvement in negotiating for changes in existing practices (Batillana et al., 2009; DeClercq & Voronov, 2009).

The field and its associated habitus thus have a creative, learning and inventive capacity, and are open to multiple possibilities of expression (Hurtado, 2010). SNP may not be static and deterministic; changes may result from a negation or re-negotiation of the existing habitus between agents, or even as the symbolic capital in the fields becomes more or less durable. For example, longer term and arm's-length relationships might become more useful than shorter-term and more embedded options respectively. The case might be that capital which used to be scarce and symbolic in the past, might become more readily available over time, subjecting the field-specific habitus and dispositions to change, which in turn triggers changes to networking practices; the reverse may also be true. Technological changes in the larger social world for instance might also become influential at the level of the field, and in the process disrupt existing habitus and dispositions, thereby redefining possibilities and impossibilities (Nicolini, 2009). Granted this observation, field-conditioned SNP in particular fields may be subject to some of these macro-field influences. Mediation, learning, other practices, and people outside the focal field are thus critical to understanding the extent of continuities or discontinuities of practices within a field (Nicolini, 2009).



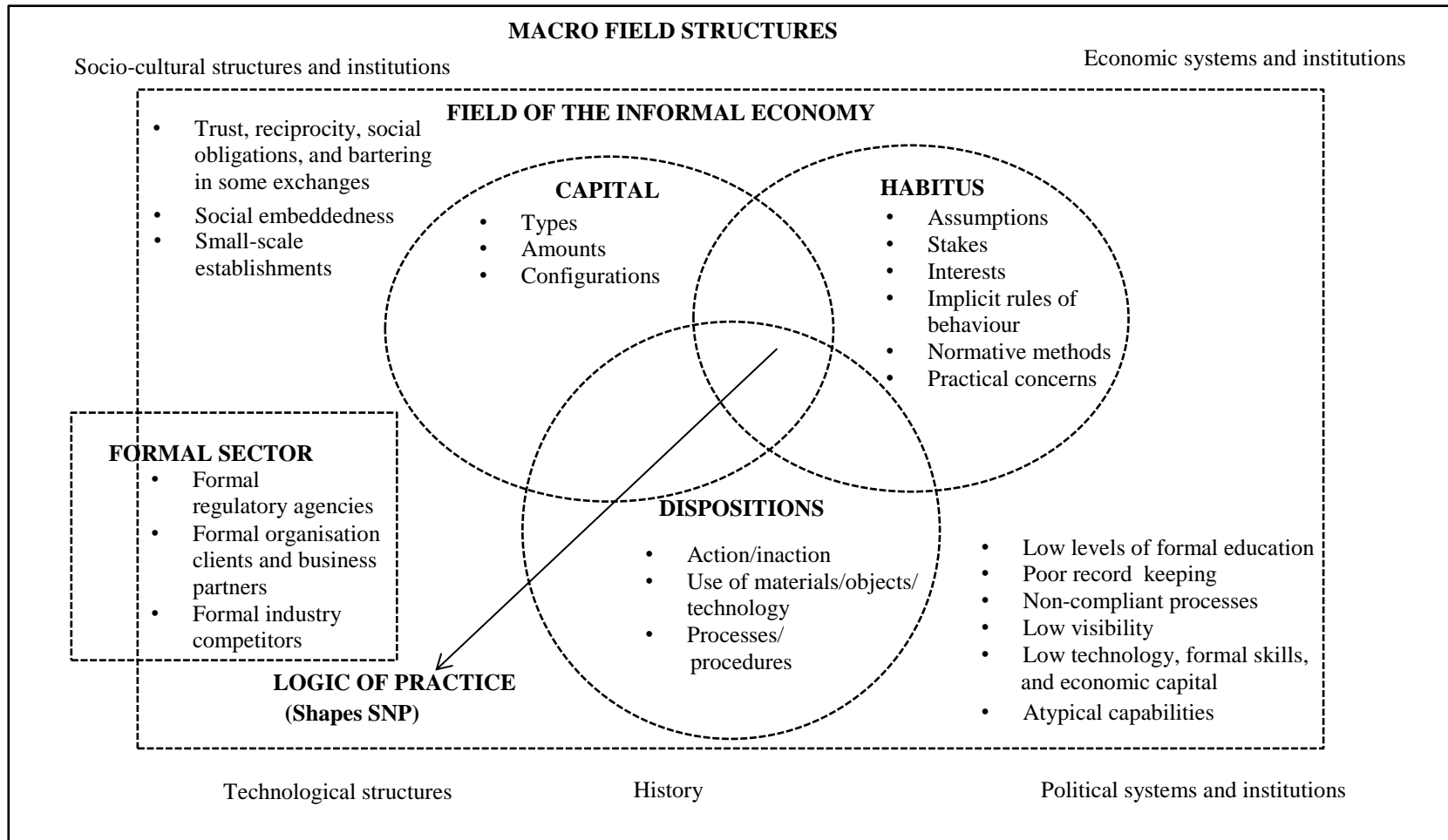
Bourdieu's logic of practice framework is therefore adaptable for the conceptualisation of social practice as contextual, relational, systemised, structural, and structuring. The framework for instance, enables the analysis of the interplay amongst the agent as an individual, as a collective, and as part of a wider field of practice subsumed in an overarching macro-field. Again, it is also possible to study the interplay between the individual agent and the field independent of the organisation, just as one can examine the firm as a collection of agents on one hand, and the field on the other. However, the field is the primary focus around which all research operations evolve in Bourdieusian relational approach to management and organisation studies (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). An in-depth study of SNP in a field will invariably have to draw on this interplay and generative dimension of the concepts that make up the logic of practice.

### **3.3 THE INFORMAL ECONOMY AS A FIELD OF PRACTICE**

Bourdieu's theory of practice conceptualises practices as interrelated concepts of field, capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101) as follows:

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

Figure 3.1 illustrates the relationships amongst Bourdieu's key concepts, the logic of practice and SNP in the field of the informal economy. Habitus is a generative scheme of dispositions (Hurtado, 2010, p. 54). However, the relationship between the concepts especially habitus and dispositions depicted in Figure 3.1 does not represent extents of overlap, instead it illustrates the dynamic relationship amongst the key concepts. It outlines how social positions endow agents with capital that is characteristic of a social world, which in turn generates habitus through socialisation and 'embodied' as dispositions, which then manifest as practices (Hurtado, 2010). Figure 3.1 further indicates that agents have voluntary action (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). As shown with the dashed lines, agents' field-specific habitus, capital, and SNP may be subject to influences by macro social, economic, technological, and political systems, institutions, and structures (including the formal sector). These structures more or less embed agents and the field of the informal economy, resulting in an interplay between maintenance of field structures and practices, and possible discontinuities.



**Figure 3.1 Bourdieusian framework informing SNP in the field of the informal economy** (Source: Author)

In this thesis, the informal economy is conceptualised as the focal field; the informal businesses, their owner/managers and employees are individual and collective agents with field-specific capital configurations (see Section 3.2). By virtue of the logic of a field, a set of defining properties and characteristics of a field can be identified (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As businesses whose set-up, management, and operations differ from formal firms, informal businesses possess particular characteristics (see Section 2.6), that must be accounted for when investigating how strategic networking is practiced by businesses operating in the field. Field-specific characteristics more or less determine practical concerns, and implicit rules of conduct amongst field actors for instance, as they tend to embody a socially-conditioned set of habitus and dispositions. For instance, education levels in the informal economy are usually low (see Section 2.6.4), agents are therefore endowed with particular cultural resources, on which they draw in on-going strategy work within the field. This is foreground in their habitus and dispositions, to act in internally-defined meaningful ways in their SNP; this observation was one of the research issues raised in the current study.

In Section 2.6.5 of the thesis, the study defines the informal economy as including informal businesses that are not properly registered, licensed, recorded or enumerated, and also not fully complying with tax, labour and employment laws, as well as employ atypical capabilities (Castells & Portes, 1989; Blunch et al. 2001). Even for informal businesses that fit into this typology, the levels of informality may vary according to the extent of external compliance, internal bureaucratic structures, and the identity of agents (Gërkhani, 2004; Godfrey, 2011; Losby et al., 2002), as illustrated in Figure 2.1. These varying levels of informality may signify agency, which is an integral phenomenon in Bourdieu's practice theory that the current study queried in the SNP of the informal businesses. Agency is often moulded by actors' capital configurations. This may form the bases for the projection of specific actions, stakes, and interests in the relationships, as well as the motivation and capacity of agents to contribute to stabilisation, or destabilisation of the field structures of the informal economy (see Section 3.2).

Again, given the heterogeneity of the phenomenon, businesses and participants may differ in their economic and employment status, the degree of legal and regulatory compliance, the location of activities, the motives for involvement, and their management practices (see Sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.5). These may influence the position of informal agents in the social space, and invariably shape SNP, as social space occupied by an agent or group, determines and confers legitimising powers (see Section 3.2). Across countries, heterogeneity is a

reflection of political, regulatory, economic, cultural, social and technological differences, and hence national specificities, rather than the underlying meaning of the phenomenon (see Sections 2.6.1, 2.6.2 and 2.6.3). This feature of the phenomenon was also treated as one of the research issues in the construction of the field, and was further pursued in the analytical questions, that sought to understand how macro-level structural factors and practices influenced SNP of the informal businesses.

As mentioned above, informal businesses are characterised by a unique set of informal arrangements and practices from which a habitus and thus agents' dispositions may be understood. These characteristics of informality may influence the kinds of capital available to agents, and invariably determine strategic networking relationships, with agents and firms from other fields that possess alternative habitus, dispositions or 'institutional biography' (Suddaby & Viale, 2011). Other than the informal businesses, their agents, as well as informal institutions, the field of the informal economy includes agents and institutions from other fields, for example, formal organisations and regulatory institutions (see Section 3.2). The current study was therefore alert to this research issue, and subsequently queried the effect of these varied sets of biographies on the practice of strategic networking in the field as well.

For instance, education levels amongst agents in the formal economy are comparatively higher than those of the informal economy (see Section 2.6.4). Invariably processes, procedures and use of artefacts like technology in SNP may be shaped by the resultant different sets of institutional resources between formal, and informal business agents. Again, whilst good record-keeping practices for example are symbolic in the field of formal businesses, same may not be the case for informal businesses (see Section 2.5.4). Agents in the informal economy may therefore accumulate social, economic or cultural capital, of different configurations from those of the formal economy (Baron & Markman, 2003; Kodithuwakku & Rosa, 2002; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005). This was yet another research issue of interest that was intended to reveal how these two sets of habitus and dispositions were reconciled in field-conditioned SNP.

Though the majority of informal economy participants and agents have low levels of education as indicated before, relatively higher numbers of better educated participants have been found elsewhere (Adom & Williams, 2012; Lubell, 1991) (see Section 2.6.4). Agents' education, and especially career trajectories and history for instance, endows them with

capabilities, social networks, stocks of capital, and worldviews (see Section 3.2) that are brought to bear on SNP; this informed another area of inquiry of the thesis. Adom and Williams (2012) in a study of informal entrepreneurs in Ghana found a civil engineering university graduate who owns, and manages an informal building construction business after a short stint of employment in a formal firm. This apparently better-educated agent, with formal firm experience, and now operating in the informal economy may likely exhibit a unique type of agency; the current study was therefore interested in such agential influences on SNP.

By virtue of his training and previous formal work experience, his pool of capital may be somewhat different from other agents within the field; this in turn nurtures a habitus and disposition, prior to entering the new field of the informal economy (Bourdieu, 1990). Moving from one field to the next implies a shift in the structural conditions of an agent's practices, just as when agents in a field choose to acquire a new set of capital by going for formal education, training, or striking unusual acquaintances (Splitter & Seidl, 2011) (see Section 3.2). In this sense, SNP of agents of the sort may embody a peculiar set of biography, and can therefore provide a promising avenue for understanding possible influences or changes to capital, rules of the game, stakes, habitus, and field structures, depending on how pervasive the practices, and dispositions of this group of agents are (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Informal businesses prefer to remain as small establishments unlike formal firms, because of inherent advantages of low visibility and ease of relocation, displacement, folding-up and re-opening. Typically and historically, informal businesses operate in industries, or sub-sectors of industries that are characterised by small-scale; low levels of skills, low technology and capital requirements; simple or no division of labour; labour intensity and little differentiation in the ownership of factors of production (see Section 2.6.4). The focus on multiple influences on SNP was based on some of these observations that history, industry, capability, and economic capital may enable or constraint choices made in SNP, since collectively, these factors underpin the logic of practice operational in the field.

Limited resources and capabilities, as well as expediencies at stake in the industry, may provide impetus, and nurture dispositions towards collaboration as opposed to competition, this was another research issue taken up in the study. Similarly, a blurred distinction between ownership of factors of production may reduce divergent interests, stakes and power

struggles in decision-making, since the opposite situation has been found in more pluralistic contexts (see 2.3.8). Invariably, a habitus nurtured by low-tech, small-scale, low economic capital, and low level formal skills operations, may reflect in the logic of practice which shapes SNP of informal businesses. Per this logic, these inherent features of the informal economy may bear on the kinds of normative methods: materials, tools, and technologies that make up SNP, as well as where informal businesses are likely to lie in the value chains of strategic networks.

Another important defining characteristic of the informal economy with possible implications for SNP is the social embeddedness of businesses operating in the informal economy. Sometimes referred to as the ‘social economy’, early anthropological and sociological studies Ferman and Ferman (1973), Stack (1974), Lowenthal (1975) and Dow (1977) conceive the informal economy as a means of subsistence and survival-type social exchanges between families, neighbours, and communities (see also Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.4). The relationships are guided by trust, barter exchanges, social obligation, commitment and reciprocity (Williams et al. 2012), rather than the result of pure market exchanges between legally-formed businesses governed under formal laws and rules (Henry & Sills, 2006).

In some cases, aside economic factors, ethnic, social, and even religious factors have been found to somehow influence economic decisions of informal businesses (Bromley & Birkbeck, 1984; Godfrey, 2011; Varcin, 2000). Invariably, SNP may find expression in this social and cultural milieu in which informal businesses are embedded. Borch and Arthur (1995) emphasise the importance of the symbolic realm, the institutional context of religious symbols, and SNP in small businesses. With these practices in mind, we may conclude that informal businesses seem not to foreground economic logic, and thus economic capital, that is operational and symbolic in formal business fields. The thesis further sought to explicate the implications these dispositions have in SNP in the field, particularly in the exchanges and evaluation of network benefits and priorities.

Informal businesses do not always act in order to maximise individual profits because it is necessary to moderate competition, in order to enhance lasting social relationships amongst competitors (Beals, 1975; Varcin 2000). However, Weber’s (1978) social closure concept in which groups of competitors identifiable by common characteristics such as language, religion, descent, ethnicity, race, and residence attempt to maximise group profit at the expense of ‘outsider’ competitors or potential competitors has been found (see Section 2.6.4).

In essence collaboration which is a common feature in the informal economy is often leveraged to achieve collective rather than individual goals. For instance, Varcin (2000) found that informal businesses achieved a number of group competitive advantages, such as erecting barriers to entry against non-members; gaining economies of scale through coalescing by putting capital and other productive resources together; or specialising and fixing prices through collusion. These and previous observations further reinforced the quest of the current study, to understand how this dispositions towards high levels of collaborations, as well as its underlying field-conditioned habitus, specified interests and stakes that were foreground in SNP in the field.

These kinds of informal strategic networks are built on trust, and involve implicit and ‘open-ended’ contracts, these factors are critical to understanding normative methods of strategic network formation and governance, a matter that was given consideration in this study. This trust-based relational option is believed to provide an alternative to the strict legally binding, and short-term opportunistic bureaucratic governance mechanisms (Poppo & Zenger, 2004). Examples of informal socially-controlled governance arrangements reported in the small business network and informal economy literature (see Sections 2.5.2 and 2.6.4), led the researcher to probe how these options, and choices made by the informal businesses in their SNP, fit into the logic of practice of the field of the informal economy.

### **3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter reviewed Bourdieu’s practice theory, and illustrated how the concepts of capital, habitus and field are amenable to the study of strategising and therefore SNP in the informal economy. More specifically, using a Bourdieusian framework it indicated how the concepts together may be treated as logic of practice, whilst stressing their generative capacity. Additionally, the informal economy is outlined as a field of practice with its peculiar logic of practice that shapes field practices, including SNP. In developing this logic of practice in the field of the informal economy (Figure 3.1), a broad range of features and characteristics of the informal economy phenomenon reviewed in earlier sections were drawn upon. In the process a number of research issues and analytical questions that the thesis intended to address emerged and were identified. The next chapter outlines research methods and design choices made in the current study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter turns to a description and justification of methods and design employed for implementing the research project. A brief discussion of ‘research philosophy’ that outlines the author’s stance on the knowledge creation process is included as the first section in this chapter, since research methods and design have philosophical underpinnings (Creswell, 2009). The next section reviews strategies that informed data collection and analysis, before a brief commentary on the pilot study. The considerations that informed this case-based study employing ethnographic techniques, in addition to its design are then outlined. The section that follows presents issues surrounding gaining access, fieldwork, data collection techniques, and procedures. This is followed by one dedicated to data analysis methods and processes; the final section evaluates the research before discussing related ethical issues.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

Research philosophy is an integral part of research, knowledge creation, and knowing. Whilst scholars may assign myriad labels to this often implicit component of a research project, research ‘philosophy’ (Ritchie & Lewis 2003; Saunders et al., 2009), ‘paradigm’ (Corbetta, 2003; Guba & Lincoln 1994), ‘framework’ (Berg, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 2003), ‘worldviews’ (Creswell, 2009), ‘orientation’ (Bickman & Rog, 1998), ‘approaches’ or ‘assumptions’ (Patton, 2002) influence inputs and outputs of research to a large extent (Creswell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). Choices made by researchers in the development, reporting, interpretation, and the specification of the contribution of their research may be examined in light of three main labels: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Corbetta, 2003). Ontologically, researchers are confronted with the question of what the nature of reality is and how it dovetails into their research agenda or investigation. The epistemological question on the other hand borders on how we know about reality, what is/are the relationship(s) between the researcher and what can be known about reality. Methodology, which is driven by a corresponding ontological and epistemological philosophy (Guba & Lincoln 1994) concerns how we go about discovering knowledge (Killam, 2013).



Positivism, interpretivism and post-positivism (Corbetta, 2003) are the dominant overarching paradigms that underlie social science research, and each of these paradigms lends itself to a specific menu of ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and choices. Positivism subscribes to the notion that there is a single reality or truth out there that researchers can 'find'. Positivists believe the truth is apprehensible, and can be achieved through objective experimental means, guided by natural cause and effect laws, and plausible to generalisation without recourse to context (Saunders et al., 2009). The positivist researcher thus strives to conduct value-free research, wherein the researcher remains independent of the subject of research. It gathers quantitative data that can explain cause and effect, and can be subjected to quantitative and statistical analysis (Creswell, 2009). In spite of the association of positivist persuasions with quantitative studies generally, this philosophical stance has also been identified with qualitative approaches (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009).

In contrast, interpretivists subscribe to the stance that reality is socially constructed and can only be seen through many different lenses, we can therefore contemplate multiple realities (Corbetta, 2003). For this school of thought, the basic assumption is researchers construct knowledge or reality through context-specific meanings individuals attribute to the social world in time and space (Guba & Lincoln 1994). Another fundamental belief of this paradigm is that the social world, action, practices, experiences, interactions, and interpretations are far too complex to be understood from an objective realist angle. The interpretivist researcher is therefore a social constructivist who seeks subjective meanings of reality, that research subjects bring to bear on the understanding of their actions, inactions, motives, or intentions (Saunders et al., 2009). In the process of socially constructing reality in this fashion, the researcher becomes intrinsically part of the knowledge creation process and thus ceases to be neutral. Logically, methodologies that fall within the interpretivist paradigm are qualitative and amenable to 'how' and 'why' research questions, geared towards understanding and describing the many different realities in the social world (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative approaches further permit interaction between the researcher and the researched in a fashion that allows a vivid description of context.

Post-positivism paradigm somewhat combines viewpoints from the other two opposing perspectives. It shares ontological underpinnings with the positivist tradition and epistemological similarities with the interpretivist paradigm (Killman, 2013). Representing an early shift from positivism, post-positivism believes in the existence of reality and a single truth, but dismisses the tools that positivists recommend for uncovering it. At best,

researchers must draw on a combination of tools that offer the highest *probability* of knowing the truth. This may include complementing quantitative techniques with some qualitative approaches, falsifying alternative explanations, and subjecting findings or the truth to continuous revision, since they are actually ‘probabilistically true’ (Corbetta, 2003, p. 14). Unlike positivists, they subscribe to the difficulty in achieving researcher neutrality, but take deliberate steps to minimise such influences. This paradigm is responsive to contextual influences and *in situ* views of participants despite its tendency to weigh more towards quantitative approaches (Killam, 2013).

This thesis is embedded within the interpretivist view, which informed earlier choices and discussions bordering on research topic, questions, and theoretical framework outlined in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. This thesis therefore employs a social practice theory as analytical frame, and also a qualitative approach and methodology. It is important to note however that social practice theories like Bourdieu’s can also be used for quantitative studies (see Anheier et al., 1995; Lebaron, 2009). Nevertheless, quantitative analysis is inappropriate for the purposes of some studies, such as the one reported here (Hardy, 2014). The thesis now turns to a brief discussion of the epistemological and ontological justification of the choice of Bourdieu’s theory of practice out of the family of social practice theories outlined in Chapter 2 above. The reasons for a qualitative approach and methodology are also presented next.

#### **4.2.1 The choice of a Bourdieusian relational sociology**

A general aim of the thesis is to investigate how strategic networking is ‘done’ in the informal printing economy; a more specific objective is to uncover how the ‘doing’ can explain, and be explained by the practices at individual (micro), organisational (meso) and extraorganisational (macro) levels. An underlying ontological assumption in line with current SAP discourse (Golsorkhi et al., 2010; Seidl & Whittington, 2014) is that, SNP for instance, are best understood as a co-construction of individual actors or agents, the organisations to which they belong, as well as the larger macro institutions and society within which the actors, and their organisations are embedded. Put another way, the social world is best constituted by actors and their actions, through dialectic and inseparable relationships between agency and structure. Situated practice is therefore ‘recognised as a central locus of organising, and thus critical in producing consequential organisational outcomes’ (Orlikowski, 2010, p. 24). With this ontological orientation to constructing social reality

espoused here, the researcher's approach to researching practice, and in this case SNP, is first as a 'phenomenon' (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Orlikowski, 2010).

As a 'perspective' (Orlikowski, 2010), and in accordance with a relational ontology (Emirbayer, 1997), this thesis employs a social practice theory as the most salient tool for understanding the everyday social and *in situ* meanings of SNP. More importantly, social practice theories provide affordances for abstracting mundane micro-level strategy praxis and practices to higher-order historical, structural and societal practices, influences and underpinnings. They therefore offer a range of resources to turn an otherwise weak practice programme into a strong and more relevant one (Nicolini, 2013). Consequently, three questions arose during my reading of social practice theories prior to making a choice: Which of the social practice theories 1) Subscribe to the above assumptions, and therefore give ontological primacy to practices in the form of 'doings'? 2) Permit an analysis of both structure and agency? 3) And most importantly, enable the tracing of practices and their interconnections at multiple levels and social spaces, in ways that dissolve the divide between agency and structure.

Bourdieu's (1977; 1990) theory of practice fits these criteria better than its two closest candidates: Archer (1982; 1995) and Giddens (1979; 1984). Like Giddens's and Bourdieu's practice theories, Archerian theory subscribes to the influence of structure, agency and history in the constitution of social reality but dismisses Bourdieusian and Giddensian idea of 'mutual constitution' (Mutch, Delbridge & Ventresca, 2006, p. 614). Instead Archer espouses 'analytical dualism' (Herepath, 2014, p. 5), and argues for ontological and analytical separation of structure and agency on the basis that structure and agency are shaped or act at separate points in time. Structure predates agency, thus present-day agents may only structure future structures by their intended and unintended actions, through a 'morphogenetic-morphostatic' cycle (Archer, 1982).

An Archerian perspective with reference to its origins, development and ontological basis, lends itself to studies that explore temporal dimensions of social phenomena and processes, and how they relate to change or reproduction of structures or a given state (Herepath, 2014). Secondly and from an SAP research agenda viewpoint, it endorses the tallest ontology of the three lenses (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Compared to Bourdieusian and Giddensian theories, instances of micro-level strategy praxis and practices are conceptualised most remotely from existing meso and macro structures with which they may have a host of extant

connections (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Invariably Archer's (1995) social theory limits the author's ability to reify the dialectic between broader macro and meso structures, and local SNP that are made intelligible in socially and culturally-mediated dispositions (*habitus*), and related concepts: capital and fields discussed in Chapter 3.

Giddens's (1979, 1984) structuration theory is similar in a number respects to Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theory of practice (Nicolini, 2013). Like Bourdieu, Giddens is amongst the first generation practice theorists that place emphasis on agential actions, interaction, innovation and how these bring about continuities and discontinuities of social structures (Orlikowski, 2010). In their social praxeology approach to studying social practices, both theorists recognise constrained human agency and therefore eschew dualisms or antimonies such as micro or macro, objective or subjective, cognition or practice, mind or body (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow, 2009; Nicolini, 2013). Their theorisation gained traction by suggesting social practices are best understood through human activities that are ordered through time and space (Nicolini, 2013). These activities are neither purely deterministic nor purely voluntary but have generative capacity, embedded in structures at multiple levels, and made intelligible in mundane day-to-day exigencies of work (Whittington, 2010). So in strategic networking activities, micro-level activities or praxis may draw on, or link to meso-level organisational level strategising tools, heuristics or routines, that local actors or strategy practitioners have studied from the macro-level field of strategy, or better still shaped from macro institutions and society within which these localised activities happen (Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Whittington, 2006).

Of these two theories, however, the point of departure for Bourdieu's theory of practice, which holds sway for this thesis is its salient conceptualisation of practice. The concepts of *habitus*, capital, and field offer profound leverage for operationalising theory, in consonance with the phenomenon and setting studied here. From some perspectives, 'practice theory is to be understood as an ontological sensitivity and a set of epistemic preferences; that is, a way of theorising, instead of a corpus of universally valid normative statements' (Nicolini, 2013, p. 66). The thesis seeks to understand the practice of an inherently relational phenomenon (strategic networking), drawing on the experiences, interactions, and relationships amongst a social group (informal economy businesses), and with other individuals, groups and institutions with varied interests across myriad levels of socio-cultural, political and economic spaces.

Aptly, Bourdieu's theory of practice seems superior as a relational perspective to studying such social practices in this fashion (Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Özbilgin, Forson, & Slutskaia, 2014). Epistemologically, in socially constructing strategic networking activities, the concept of fields carves the pertinent structures and shows how actors are positioned within those structures. Capital aptly defines what is at stake and critical for individuals, groups and institutions in these networking relationships as per the exigencies of their field structures. The third of Bourdieu's triad, habitus, provide the machinery for making intelligible dispositions, practical sense, regularities, and order in networking strategies in ways that are sometimes bereft of intention or calculation (Gomez, 2010; Nicolini, 2013). It also unlike Giddens' theory facilitates analytical connection amongst micro, meso, and macro levels of practice and organisational phenomena (Nicolini, 2013).

Invariably Bourdieu's concepts offer the tools needed to sketch direct and indirect relationships amongst interests, intentions, actions (agency), and structures at multiple levels of analysis, in addition to the potential outcomes from SNP. Ultimately, Bourdieu's theory of practice provides ontological apparatus at the boundaries of horizontal (tall) and vertical (flat) linkages of interpretations of organizational phenomenon (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). So in much as the theory gives analytical primacy to connections amongst lower through higher levels of actors and influences (tall ontology), his concept of fields makes room for extending linkages to those of similar status or level (flat ontology). Bourdieu's theory further supports alternative approaches to constructing the concept of strategy, strategy-making, and strategy research in SAP scholarship that Grand et al. (2010) call for. As mentioned above, his social praxeology privileges a 'dwelling worldview' epistemology that accounts for the unconscious aspects of local strategising, which may complement and extend the more dominant 'building' mode (Chia & Rasche, 2010). Methodologically, by drawing of analytical linkages to actors and influences hierarchically and laterally, a multi-sited approach to data collection in the study of social practice is foreground, which may invariably enhance research validity (Nicolini, 2009).

### **4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH AND STRATEGY**

This research is interested in understanding contextual and structural meanings and influences, which characterise SNP in the informal economy, hence a preference for a solely qualitative approach akin to the interpretivist philosophy. Additionally, this thesis is sympathetic to the SAP paradigm discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. We recall that SAP-inspired

research studies the ‘doings’ of strategy and strategising, and thence involves a set of research projects that give analytical primacy to the day-to-day activities strategists and their agents accomplish *in situ*. Not surprising, qualitative methods have dominated these mostly contextualised approaches to knowing, they study how actors’ emotions, discourse, experiences, and choices influence outcomes, and the consequent implications for the actors and others within and without their organisations (see Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Given this backdrop, the choice of qualitative approach is in tune with the dominant philosophy of the SAP scholarly community.

Ethnographic case study, which is described as an appropriate approach for a Bourdieusian field analysis (Grenfell, 2014) is employed for this thesis. The way the ethnographic case approach was implemented is reported later in Section 3.4. Ethnography is historically a tool for anthropological studies aimed at appreciating first-hand, cultures and society and how their inhabitants experience and interpret them (Murchison, 2010; Walliman, 2006). Through an extended period of engagement with the researched, the ethnographer develops a better understanding of social phenomena in their natural setting, by means of the everyday manifestations in their conduct. It also offers a range of field research techniques and methods (Humphreys & Watson, 2009) that provide the flexibility required to navigate the complex patterns of social action, while it unfolds (Murchison, 2010; Saunders et al., 2009). The way this toolkit of techniques was used in the thesis is discussed in a later section in this chapter.

The type of techniques employed by the ethnographer amongst other factors is often considered a point of distinction between ‘anthropological ethnography’ and ‘organisational ethnography’ research designs (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanow, 2009, p.1315). Organisational ethnography ‘is the ethnographic study, and its dissemination, of organisations and their organising process’ (Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009, p. 4). For reasons such as gaining ‘formal’ access, operating procedures, multi-sited and multi-firm nature of management and organisations’ actors and actions, organisational ethnography may involve written documents, shadowing, and formal interviews alongside informal talk and interviews (Yanow et al. 2012). Invariably, organisational ethnographic-type studies such as this thesis, may be described as employing ethnographic data collection techniques rather than a fully-fledged ethnography (see also Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2002). Watson (2012) and Watson and Watson (2012) also draw attention to the notion of ‘everyday ethnographer’ as opposed to ‘organisational ethnographer’: researchers must consider themselves as everyday

‘participant observers’ in society because the organisations and phenomena we study, and which we co-create, unfold on a day-to-day basis in society, requiring us to extend our locus of inquiry beyond the immediate organisations and developments we often study.

This type of interpretive analytic strategy is suited for inquiring about how associated informal arrangements and practices of the informal economy as field, become manifest and sustained in the day-to-day social and economic interactions, as well as the strategising work of informal businesses (Holstein & Gubrin, 2005). Instructively, this research intends to gain insights into ‘how’ participants do things and ‘why’: the lens through which participants ‘see’ things, which invariably constructs their social reality. Consequently, unearthing subjective meanings and interpretations that participants ascribe to their activities and experiences (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) of strategic networking, as a socially-constructed phenomenon, necessitates an interpretive approach. More so, studying strategy as lived experience that brings the researcher closer to the implicit knowledge of strategy practitioners (Clarke, Kwon, & Wodak, 2012; Samra-Fredericks, 2003) requires ethnographic techniques (Rasche & Chia, 2009). Furthermore, after experimenting with a rapprochement methodology, Borch and Arthur (1995) concluded that an ethnographic approach is the best option for decoding and interpreting in theoretical terms, strategic network behaviour as a personal, interconnected and interdependent phenomenon.

Of the two main ethnographic approaches discussed above, this thesis adopts ‘organisational ethnography’, however the notion of ‘everyday ethnography’ was also incorporated for a number of reasons including the ontological and epistemological tenets of the thesis espoused earlier in this chapter, as well as the specificities of the research setting. The research investigates business in the informal economy that accounts for more than 90% of private business/economic activities in Ghana (Palmer, 2008), invariably they are a source of great socio-economic interest and influence in the Ghanaian society. Thus in addition to written documents, shadowing, formal interviews, informal talk and interviews, and participant observation during the period of fieldwork, the thesis includes observations from the ‘broader social organisation’ (Watson, 2012, p. 17) of which the informal economy and businesses are a part.

### **4.3.1 Interviews**

Research interviews are purposeful discussion, interactions or conversation between two or more people for reasons of gathering data relevant to achieving the aims of a particular

research project (Berg, 2001; Saunders et al., 2009). Interviews are critical tools for collecting information bordering on human activities and behaviours (Yin, 2014), and are indispensable in case-based studies (Gillham, 2000). Semi-structured interviews have less flexible formats compared to unstructured interviews, but are more flexible than structured ones (Walliman, 2006). The interviewer in semi-structured interviews will have some outline or list of broad themes to be covered, and thus may decide to include new questions, omit some questions, or present questions in a different order for the next interviewee (Corbetta, 2003; Saunders et al., 2003). Studies that subscribe to a constructivist paradigm and support researcher-researched contextual interaction (Corbetta, 2003), or those intended for exploring perceptions and lived experiences of local and relevant actors, are more likely to skew towards unstructured face-to-face interviews along a continuum from ‘purely’ structured to ‘extremely’ unstructured options. These types of interviews are popular in SAP scholarship. For instance, Vaara & Whittington’s (2012) review revealed that about 82% of SAP used unstructured or semi-structured interviews, which was either explicitly stated or implied in the discussion of methods.

This thesis uses semi-structured interviews to explore SNP, activities and experiences of informal business owner/managers and their employees. Semi-structured interviews was extended to their network partners and agents like suppliers, customers, as well as those outside the informal economy setting such as formal business clients, and regulatory agencies. Interviewing all these agents involved in the strategic networks of informal businesses in a semi-structured manner helped corroborate responses to specific questions from informal businesses, while providing some opportunities for gaining interviewee-specific insights around the same broad set of research questions.

### **4.3.2 Observation**

Similar to interviews some scholars liken observation to qualitative research (Berg 2001). It involves an attempt by the researcher to get deeply involved in the ‘lives’ and activities of the researched with the aim of fully appreciating the community, organisation or research setting of interest (Bryman, 2004; Corbetta, 2003). Observation technique is more suited for some kinds of research depending on either the nature of the topic, phenomenon under study, or targeted participants. For instance, it is more amenable to the study of phenomenon that we have little knowledge about, or those obscured from outsiders or from public view, and also



situations of wide differences in the understanding or views between insiders and outsiders (Corbetta, 2003).

Despite the prevalence of the informal economy phenomenon in Ghana, some aspects of activities of participants remain obscured to outsiders and the public, due largely to various types and degrees of informality (Hart, 1973). Also compared to firms in the formal economy, informal businesses and the informality phenomenon have attracted limited management scholarship; invariably management knowledge in this setting is in its early stages (Bruton et al., 2012). Observation invariably fits this research, granted it intends to study management practice in the informal economy. Observations are also particularly appropriate for research focussed on what people do (Saunders et al., 2003), which is a cardinal objective in this thesis. Beyond the focal practice of strategic networking, and in line with the research questions, other organisational or field practices and developments that might have any effect, influence or are resources (Nicolini, 2009) into SNP must be included in the analysis, in order to establish a logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1990). The observation technique espoused here is suited for establishing these largely non-verbal conducts that occur naturally (Corbetta, 2003).

Observation further allows researchers to appreciate how artefacts: tools, materials, and objects mediate practices, so they are better informed about how these interactions are integral to knowledge production on social practices (Kaplan, 2011), in consonance with Bourdieu's (1990) logic of practice. In some cases, for example in this thesis, observation is not used as the sole or main technique in the research project, instead to seek explanations that other techniques are unable to fully explicate. It is also adopted to clarify researcher's own assumptions, and to supplement participant responses. By combining techniques and describing them in this fashion the researcher provides 'thick description' (Geertz, 1993; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) of the context, and SNP of the informal businesses and their network partners.

Its numerous merits notwithstanding, observation techniques present some peculiar challenges and demerits that researchers need to look out for (Yin, 2014). Difficulty in gaining easy and uninterrupted access (Walliman, 2006), risk of 'going native' (Johnson et al., 2007), time-constraints (Gillham, 2000; Saunders et al., 2003), daunting task if the organisations or participants are not physically located in close proximity (Yin, 2014),

‘observer effect’ (Gillham, 2000) and lastly, ethical concerns (Bryman, 2004) are some examples.

Some guidelines are provided however, for addressing these challenges. These include, but not limited to, using close associates to negotiate access, keeping a fine balance between participation and observation in order for the researcher to benefit from the best of both ends (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Assuring confidentiality and anonymity, undertaking debriefing (Saunders et al., 2003); and employing minimal interaction and habituation strategies (Robson, 2002) may help reduce challenges with gaining access and ‘observer effects’. The way observation is deployed in this thesis, as well as steps taken to overcome these challenges, and to minimise the effects of the demerits of the observation technique are discussed in a later section in this chapter.

### **4.3.3 Shadowing**

Shadowing is a data collection technique that involves a researcher or researchers closely following the researched, who may be an individual, a member or representative of a group or an organisation across different activities and locations (McDonald, 2005). It may vary from ‘shadowing’ participant(s) for limited hours of work or activities, to full day shifts and activities that span offices, buildings, organisations and places. With increasing calls for management and organisations scholarship that is responsive to the complex temporal and spatial dynamics of management practices, scholars have responded by investigating what managers do in practice (Johnson, 2014; McDonald & Simpson, 2014) through the appropriation, and in some cases, adaption of anthropological devices such as shadowing (Czarniawska, 2012).

Shadowing studies have some advantages over other data collection techniques, and thus promise to enrich management and organisational research. It is able to construct more detailed accounts of practices including the emergent, mundane, trivial, otherwise forgotten, otherwise insignificant, and also those that participants may find difficult to describe in interviews for instance (McDonald, 2005; McDonald & Simpson, 2014). Second, opinions, actions and behaviours are observed and interrogated simultaneously so that the ideas generated are more ‘grounded’ in the roles and practices of the researched, and less in the conceptions of the researcher, or discrepancies in participant accounts. Shadowing is better suited for unravelling modern, often fragmented, and spatially dispersed set of organisational

practices, because of its advantage of researcher mobility relative to similar techniques like observations (Czarniawska, 2008, 2012; McDonald 2005).

Shadowing technique however present some challenges similar to those of participant observation discussed above arise; these challenges could be greater when compared to other techniques (Johnson, 2014; McDonald 2005). It is a good idea not to rely solely on shadowing, but supplement it with interviews, observations, telephone and postal surveys, and secondary data (Johnson, 2014). Instructively, most shadowing studies show a preference for this 'supplementation' strategy (McDonald 2005). This research therefore follow organisational theorists (Nicolini, 2009), organisational ethnographic studies (Ybema et al., 2009; Watson & Watson, 2012) and extant empirical SAP research (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2008; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008), and employed shadowing technique in combination with other methods. The ways shadowing technique is implemented in this thesis are discussed in Section 4.6.2.

#### **4.3.4 Documents**

Documents provide secondary sources of data that either complement primary data or are used as the main source of data for a research project (Saunders et al., 2009; Walliman, 2006). A wide range of personal, commercial, private or public organisational documentary data exist. These include letters, photographs, diaries, memos, policy statements, regulations, guidelines, minutes of meetings, annual reports, press releases, media reports, public records, prior research studies, most of which are available as webpages on the internet (Yin 2014; Walliman, 2006). These sources of information are used primarily to substantiate other sources of information, evidence or data, and to provide a historical account, or may act as artefacts, especially in ethnographic studies (Murchison, 2010; Patton, 2002). Another value in this data collection technique is the flexibility it affords the researcher, as the researcher may collect this kind of data before, during and after field entry. Additionally documentary data may proceed in the absence of participants, thereby overcoming one of the hurdles to data collection.

Despite the potential of large volumes of invaluable data via internet searches, documentary data are subjects of controversy as they may lack accuracy, credibility, and objectivity because of either primary purpose biases or context sensitivity, and thus must not be used without caution. Consequently, inference drawn from documentary data should be treated as clues and not pure truths, their representativeness and consistency with other sources must be

established before definitive analysis and conclusions are drawn from them (Walliman, 2006; Yin 2014). A corollary precautionary measure is to focus the search given the sheer volume of potential documentary information that is available about any given topic. However, some important ‘controlled’ or ‘archived’ documentary data may not be readily available, for this reason, the researcher must negotiate access at an early stage of fieldwork. This thesis like other SAP ethnographic studies (Kaplan 2008, 2012) relied partly on documentary data, its implementation is given further attention in a later chapter.

#### **4.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

A case study employing ethnographic data collection techniques was adopted for the thesis in cognisance with the study of a contemporary phenomenon as a situated real-life practice (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009; Yin, 2014) and the tenets of Bourdieusian field analysis (Grenfell 2014). The case study approach is often used to describe, develop, extend or test a theory, and suited for answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions involving activities, events, individuals, groups, institutions or settings (Berg, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Gillham, 2000). It is extensively employed in management research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), and has gained popularity in strategic management research generally (Gibbert Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008), as well as SAP scholarship in particular (Ambrosini et al., 2007; Jarzabskowski, 2008; Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd, & Bourque, 2010). The case approach is thus appropriate for studying SNP, which is a contemporary organisation and management phenomenon involving individuals, groups and institutions in an informal setting, and from an SAP perspective.

The case study approach offers a wide range of designs that can be grouped into one of two broad classifications: single or multiple case designs. The choice of design is a function of the objectives and purposes of the research, as well as the nature of the knowledge claims one aims to make from the research findings (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014). The pervasiveness and utility in the case study approach notwithstanding, a number of pitfalls bordering on validity and reliability may arise. Others prefer to assign qualitative-friendly conceptualisation like credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Bryman 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These pitfalls may cast doubts on the knowledge claims that can be made from research employing the approach (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013; Yin, 2014). Subsequently, some quality enhancement evaluation criteria and prescriptions aimed at navigating these pitfalls are offered by scholars (Gibbert et al., 2008; Patton, 2002). The

reasons for the case design adopted here, and the manner in which evaluation and choices were made in order to reduce the limitations posed by the case study approach is discussed in the subsequent steps of the research implementation.

#### **4.4.1 Research setting: Accra New Town, printing hub of Ghana**

For reasons of research validity and reliability which is elaborated in later sections, a vivid description of the context is given here, as an empirical background to how practical context-specific knowledge somewhat limited in its statistical generalisation, but which may have theoretical implications beyond the immediate context, was generated (Yin, 2014). This background may provide salient information required to subject the knowledge created here to verification, given contextual boundaries and descriptors provided.

##### ***The informal economy in Ghana***

The informal economy provides a fruitful setting for this research aimed at studying strategy practice in a non-traditional context. For the purposes of this study, the informal economy is limited to self-owned informal businesses that are not properly organised, registered, licensed, recorded or enumerated, and also not fully complying with tax, and labour and employment laws. Informal businesses are typically categorised as micro-businesses and defined as individual-owned with up to ten paid permanent employees (Charmes, 1999; Sethuraman, 1976). In some countries however, businesses employing more than 10 employees may be classified as informal based on a mix of self-ownership, internal organisation, and external compliance definition (Leidholm, 2002). This study therefore intends to classify informal businesses based on myriad informality characteristics (e.g. Holt & Littlewood, 2014; Pisani & Richardson, 2012). Scale of operation is a popular size criterion in informal business studies (Gërkhani, 2004) but this definition is somewhat limited, the reason additional criteria were included in the study. The conceptualisation in Figure 2.1 also helps capture the heterogeneity of informal businesses.

The informal economy in Ghana (map of Ghana is provided in Figure 4.1) was chosen as the overarching field for this study for a number of reasons. The author originates, works and reside permanently in Ghana, invariably this familiarity eased access to the field. More importantly, Ghana bears witness to a long history of informal businesses and economy, and is also representative of theories and literature on the informal economy (Aryeety, 1996; Debrah, 2007; Overa, 2007; Palmer, 2007). The first reported study of informal economy

activity in Ghana was undertaken by an anthropologist (Hart, 1973) who studied unemployment and income opportunities in urban areas in Accra. Hart (1973) found that the informal economy provided employment opportunities to a vast majority of urban dwellers especially migrants from the rural areas.



**Figure 4.1 Map of Ghana**

The range of activities was also wide and vast including small operations in distribution, construction, transport, and tertiary activities.

Another observation from Hart's (1973) study was that the scale of operations varies from marginal to relatively larger businesses. However, the study portrayed the sector as comprising subsistence activities, which unlike the formal economy, were unable to on their own, generate growth in productivity and income for participants. By the late 1980s, Ghana's informal economy was contributing 31.4% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing about 60% of the working population (Charmes, 2007; ILO, 1997). The size of the informal

economy however shot up from the mid-1980s to 1990s as a result of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and Economic Recovery Programmes (ERP) (Jackson, 2012; Obeng-Odoom, 2009, 2011). This led to the privatisation of state-owned enterprises with its concomitant reduction in formal public sector employment. With the permanent loss of jobs and redeployment, and severance packages that were not attractive enough, a number of public servants had turned to jobs in the informal sector especially in the late 1980s (Obeng-Odoom, 2009). Between 1997 and 1999, the informal economy accounted for about 76% to 78% of total employment (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 1997; Charmes, 2004). Given this backdrop, the significance of the informal economy to Ghana cannot be overemphasised. Currently more than 80% of Ghanaians work in the informal economy contributing about 40% to GDP (World Bank, 2009; Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

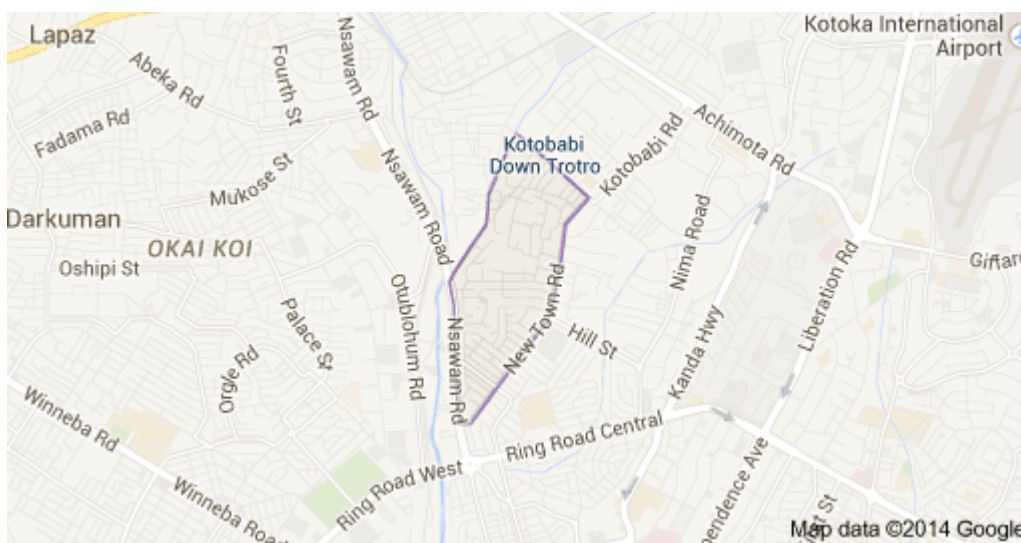
The current figures have been attributed to a number of global economic trends such as pressures for trade openness and liberalisation that results in heightened competition from foreign suppliers, thus leading to an increase in informality, as some domestic businesses are unable to compete in the formal sector (Breman & Das, 2000; Demisse, 2007; de Oliveira & Roberts, 1994; Endo & Goto, 2014; Kar & Marjit, 2008). Secondly, domestic regulatory factors such as the time and monetary costs of formalization (registration and licensing procedures) have been mentioned as a contributing factor (Verick, 2006; World Bank, 2009). These observations reflect the contemporary nature of Ghana's informal economy, beyond earlier 'survival' theorisation of the sector. Subsequent developments point to other informal economy theory explanations (see Section 2.6.2). Additionally, a bureaucratic business environment, complicated registration and tax system, as well as a willingness of formal private sector firms to wholly or partly sub-contract work to informal businesses, have also accounted for the setting up of informal businesses in Ghana (Obeng-Odoom, 2011). With some exceptions, levels of education of participants in Ghana's informal economy are low (Palmer, 2007, 2009; Adom & Williams, 2012.)

There is also a rural-urban divide in Ghana's informal economy (Adu-Amankwah, 1999; Osei-Boateng & Ampratum, 2011); rural businesses are primarily agricultural and natural resources-driven, including some basic forms of agro-processing. Rural businesses such as farming, carpentry, wood processing, fishing, local alcoholic beverage brewing and distilling, wood carving and so on are the most popular forms of rural informal economy activities. Urban businesses tend to be relatively larger, more sophisticated and less informal compared to their rural counterparts. However, activities vary from participants and businesses with

limited access to land, labour, capital, or formal training such as shoe-shiners, street hawkers, food vendors, refuse collectors, equipment repairers, to small and medium-scale service, construction, retailing, hospitality, manufacturing businesses that often provide various kinds of services, products and workforce to formal firms (Aryeetey & Fosu, 2003; Aryeetey & Gockel, 1991). A number of forward, backward, technology, consumer, and credit linkages have also been reported to exist between formal firms and informal businesses (United Nations, 1996). For instance, complementary linkages have been observed between the formal and informal sectors of the financial markets where informal sector money lenders act as intermediaries for formal sector institutions (Aryeetey, 1992).

### ***Brief overview of Accra New Town***

Accra New Town was chosen as the research location because it is the hub of the printing industry in Ghana; it invariably provided the social space for the most significant players in the field and thus suitable for a Bourdieusian field analysis (Hardy, 2014). The printing industry is very competitive, with a lot of informal business participation and characterised by wide range of specialised activities such as branding, engraving, embossing, printing, concept creation and design, plate and paper cutting, colour separation and preservation, production, collation, book printing, digital printing amongst others, which engenders strategic networks. These informal businesses are small in size and mostly located in the hub as an agglomeration. Typically, they measure about the size of a standard shipping container and have permanent employee numbers of three to five (see also Siqueira & Bruton, 2010).



**Figure 4.2 Accra New Town printing hub shown with purple boundaries on the map**



Accra New Town (Figure 4.2), which is traditionally a residential area, has emerged into a vibrant industrial area where informal commercial and economic activities co-exist with domestic and residential activities. Almost every structure in the location, from the smallest shipping container to the largest building, houses a printing business with total numbers in the hundreds. Related and supporting businesses such as training schools, input material suppliers, and mechanics that provide equipment maintenance services are also located in the hub. Each banner in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 depict a business located in the immediate space of the advertisement.



**Figure 4.3 Printing and related businesses housed in small spaces in the printing hub at Accra Newtown (Picture A)** (Source: Author)

Historically (in the late 1970s), Accra New Town was called Lagos Town (Lagos is the capital of Nigeria) because it was inhabited by Nigerians who through chain migration owned many plots of land and built houses for residential purposes, and stores, which they used as trading outlets, as most of them were traders. They mostly spoke Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo languages and were largely not highly-educated, and thus traded in any and everything amongst themselves. Around 1970 the then prime minister of Ghana, Dr. Busia decreed that

all aliens who were not complying with immigration laws (without formal residence permit) must leave the country to open up employment opportunities for Ghanaians. The residents of Lagos Town therefore sold their properties to their Ghanaian friends and associates, after which the name was changed to Accra New Town. Subsequently, inhabitants of the now cosmopolitan suburb also opened up trading shops and converted residential structures into shops, in order to engage in retailing business of all kinds.



**Figure 4.4** Printing and related businesses housed in small spaces in the printing hub at Accra Newtown (Picture B) (Source: Author)

With the emergence of the cyber/computer age, the descendants of early residents of Accra New Town converted most of the shops into internet/cyber cafes and related businesses that encouraged and nurtured apprenticeship and ‘learning-on-the job’ for the youth in the community. These self-enterprise culture and environment engendered an ICT, graphic design and printing-type businesses that now make up the mostly informal printing hub we witness today in Accra New Town.

#### 4.4.2 Case design and selection

‘Cases’ which are the objects of analysis in this study included informal businesses operating in the informal printing economy. An embedded case design was employed (Yin, 2003), since this research was not inclined to achieving generalisation (Yin, 2014), about ‘how things work in the organisations and the associated social organisation which the ethnography has studied’ (Watson, 2012, p. 19). An embedded design draws closer attention to an analysis of how sub-units (informal printing businesses in Table 4.1) within a case individually and collectively shape the understanding of the larger object of analysis, in ways that are more representative of the case (Yin, 2014; Patton, 2002).

Purposeful sampling techniques (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Cobin, 1990) guided the selection of informal businesses for the study since it suits the study best and also because it has been used by previous SAP scholarship (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2003; Mantere, 2008; Regnér, 2003; Vaara, 2004). An assumption of purposeful sampling is that, some cases are more suitable for the purposes of the research than others. Following this assumption, a purposeful sampling targeted at the most productive business participants, was employed so as to maximise the value of information obtained, as well as inferences that can be drawn from them (Johnson et al., 2007). Consequently the printing industry, a sector that is witness to vertical and horizontal strategic networks by informal businesses was selected (cf. Patton, 2002; Stake, 2013). Earlier SAP studies (e.g. Hendry et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Moisander & Stenfors, 2009; Regnér, 2003) have likewise selected cases based on their propensity to illuminate the phenomenon, thus allowing for a more comprehensive study and understanding of strategy practice.

All cases were selected from the printing industry with the intent of minimising differences across industries (Yin, 2014). Individual businesses were selected based on length of operation (level of experience) in the informal printing sector, a criterion which is best suited for the research questions and theoretical framework. The thesis more or less aims to understand the influence of history, socio-cultural embeddedness, learning and knowledge amongst agents (agents’ trajectory with field structures) and their relation to agency, capital, habitus, dispositions, and field-specific SNP. Three (3) distinctive cases of businesses were selected. These comprised 1-5 years (minimal); 6-10 years (moderate) and more than 10 years (extensive). Within each of these three (3) cases of minimal, moderate and extensive cases based on levels of experience, two (2) cases were picked (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1 Selected cases of informal printing businesses**

<b>Business name</b>	<b>Business legal status</b>	<b>Age of Business</b>	<b>Informal printing sector experience</b>	<b>Permanent staff size</b>	<b>Area of specialisation</b>	<b>Type of compliance informality</b>
SGC	Company	16 years	Extensive	5	Branding	Low tax compliance level; moderate labour regulations compliance level
MCS	Sole proprietorship	16 years	Extensive	3	Book printing	Low tax compliance level, minimal labour regulations compliance levels; business license renewal non-complaint
CAS	Sole proprietorship	10 years	Moderate	3	Branding	Low tax compliance level; labour regulations non-compliant; business license renewal non-complaint
TVC	Company	6 years	Moderate	5	Book printing	Moderate tax compliance level; moderate labour regulations non-compliance levels
SSC	Company	2 years	Minimal	12	Branding/Book printing	Moderate tax compliance level
FPS	Sole proprietorship	2 years	Minimal	9	Branding	Moderate tax compliance level; moderate labour regulations compliance level; business license renewal non-complaint

Note: All business names are pseudonyms

Each of the two businesses was selected to reflect some differing informality characteristics including level of formal education and informal sector experience of agents, in addition to the type of external non-compliance (see also Table 4.6). Borch and Arthur (1995) found in a case study of strategic networks of small businesses that older and self-made managers of a family-owned business valued protestant ethic as symbolic, and a criterion for selection of network partners, unlike younger MBA-educated managers in the other firms. As far as the informal businesses in the study are concerned, tax non-compliance bordered on their failure to file returns and pay taxes such as personal income tax, corporate tax, employee PAYE contributions, value-added tax, capital gains tax. Absence of legal employment contracts, failure to pay minimum wages and social security contributions, were the sources of employment and labour regulation compliance informality. While all participant informal

businesses are legally registered with the Registrar General's Department, most fail to meet the annual licence renewal requirement. 'Branding' in Table 4.1 may involve a range of products and services such as graphic design, advertising materials, laser printing and engraving. Similarly, book printing includes books, booklets, files, magazines, and periodicals.

Within each embedded case of an informal business, and for the purposes of interviews, three participants including the owner/manager and two other employees who were actively involved and knowledgeable about the business's SNP were included as interviewees (Table 4.6). As hinted above, the use of this kind of embedded design is not intended to achieve a replication or comparative logic, instead, to capture a more vivid description and understanding of the dynamics of the context, in a manner that is comprehensible and reflective of any theory generated in relation to it (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991). In all, a total of 18 interviews (three each at six participant informal printing businesses) were anticipated, but 15 actually participated. This figure excludes those of their network partners sampled as part of the field analysis, and outlined in later sections of this chapter.

#### **4.5 PILOT STUDY**

To enhance the quality of the study, in addition to the fact that strategic management research in the informal economy is limited, a pilot study was conducted as part of prior preparation for data collection. This was aimed at testing and refining the content, methods and procedures applied in the larger research project. The pilot case was selected based largely on ease of access and the potentially rich amount of data that it promised (Yin, 2014). Access to the informal business with more than 15 years of experience in the informal printing industry was made easy by the author's personal contact, who happened to be his former student in the university. This facilitator at the time was an employee/partner in the business. This was the result of an email sent by the researcher to a couple of his contacts detailing research purpose, and his intention to get them facilitate access by suggesting candidate cases that meet a set criteria, as well as endorsing the him as a non-threatening academic, given the nature of the setting.

The printing industry, where the pilot study took place turned out to be the sector selected for the larger study. First, it characterised an informal economy setting with high levels of informal business participation, second it provided some initial interesting insights that stimulated interest and urge for more extensive and intensive investigations. And last but not

least, the researcher established some contacts and relationships for this larger research. The other value of the pilot study includes minor revisions that enhanced the process in the larger study as follows:

- Reworded some interview questions in the protocol making them clearer and unambiguous.
- Appreciated ‘field business language’ that interviewees understand and use.
- Revised inconsistent, inappropriate, misleading and redundant interview questions in the protocol.
- Reworked the ordering of interview questions in the protocol.
- Got a sense of the duration of the interview process which guided access negotiation.
- Made adjustments to the field guide (see Appendix A)
- Got information on the most efficient and effective data collection method and procedure.
- Brought some clarity to bear on likely analytical themes and categories for the larger project.
- Got a general sense of the likely process and success of the larger research project.

## **4.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

Before reporting on the actual fieldwork and data collection techniques, a brief account of the way access to research participants and other informants was negotiated and achieved is first provided, as this step was an important and integral part of the data collection process.

### **4.6.1 Gaining access to informal participants and other research informants**

Granted the nature of the phenomenon being studied often poses potential access problems, a number of complementary strategies were employed to identify and recruit businesses classified as ‘informal’. This step was critical to data collection for the research, even though all informal business participants were located in a known and accessible informal cluster in Accra Newtown. In light of the pilot study, and with support from the above mentioned facilitator-student, the author was able to strike acquaintances before field entry. The process was further enhanced by his chancing upon yet another past student of his during early stages of field entry, and who co-owned/managed an informal printing business himself. Obviously, snowballing became the main vehicle to access, in that the researcher got endorsed to

participants, who were conversant with the purpose of the fieldwork. Even though participants did not feel too threatened by the research and potential access to their practices, these developments helped in generating interest and the support for data collection. Snowballing techniques are typical to accessing traditionally 'hidden' populations (Heckathorn, 2002).

The next hurdle was how to know, access, and record the 'informality' of the businesses, especially those that bordered on non-compliance. Those to do with organisational infrastructure in Figure 2.1 were possible through mere observations and probing. Aside from the 'informal cluster' tag identified with their physical location, the participating businesses in the research have been designated informal by some state agencies. For instance, the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), the agency responsible for regulating employees' social security contributions in collaboration with the World Bank has set up 'SSNIT Informal Sector Fund' offices in zoned locations targeted at informal businesses.

Additionally, the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), the agency in charge of tax collection has dedicated offices for such businesses located in the cluster considered to be operating in the informal sector. Ultimately, the snowballing technique meant the researcher could ask to be introduced to an informal businesses by other informal businesses who knew in some reasonable detail the dealings and operations of the other, since they seem to work closely together in most cases. Therefore background information on the owner/manager, number of years of operation in the informal printing sector, and his area of specialisation, became useful inputs into the selection of cases.

Being an 'unthreatening self', considered a 'non-interested' academic introduced by a 'trusted colleague' helped a lot in this direction. Informally, rather than during the audio-recorded interview owner/managers were asked about how for instance, they were managing to pay their employees' wages given some challenges alluded to early on. Cues were often picked from these chats, which were later corroborated with the employees themselves. On many occasions they confirmed the more general 'informality' issues previously mentioned to me by my student contacts who confided in me. Similar strategies were employed to know about other compliance issues, such as taxes, however with due regard to conditions set out in the Human Ethics approval document (Appendix B). It was clearly stated on the information sheet handed to participants that the focus of the study and the final report therein, is not about their non-compliance behaviours and practices. This potential threat notwithstanding,



participants were comfortable talking about their ‘inability’ to comply with some formal regulatory requirements because some believe their case is not an isolated one, also the repercussions of non-compliance were not too serious.

The greatest access challenges were thus not with the informal businesses, or their formal firm partners in the same printing industry. Instead, it was with their formal firm client partners. It was intended to get the views and experiences of these two groups of formal firm informants in respect of their dealings and networking practices with participant informal businesses for reasons mentioned above. However, some level of unwillingness was expressed, especially by formal firm clients. Other strategies were then used to obtain access to more businesses in this category of informants (formal firm clients). In this case, the participant informal businesses were not relied upon to introduce them, however, a condition was the formal firm informants should have, or have had similar informal businesses in the printing sector in their networks.

#### **4.6.2 Data collection techniques**

Data collection techniques (reviewed in Section 4.3) consisted of a mix of field methods and desk research of secondary data sources. Ethnographic-type data collection was done over a period of approximately five (5) months between mid-May 2014 and mid-October 2014. As noted above, fieldwork was predominantly based in Accra New Town where the participant informal businesses were located. Additionally, a couple of visits were made to the offices of formal firm partners, and regulatory agencies: GRA in charge of tax, SSNIT for employee social security, Registrar General’s Department (RGD), concerned with business registration and licensing and Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), the local authority for the conduct of interviews. Some of these partners and agencies were located outside Accra New Town but within Accra, the capital city of Ghana.



**Table 4.2 Fieldwork timelines**

<b>Field event</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description of activity</b>
Week 1	Formal field access negotiated	Formally contacted owner/manager of participant informal businesses introduced myself and completed access negotiation
	Paperwork was done	Discussed the information and consent forms (see Appendices E, F,G and H), and also when data collection was to commence
	Started data collection	Commenced data collection of observations, informal meetings, conversations related to strategic networking and other management practices on-site
	Agreed on modalities for semi-structured interviews	Agreed on the day, time and how the formal semi-structured interviews should be conducted the following week
	Observations and probing	Inquired further about issues and observations arising from data collection
Week 2	Formal interviews done	Conducted and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with the owner/manager and two other employees who are conversant with the business's SNP, and identified through snowballing by owner/manager
	Access to network partners discussed	Discussed and agreed access to selected network partners for interviews. The initial selection and sample size was based on a number of emerging factors, but most significantly, their contribution to illuminating data collected on the strategic networking practices. However ease of access became an equally important criterion because of access challenges that emerged in some cases
	Observations and probing	Inquired further about issues and observations arising from data collection
	Shadowing	Observed through shadowing meetings and interactions with some network partners
Week 3	Interview with partners commenced	Conducted and audio-recorded interviews with selected network partners including formal client partners, informal partners in the printing industry, as well as informal business partners
	Observations and probing	Any issues and observations arising from interactions with network partners probed
Week 4	Interview with partners completed	All scheduled and emergent interviews with network partners completed
	Final field observations and probing	All emerging observations arising from collected data and initial analytical concerns cross checked with informants
	Debriefing and follow-up contact discussed	A brief field exit discussion with participants in informal businesses about their impressions and any reservations that might have arisen over the course of the fieldwork and to indicate a follow-up as needed

The process of data collection was more or less concurrent and included half to full day visits to the premises of participant informal businesses. Approximately three (3) to four (4) overlapping weeks was spent with each of the six (6) participant informal businesses. Table 4.2 illustrates an account of field entry and data collection process for each participant informal business. In some cases however, the process took a little less than four (4) weeks depending on the availability of participants and information. The application of the various data collection techniques (Table 4.3) is discussed next.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

Formal interviews which are used in SAP research (Hendry, 2010), was conducted primarily with owner/managers, as well as employees who act as contacts or deal with network partners of the informal business in English language (English is the official language in Ghana, thus most Ghanaians with at least basic education could speak simple English, sometimes interspersed with pidgin English). Since the research adopted ethnographic data collection techniques, a comprehensive field guide (Appendix A) was first developed, from which an interview protocol/questions (Appendix C) was designed to address more specific questions that were best elicited by interviews. The interview protocol/questions also solicited business profile and biographical background information on participants, required for a Bourdieusian analysis.

The face-to-face interviews were semi-structured and audio-recorded with the permission of participants. First, interview questions were posed in an open-ended fashion with the intention of eliciting the views of informants on strategic networking experiences and practices in a story-telling fashion (e.g. Mantere, 2008; Vaara et al., 2010). Interviewees were asked to recall and reflect on past and current strategic network partners, networking practices and experiences. After this initial interaction, interviews took a more focused approach based on the interview protocol prepared in line with the research questions of the study. The same strategy was adopted for their formal and informal business partners, but for these groups, the interest was in their experiences with participant informal businesses, and what the relationships entailed, as illustrated in the interview protocol/questions (Appendix D).

A similar approach was employed for regulatory bodies who were interviewed about what the policies, regulations and requirements are, and what their experiences have been with informal businesses, as well as related issues that border on implementation and enforcement

(see Appendix D). The decision to include these bodies: GRA, SSNIT, RGD, and AMA was both theoretical and empirical, as these constituted part of the field structures within which participant informal businesses were active at the time of this research (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).

**Table 4.3 Data collection techniques employed in the study**

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Semi-structured interviews	Participant informal businesses	SGC: 1 owner /manager; 2 employees	3	15	20 minutes to 1hour 25minutes with each interviewee
		FPS: 1 owner/manager; 1 employee	2		
		CAS: 1 owner/manager; 1 employee	2		
		MCS: 1 owner/manager; 1 employee	2		
		SSC: 1 owner/manager; 2 employees	3		
		TVC: 1 owner/manager; 2 employees	3		
	Partner businesses	Formal business clients	4	16	20 to 46 minutes with each interviewee
		Formal business partners in printing industry	6		
		Informal business partners (some are amongst the six (6) informal business participants)	6		
	State regulatory agencies	Tax: 1; Business registration and licencing: 1; Employee social security: 1; Local authority: 1	4	4	15 to 30 minutes with each interviewee
Total number of semi-structured interviews				35	
Shadowing	Meetings and interactions with partners at partners' premises	Informal business partners: 5 occasions; formal business partner in printing industry: 2 occasions	7	7	30 minutes to 1 hour on each occasion
Observation	Various activities, processes, actions, practices, equipment, objects, documents, physical	Field notes on informal chats and probes with participants and partners; impressions written in research journal;	Not Applicable (N/A)	N/A	3 to 4 weeks at each participant informal business location

	arrangements, wall hangings etc. that depict SNP and the logic of practice of the field	corroborated participant accounts with partners and recorded as field notes			
Documents	Secondary data/information about informal businesses, informal economy, regulatory agencies, SNP, the Accra New Town cluster	Website content/pages of regulators; press releases and news items about informal business regulation and practices, academic literature on informal economy/sector	N/A	N/A	Before field entry till final report

In all 35 interviews were conducted. Accounts of strategy practice of this kind, some of which may be retrospective have been employed in previous SAP research (e.g. Jarratt & Stiles, 2010; Regnér, 2003; Sillince & Mueller, 2007). However, Chia and Rasche (2010) warn researchers about the inability of retrospective sensemaking offered by actors to fully capture the relationally, agency, action, interaction, and habituation which are the real essence of strategy as social practice. This caveat notwithstanding, they advise that richer accounts are possible, if researchers carefully chose non-academic vocabulary/jargon, and also commit to a sympathetic appreciation of internal logic that manifests as patterned and consistent practical coping *in situ*. The pilot study (Section 4.5) aided the researcher in appreciating some of the indigenous business language of participants. Additionally, in light of this possible limitation, interviews were not the sole data collection tool used here as explained in Section 4.3.1. This allowed for the identification of patterns and consistency across the data, and thus a field-wide logic of SNP. Following Ambrosini et al. (2007) and Whittle and Mueller (2010), the appropriateness and correctness of participant actions, decisions or practices was not a concern, and this was included in a preamble that preceded interviews with each participant.

### *Shadowing*

Shadowing opportunities arose when a participant deems it appropriate to visit, meet or interact with a partner. Data collected in the process was included in the field notes as observations and informal interviews and talk. Most of the shadowing involved following either the owner/manager or employee to partners located in Accra New Town on a few occasions. Outside Accra New Town, the only opportunities arose when interviews with

some formal partners in the printing industry were scheduled to coincide with a meeting with the participant informal business. This technique made it possible to collect and record data as field notes on the nature of the discourse and transactions, the use of 'indigenous' business language, the nature of the exchanges, and impressions that partners have about their relationship amongst other things.

However, a lot of interactions, deals, business, and agreements were done on mobile phone, thus reducing the need for physical presence with partners'. Despite the relatively limited data collected via shadowing, the technique provided data on partners' businesses practices, and how these dovetailed into the broader strategic networking and logic of practice of the field. Interviews with participant informal businesses as well as observations at their premises alone may not reveal this kind of data. Problems with access, concerns about ethics, and having to commute between locations over long distances (Section 4.3.3) were not encountered since the researchers's identity and intentions were known to partners, and also because most of the shadowing was done within the cluster which minimised distances that had to be travelled.

### *Observation*

Observations were critical aspect of the data collection process, and were in line with the ethnographic data collection techniques that require the researcher is immersed in the daily activities and practices of participants (Yin, 2014). It also afforded the opportunity to collect a wide range of context-specific information that is fundamental to qualitative research of the type undertaken here. Half to full working days was spent on the premises of a participant informal business doing naturalistic observation in order to integrate interview data with that of daily activities and actual behaviours of participants (Bryman, 2012). Adopting Karatas-Ozkan (2011), observations were made about space, objects, actors, acts, activities, event, time, goals, and feelings (Table 4.3). Furthermore, the role that particular actors or agents such as employees played in the relationships, practices and interactions was of particular interest and were probed. This data collection technique was pivotal to the entire data collection process partly because it provided the platform for creating rapport and some level of trust amongst participants thereby facilitating the negotiation of the others.

Some of the ways of overcoming challenges in observations discussed in Section 4.3.2 guided this aspect of data collection. The researcher's identity and role was made clear, as one who only observed in a spectator fashion but did not take active part in the activities (Gill

& Johnson, 1997). This strategy somewhat dealt with the issues of ethics and the possibility of 'going native'. Confidentiality and anonymity was also promised which further facilitated access and allayed ethical red flags (Bryman, 2004), this step ultimately contributed to reducing 'observer effects' (Gillham, 2000). 'Observer effects' also did not take long to wear away as participants soon got used to the researcher being around.

### *Documents*

The main sources of documentary data used in the analysis are characteristically not those generated by the informal businesses. Instead official webpages of regulatory bodies identified above, as well as literature, information and discourse amongst regulators, scholars, and the larger society on the operations of informal economy and businesses (Table 4.2). These documentary data were collected to provide some background with which to make sense of observed practices and other evidence (Gillham, 2000). It was meant to provide some history of the operations and regulation of informal businesses in Ghana as well as the Accra New Town hub in particular. Documentary data was not available from participant informal businesses, documents sighted such as wall hangings, blank receipt books and invoices were more or less treated as artefacts. The researcher did not encounter any access problems with the other sources of documentary data identified above, as they were readily available on the internet. Invariably the data from these sources were collected continually up to the point of writing the research report.

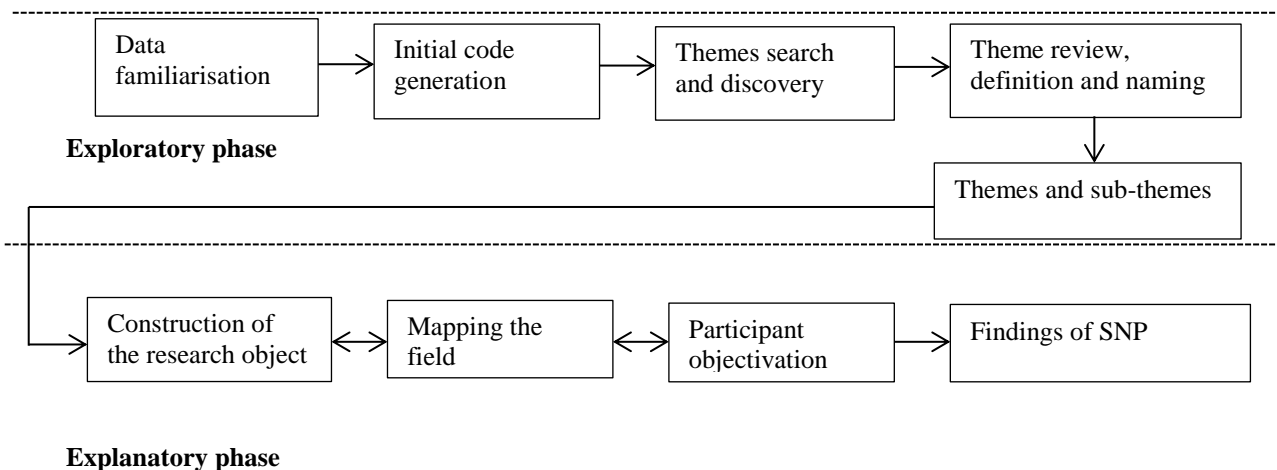
## **4.7 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD AND PROCESS**

Data analysis comprises the process of examining, categorising, illustrating and evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning. Inductive qualitative techniques informed analysis of data in this research; however not in the pure grounded theory sense as in Glasser and Strauss (1967). It was inductive because the research setting is somewhat under-explored, hence provision was made for the emergence of new insights. However, in a deductive sense, existing theoretical ideas informed the research questions and provided background and focus for the study. According to Watson (2011, 2012), we can make ethnography type research grounded without necessarily turning to grounded theory, and that theory is both a resource that guides fieldwork and an output of the thinking behind the interaction between the theoretical ingredients and field experiences. The analysis thus involved an 'abductive reasoning' style where the researcher moved between evidence and theory through a

continual engagement and re-engagement in light of evidence from the case (e.g. Mantere, 2008; Jorgensen & Messner, 2010).

Bourdieu's theory of practice (1990) and the related concepts of habitus, capital and field offer the theoretical framework (Chapter 3) used for data analysis. However, it is important to note that the framework was neither necessarily employed to construct a pre-existing coding scheme (Watson, 2013) nor test and rebuild theory, which is a tenet of the extended case method (Wadham & Warren, 2014). Instead, these concepts were deployed as sensitising frame for empirical instances of SNP in the informal printing economy (Blumer, 1954). They thus guided data collection, as well as analysis and interpretation after initial discovery of themes. Subsequently, the risk of imposing and dominating the analysis with a priori theoretical framework, which may limit the breadth and depth of themes, is minimised (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data analysis proceeded in two major phases: a first 'exploratory analysis' phase and a second 'explanatory analysis' phase, using exploratory and explanatory research analogy (Figure 4.5). The 'exploratory analysis' phase was intended to lay the groundwork that should lead to future analysis ('explanatory analysis') phase aimed at explaining what is observed, by way of an existing or preferred theory. The 'explanatory analysis' phase thus connects and gives meaning to influences, interactions, relationships observed in the 'exploratory analysis' phase so a better explanation of the 'why' and 'what is going on here' questions may be achieved. This two-phase analysis may be likened to first and second order analyses (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Van Maanen, 1979). The first order allows for the emergence of broad categories and sub-categories, whilst the second order is geared towards performing a theoretical analysis, in which first order findings are examined to find deeper patterns, and explanatory dimensions based upon a theoretical perspective (Hope, 2010, p. 202).



**Figure 4.5 Two-phase data analysis** (Source: Author)

Hence, a first ‘exploratory’ phase of thematic analysis based predominantly on Braun and Clarke (2006), which generated themes from the data was followed by a second ‘explanatory’ phase of Bourdieusian field analysis of the informal printing economy, aimed at ‘thinking’ of themes that emerged in terms of the concepts of habitus, capital and field (Grenfell, 1996, p. 302). An added value in approaching the analyses in this two-phase fashion is to present a more systematic approach to analysis, one which progresses from explicit, descriptive and semantic notion of practices, to a more sophisticated understanding of the latent and underlying logics of the themes that reify SNP in the informal printing economy (Nicolini, 2013).

#### 4.7.1 ‘Exploratory’ phase: Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a popular tool in qualitative research methods which entails an iterative and reflexive process of identifying, analysing, interpreting and articulating of patterns in a data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001). It provided a flexible, useful, and nuanced approach to reducing the large volume of qualitative data into more meaningful themes that represent SNP in the informal printing economy. Next, detailed steps of thematic analysis conducted in this study drawing on Braun and Clarke (2006) are elaborated.

##### *Step 1 Data familiarisation*

Through ethnographic data collection techniques, rich interactive data was solely collected by me, as a result, data analysis started in the field. This was particularly enhanced by a research diary in which reflective information was recorded prior to field exit and formal performance



of data analysis (Gibbs, 2007). In addition to repeated reading of the data, some clues about possible initial codes, which were enveloped within the broad research questions and analytical cues of the study, began to emerge at this stage. These hunches were recorded in the research diary. Moving on to the more ‘formal’ data analysis process, all audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using VideoLan (VLC) media player equipped with features for slowing down the speed of the audio, this provided yet another opportunity to get to know the data better. During this process, audio played through the media player was typed as text in word format for importation into computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) for further analysis. Data in the form of hand-written field notes (observations, informal chats, shadowing), hand-written formal interviews, news items, webpages, and literature were also prepared into CAQDAS-friendly formats at this stage.

### *Step 2 Initial code generation*

After the above step of familiarisation, initial impressions about what the data might be telling me were taken into the next and more active stage dedicated to initial code generation. Codes, coding framework, nodes, labels, or indices are manageable units of text or other data items including phrases, passages, quotations, terms, or other information that are interesting and meaningful, and can be linked to some descriptive and theoretical idea regarding the topic or phenomenon under study (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2007). Qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 10 was used for coding the data. Its shortcomings notwithstanding, the software was particularly useful for this stage of the study as it enabled the handling, recording, retrieving, and manipulating large volumes of text data in an efficient, consistent, transparent, and systematic fashion (Gibbs, 2007).

Since the study aims to understand SNP in the informal printing economy, the overarching unit of analysis, which in turn guided initial coding, was all instances of strategic networking activities involving participant informal businesses in the informal economy, and their partner businesses and organisations. Ideas for initial codes were therefore targeted at praxis, practice, comments, relationships, actions, strategies, actors, identities, resources, perceptions, dispositions, symbols, materials, assumptions, decisions, place, consequences, and interpretations amongst others that represent the enactment of SNP in the field of the informal printing economy. This process generated twenty-four initial codes (nodes in Nvivo 10) which were more or less wrapped in answers to research questions, analytical interests, insights from field guide and interview protocol, as well as findings of the pilot study.

Particular attention was dedicated to repeated central words, expressions, quotes, episodes, and observations that participants explicitly labelled important. Different codes were assigned the same individual unit of text in some cases as a guiding principle was to code whole responses or comments with the aim of extracting a more 'inclusive data that minimises loss of context' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 19). For instance, a response that contains a unit of text, which are candidates for two heterogeneous codes under these circumstances, was coded with the same extract rather than splitting the extract into the two separate codes.

### *Step 3 Themes search and discovery*

The next step in data reduction comprises amongst other things focusing, abstracting and transforming data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013) through the manipulating of initial codes. The twenty-four codes were subsequently sorted into a first round of themes or categories of broader sets of similar codes put together. A major objective at this stage of the thematic analysis was to start establishing relationships, hierarchies, and meaning amongst the initial codes, overarching themes and lower level sub-themes, so that a more conceptual classification of patterned response within the data set is achieved (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Consequently, the twenty-four initial codes clustered into six themes of strategic networking practices in the informal printing economy after data reduction, and the process of turning descriptive codes to analytic categories. These are 'drivers', 'nature of relationships', 'types of exchanges and partners in relationships', 'degrees of embeddedness in relationships', 'building and managing relationships' and 'outcomes' with their respective sub-themes that reflected lower level categories emerging from within the data.

### *Step 4 Theme review, definition and naming*

The final step of this 'exploratory' phase of analysis was predominantly geared towards fine tuning tentative themes identified in the previous step, so that the final themes that will represent, and form the basis for describing and interpreting the data are named and defined in scope and substance. Text items extracted to each tentative theme were reread and where it was determined it lacked coherence and relevance with the others coded to a theme, they were either recoded or put aside temporarily. This process was repeated at the theme level where attention was turned to the meaning, coherence, and relationships amongst themes, in the process one of the tentative themes was subsumed under another, whilst final sub-themes were constituted to give further structure to the analysis. Two important tests suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006) were conducted next: Can each theme be delineated in terms of 'what

it is, and is not? Each theme was thus subjected to a scope and content test. Second, are the themes broad enough to allow detailed write-up on each? In the course of the test, temporarily un-coded text units were re-assigned otherwise they were discarded.

The resultant and substantive themes that invariably tell the story of the data did not vary significantly from the six tentative themes mainly because, as we recall, the analysis benefited from a pilot study that more or less guided the search and discovery of codes and themes early in the data analysis process. In all five themes representing major categories under which SNP in the informal printing economy clustered were identified, defined and named, each with a number of sub-themes: 1) ‘Drivers’ which included internal and external components, 2) ‘Nature of relationships’ made up of cooperative and cooperative aspects, 3) ‘Partners and exchanges’ including extent of mediation and degree of involvement with partner groups components, 4) ‘Building and managing relationships’ that encapsulates partnering practices and strategies, dealing with inherent mistrust and risk, satisfying and retaining clients aspects and 5) ‘Outcomes’ categorised into individual-level, organisational-level and extra-organisational-level components. A thematic map or network, which is a representational web-like map that depicts these themes, sub-themes, and their relationships (Attride-Stirling, 2001) is shown and discussed in the next chapter where the findings of the analysis are reported.

Despite the fact that a substantial amount of the data was accounted for by each of these themes (52% to 84%), the criteria for the justification of a theme, and thus assignment of analytic superiority was not strictly based on data quantification. Instead, the interest was in important themes that cut across the data set. More instructively, this included those that capture qualitative experiences and issues raised in equally significant data sources such as ‘secondary participants’ (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Kitinger & Willmott, 2002). For example, the amount of data collected from formal economy client partners was relatively smaller than informal business participant respondents included in the study. However, we are unable to fully appreciate SNP in the informal printing economy if themes that represent this aspect of the practice are discarded simply on quantitative grounds. Seidl and Whittington (2014, p. 2) succinctly illustrates this point with Callon and Law’s (1997) archetypal: “ ‘Andrew-the-strategist’ is only a strategist by virtue of his place in a network of essential elements that includes, in no rank order, his fellow managers, his secretary, his office, his PC and his train to London”.

#### 4.7.2 ‘Explanatory’ phase: Bourdieusian field analysis

This section attempts to show how Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) social practice theory, rendered in his concepts of habitus, capital and field was ‘operationalised’, and less a discussion of the theory and its underlying concepts, an exercise adequately catered for in the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3. The section aims to explicate the application of a Bourdieusian approach to the analysis and interpretation of the themes identified as categorising SNP in the informal printing economy during the thematic analysis (‘exploratory’) phase.

To be comprehensive, a Bourdieusian analytic approach must be relational, especially in terms of the use of his ‘thinking’ tools of habitus, capital, and field, these must also be applied together and relationally (Hardy, 2014; Grenfell, 1996; 2014). Furthermore, the analysis entails three necessary and interrelated stages: first step is the construction, rethinking or reconceptualisation of the research object as a ‘field’; second step is the mapping or analysis of the field at three distinct levels (micro, meso, and macro) and a last step of ‘participant objectivation’ (Grenfell, 1996; Grenfell & Hardy, 2003; Widin, 2014). Next, SNP are analysed and situated in the informal printing economy within this three-stage approach. ‘Participant objectivation’ however is included in Appendix I as a more general reflection of the author’s reflexivity in this research.

##### *Construction of the research object: the ‘informal economy’ and ‘strategic networking’*

In Bourdieusian analysis, concepts, words, and phenomenon are often treated as contested research objects since they are more or less socio-historical constructions. The resultant effect is to give primacy to relational meanings anytime these labels are evoked in social research, since a value-free perspective may not adequately capture social practice (Grenfell, 2014). This position had implications for the analysis, and retrospectively, the methods employed to collect data for the analysis. Consequently, an underlying tenet implicit in Bourdieu’s approach, which he acknowledges as lengthy and painstaking though (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) is that ‘an objective representing of the research object is constructed by identifying a systematic set of relationships associated with participants, institutions, and the broader social space which is its context (Hardy, 2014, p. 83).

Invariably in this analysis (Table 4.4), the informal economy phenomenon (research object) was constructed as a field: a set of relations that extend beyond informal businesses, and

include formal firms that are partners in the networks of participating informal businesses. Examples are some multinational banks, manufacturing companies, and breweries; other informal and formal businesses operating within the printing industry; state agencies and institutions that regulate these businesses. Similarly, SNP were constructed less as a value-free process, but more of a site of power, stakes, interests, and struggles within the field of the informal printing economy (Grenfell, 1996).

**Table 4.4 Constructing the research object**

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Examples of operationalisation of concepts</b>	<b>Exemplar empirical studies with similar analytical treatments</b>	<b>Operationalisation of concepts in exemplar empirical study</b>
Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal printing economy and strategic networks as value-laden concepts traceable to social positions occupied by agents and expressed in SNP themes.</li> <li>• History, policies, regulations, and enforcement regime-specific evidence traced to SNP themes.</li> <li>• Power struggles, contestations, stakes, and interests displayed in the acquisition and transformation of resources/capital by field agents in SNP themes.</li> <li>• Field structures, agents, and partners and their influence in SNP data traced to habitus and capital specific to individuals, sub-fields, and the larger field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widin (2014) on internationalisation of higher education in Australia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The field traced broadly to include an Australian university and project management company as service providers of a rather value-laden English language education project, Australian government as donor and ministries of education of beneficiary countries in Asia as recipients.</li> <li>• By the way participants discussed key relationships in the field, dominant and subordinate positions were identified, as well as how dominance is achieved and maintained in terms of economic, cultural and social capital.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grenfell (1996) on processes of initial training of modern language teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies three facets of field structures to include primary: student; secondary: training institution or university; tertiary: history, various sites, and time influences like education profession, larger society and; quaternary: national curriculum, discourse on training.</li> <li>• Students' experiences explained by recourse to their heritage, traditional or non-traditional status, ease of learning, the sites of training, and structures of school departments etc.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DiGiorgio (2014) on interaction between identity, power, and inclusive practice in a minority language school in Canada.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research object included student groups, parents, teachers, teaching assistants, administrators, special service staff, and inclusive practices.</li> <li>• Traced inclusive practices to the identities of individuals and groups, in relation to group membership and personal experiences, and how these individually and collectively resulted in specific kinds of power, actions, and inactions.</li> </ul>
Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic: references to money, wealth, finance, profits, materials, assets, price, costs, resources and their variants like currency, trump card, attractions, clout in SNP themes.</li> <li>• Cultural (embodied, objectified and institutionalised): education, ‘informality’, industry experience, skills, background, cultural goods and equipment, formal sector work experience, informal sector work experience and their presence in SNP themes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scott (2012) on how Do-It-Yourself music producers in New Zealand act in entrepreneurial ways to generate ‘buzz’ from an economically constrained position.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic: payments for production, recordings, tours, videos, promotional material, and income from final products.</li> <li>• Cultural: create and perform music, have instruments, tattoos and piercing, hairstyles, fashion clothing, generate interest from intermediaries like industry gatekeepers at record labels, publishing houses, management companies.</li> <li>• Social: mobilisation of social contacts/networks for ‘favours’ for creating, production, performance, promotion, distribution.</li> <li>• Symbolic: awards, the prestige and status of chart placements, sales of recordings, website hits, effusive media reviews, winning talent competitions, commercially successful tours, public endorsements by established artists, and performances at prestigious venues or events.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social capital: Strategic networking opportunities, resources and value that flows from mutual ties and durable relationships with politicians, friends, associates, etc. to informal businesses and their agents, and identified in SNP themes.</li> <li>• Symbolic capital: Instances of resources particularly valued and legitimised in SNP by agents of the field due to constant references, and struggles for its acquisition. Resources at the heart of SNP that confers power, 'dominant' and legitimisation status in the themes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watson (2013) on how students with non-traditional academic backgrounds experienced and negotiated the demands of studying in one of UK's research-intensive universities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic: policy to expand student intake, students' (in) ability to pay fees.</li> <li>• Cultural: professional/academic qualification, disciplinary study skills and knowledge, adherence to referencing and citation conventions, accessing, critiquing/ appraising knowledge, academic writing and oral presentation. Also professional practice skills and knowledge in the vocationally- oriented programme studied.</li> <li>• Social: Students' access to collaborative study groups, peer-review of written assessments, sharing of resources, practical and emotional support from social networks</li> <li>• Symbolic: professional/academic qualification and other facets of cultural capital identified above.</li> </ul>
Habitus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispositions, embodied rules of the game, motivation for participating in the field and strategic networks, levels and types of involvement of agents in relationships. How identities of individual and collective agents construct field forces that influence and legitimise SNP identifiable in themes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gomez and Bouty (2011) on how an influential practice emerged out of the complicity between the habitus of a chef (agent) and field of haute cuisine.</li> <li>• Karatas-Ozkan (2011) on how dispositions and different forms of capital held by nascent entrepreneurs at micro-level influence entrepreneurial learning in the process of business venturing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background information on where chef was born and bred, his family, early influencers, personal inclinations and trajectories with field, as well as field structure influences in terms of trends, opportunities, market demand, media etc.</li> <li>• Traced in venture team member biographies, how they individually and collectively envision the enterprise, seek support, interacted with stakeholders drawing on information and resources, cope with changes, and develop ability to more take informed future decisions.</li> </ul>



Instances of field and SNP, and the various kinds of capital operative, and subject to contestation in sub and the overarching fields were captured in the analysis (Watson, 2013). The value-laden and contested meaning of the informal economy and its influence on strategic networking practices are also noted. For instance, in Bourdieu's terms, the classification 'informal economy' may be 'deconstructed' as a historical, political, social, and somewhat academic 'construction' and 'embodies' traces of domination by agents within different socio-economic spaces and institutions (Grenfell, 1996, 2014; Widin, 2014). These agents possess and emphasise a set of capital different from informal businesses and institutions studied, and in some cases from formal institutions within which these agents are embedded. These dynamics were pertinent in the analysis of the basis, rationale, expectations, and kinds of exchanges that transpire amongst agents from different sub-fields. This often taken-for-granted 'relational' thinking of the research object is a typical illustration of how a relational analysis was conducted here, in order to throw more light on the themes identified in the thematic analysis during the 'exploratory' phase.

Similar to the exemplar works in Table 4.4, capital is manifest in many different forms in the themes that emerged from the data set, including the economic, social, and cultural in its various manifestations: embodied, objectified, and institutionalised. Habitus of agents and partners (ways of thinking and acting) operational in the field were also captured by the analysis, we recall that habitus is closely tied to the other two concepts. Its enactment and complicity was thus traced to SNP categorised in the themes. Hardy (2014, p. 83) advises that specific capitals hold the key to the construction of the field or research object, and these capitals must intricately be linked to habitus as a necessary condition for understanding the 'logic of practice' specific to the field.

#### *Mapping the field: a three-level analysis*

The next step in the three-stage Bourdieusian approach after the construction of the research object is the mapping of the field at three distinct levels (Table 4.5), in order to lay bare the manifestation of the different structural, individual, and agential connections within the field, as well as the field of power within which the field under analysis is embedded. At a micro level, individual agents and their trajectories is subject to analysis using differentiating characteristics such as biographic information (Hardy, 2014; Watson 2014).

**Table 4.5 Mapping the field**

<b>Level of analysis</b>	<b>Some traces/operationalisation/ instances/references</b>	<b>Exemplar empirical study with similar analytical treatments</b>	<b>Operationalisation and some associated findings of the empirical study</b>
<p>Level 1(micro): Analyse and compare the habitus of agents; the systems of disposition they have acquired by the internalisation of a deterministic type of social and economic condition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traced in SNP themes in terms of levels of education, (in)formal sector work experience of agents, and types of informality.</li> <li>• Types/amount of capital possessed by agents identified with dominant and dominated individual agents, suggests which type of capital is considered important/valuable, and hence the logic of practice of SNP in the field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grenfell and Hardy (2003) on young British artist in the field of contemporary British art in the 1990s.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signifiers of artists’ habitus were taken as age, geographic location, social origins, artistic education, and commercial connections.</li> <li>• These factors tend to influence artists’ configuration of capital and position either as: presiding force, current contender or rising star, signifying power and habitus of key field legitimising players.</li> </ul>
<p>Level 2 (meso): Map objective structure of relations between positions in the field; interconnections between agents, other organisations, communities, and field institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searched for in the kinds of relationships/exchanges across sub-fields involving partners with many different habitus, types/volume of capital (social economic, cultural).</li> <li>• Also how (in)formal work experience, society, industry, (in)formal institutions like school, church, clubs, and associations positions identified in SNP are associated with volumes and configurations of capital, and their salience in SNP. Links positions to agents’ economic, cultural, and social trajectories and thus capital sets internalised, and brought to the practice of strategic networking.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traces structural connections between set of relationships in the field that include artists, critics, teachers, curators, and museums, institutions of art, gallery owners, and buyers.</li> <li>• Identifies that the medium of relation and exchange occurs at the individual, institutionalised, formal, and informal levels and may be understood in terms of capital configurations.</li> <li>• Shows how an individual artist’s position and trajectory in the field is influenced by the habitus and capital portfolio of others in his connections.</li> </ul>
<p>Level 3 (macro): Analyse the position of the field in relation to other fields, especially within the field of power.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traces the embeddedness of field in larger political, technological, social, cultural and economic context; also global trade and business trends as fields of power that may</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapped the contours of the art field vis-a-vis the fields of power: culture, commerce and politics.</li> </ul>

	shape SNP in the data.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key influencing factors identified border on popular media coverage, personal politics, and individual commercial enterprise as art in its traditional legitimised form, is intricately woven into the fabric of other fields that make for the acquisition of other forms of capital.</li></ul>
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Table 4.6 shows agents' formal/informal work trajectories, their educational background and reasons for their participation in the informal economy, which gives an indication of their habitus as well as capital configurations possessed (Bourdieu, Darbel, & Schnapper, 1990; Grenfell & Hardy, 2003). How agents are positioned vis-à-vis institutions and organisations in the field constitutes a second (meso) level of analysis, then a final and more macro analysis positions the field alongside the fields of power that embeds it. These three levels of analysis are not necessarily hierarchical, neither are they applied in a strict order, nor with equal level of emphasis as these may vary from field to field (Grenfell, 1996; Widin, 2014; Hardy, 2014).

Additionally, they may be applied to different aspects, subjects, topics, or data sources in the analysis as needed, depending on their expression in the available evidence (see Watson 2013, 2014). However, a golden rule is to treat the levels of analysis interdependently in any one project (Grenfell, 2014; Widin, 2014). Table 4.4 illustrates with an example of empirical application of Bourdieusian field analysis, the study draws on this and other studies employing this three-level field analysis approach (see also Grenfell, 1996; Hardy, 2014; Watson, 2013, 2014) to map and analyse the set of structural, objective, and subjective relations amongst agents practicing strategic networking within a social space. In this instance, the social space is the field of the informal printing economy.

This research follows Watson (2012, 2013) and DiGiorgio (2014) in not presenting the levels of analysis in any particular order or hierarchy for reasons mentioned above. The analysis proceeded in two-phases (see also Widin, 2014; Watson, 2014), this Bourdieusian analysis phase is intended to 'think' (Bourdieu, 1989; Hardy, 2014) about the themes that emerged in the first phase of thematic analysis in Bourdieu terms. Thus, each of these three levels of field analysis will be applied across the entire data to the extent that it gives meaning to any and as many themes that capture SNP in the informal printing economy.

**Table 4.6 Business profile and biographies of informal business participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Major role</b>	<b>Business name</b>	<b>Formal sector work experience</b>	<b>Number of years of work in informal sector</b>	<b>Informal sector experience</b>	<b>Highest educational qualification</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	<b>Area of business specialisation</b>	<b>Reasons for participation in the informal economy</b>
Cephas	Owner	CEO	SGC	Minimal	18 years	Extensive	Art College certificate	Moderate	Branding	Easier way to set up business
Allan	Employee	Operations	SGC	Minimal	6 years	Moderate	University degree	High	Branding	Exploring job opportunity
Lenny	Employee	IT and design	SGC	Minimal	6 years	Moderate	University degree	High	Branding	Exploring job opportunity
Mark	Owner	CEO	MCS	Nil	19 years	Extensive	Basic education	Low	Book printing	Matches previous work experience
Francis	Employee	Machine operator	MCS	Nil	5 years	Moderate	Secondary education	Low	Book printing	Job opportunity
Eric	Owner	Managing director	CAS	Minimal	12 years	Extensive	University degree	High	Branding	Entrepreneurship
Pearl	Employee	Graphic designer	CAS	Nil	1.5 years	Minimal	Design and Art College certificate	Moderate	Branding	Job opportunity
Tim	Owner	CEO	TVC	Extensive	6 years	Moderate	University degree	High	Book printing	Entrepreneurship
Andy	Employee	Machine operator	TVC	Nil	7 years	Moderate	Vocational training proficiency certificate	Low	Book printing	Job opportunity
Ben	Employee	Machine operator	TVC	Minimal	10 years	Extensive	Basic education	Low	Book printing	Job opportunity
Steve	Owner	CEO	SSC	Moderate	6 years	Moderate	University degree	High	Branding/Book printing	Entrepreneurship
Evans	Employee	Graphic designer	SSC	Minimal	2 years	Minimal	Polytechnic Higher National Diploma	High	Branding/Book printing	Job opportunity
Rose	Employee	Business Development	SSC	Minimal	3 years	Minimal	Polytechnic Higher	High	Branding/Book printing	Job opportunity

		Manager					National Diploma			
Teddy	Owner	CEO	FPS	Minimal	5 years	Moderate	Art College certificate	Moderate	Branding	The only way to self-employment
Prince	Employee/partner	Graphic designer	FPS	Nil	11 years	Extensive	Basic education	Low	Branding	Best suited for self-employment

Note: All names are pseudonyms; owner/manager and CEO are used interchangeably

## 4.8 RESEARCH EVALUATION

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria introduced in section 4.4 above is used to assess the trustworthiness of the research process, especially the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. These criteria includes credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are discussed as follows:

### *Credibility*

This criterion assesses the degree of believability of the reported findings, the extent to which the constructed realities of participants were presented by the researcher. Amongst the steps suggested, the researcher had a prolonged engagement with participants, having done more than six months of fieldwork in total, in addition to previous participation in the informal economy which more or less rendered the author an 'everyday ethnographer', and thus 'everyday' participant observer (Watson, 2014; see Sections 4.5 and 4.6). Other steps were taken to guard against the misrepresentation of the phenomenon and views of participants, so that the accuracy of reported findings and interpretations are enhanced. In doing so, multiple data collection and analysis methods and strategies were employed to maximise the logic behind inferences made about particular occurrences of the phenomenon and setting studied. These are evident in the use of a wide range of data collection techniques, multi-sited data collection approach, and a two-phase data analysis procedure extensively discussed throughout the thesis (see Sections 4.6 and 4.7 for example). Applying these multiple methods and procedures compensated for individual limitations whilst enhancing their respective benefits (Shenton, 2004).

### *Transferability*

This criterion addresses the extent to which research findings may be generalised. As mentioned above, this research does not aim for generalisation to the population, but to context: 'inferential generalisation' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 275). Amongst techniques suggested for improving this type of generalisation from case studies, a thorough justification for case selection and a vivid description of the context and research setting are provided to afford the reader a better appreciation of these selection decisions (Shenton, 2004) (Chapter 4). As part of a 'thick description' requirement, multiple views, processes, and experiences relating to the SNP studied is provided (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Also, sources of data and an account of the fieldwork are reported in fine detail (Chapters 4 and 5). These will enable

scholars determine the extent to which the findings and conclusions drawn here may be transferred to other contexts, or applicable to situations observed elsewhere (Shenton, 2004). The thesis has therefore provided comprehensive contextual, background, and study boundaries information for the assessment of transferability.

### *Dependability*

This test measures the degree to which another researcher may arrive at similar results if same procedures described in this research were followed in future. Dependability may indicate the level of consistency and reliability of research findings and conclusions. A detailed discussion and documentation of the research procedure including how each step was implemented is provided, especially in Chapter 4 and Appendices. As part of this quality check, a vivid description of all the data collection and analysis methods, strategies, and procedures including timelines, durations, number of organisations, cases, and participants are reported (Chapter 4). This protocol is intended to provide an audit trail (Janesick, 2000) that allows others to make assessments about the appropriateness of the research practices, and thus, quality of the process and product of inquiry (Shenton, 2004).

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability deals with objectivity in the choices made by the researcher. It encapsulates issues such as whose views are being reported, investigator bias, investigator's own predispositions, and preferences, and research limitations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman 1994). It attests to whether the evidence supports the findings, interpretations, and recommendations (Loh, 2013). First, multiple perspectives on SNP were sort as indicated above, and second, theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices made have been made explicit and justified. Additionally, researcher's beliefs, assumptions, and position and how they came to bear on the knowledge produced, are discussed in a 'reflective appraisal' in terms of the researcher's voice and location in relation to the research object in the sections on 'research philosophy' in Chapter 4, and 'participant objectivation' in Appendix I. Third, since the research is interpretive, a fine balance was struck between reporting the way in which participants interpreted and made sense of their SNP, and how the evidence could be analytically incorporated into existing theory that may extend beyond the context studied. Fourth, the limitations of the study are duly acknowledged in Chapter 7.



## **4.9 ETHICAL MATTERS**

For an ethnographic-type study of this kind the researcher had to deal with a number of pertinent ethical issues (Murchison, 2010), more so when involved with participants who are not compliant to laws and regulations. Scholars are advised to consider ethics, which refers to issues of standards, moral judgments, and disclosure early, more so, at every stage of the research project (Creswell 2009; Gray 2004). Accordingly, approval was obtained from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee (Appendix B) that amongst other things stipulated that steps be taken not to subject participants to any form of harm, be it physical, social, emotional, moral, or economic prior to field entry. Consequently, an Information Sheet (Appendices E and F) and written Consent Form (Appendices G and H) were issued to participants.

The information sheet detailed the purpose of the research, identity of the researcher and others involved in the project, the type of information sought, how much of participants' time is required, the use to which data collected and report generated will be put, confidentiality clause, and how the researcher may be contacted. The Consent Form which was issued after a participant had read the Information Sheet outlined the purpose of the research and an informed consent of their participation in the research project. All participants were assured that participation was anonymous and that their personal and business particulars as well as any other information they provide will be treated in the strictest of confidentiality (Berg 2001; Patton, 2002). Consequently, pseudonyms of participating businesses and individuals are used throughout the reporting of the research. The Consent Form further advised participants of their right to withdraw consent, including any previously provided information, at any time before the report is finalised. Steps to be taken to store and secure their information in order to minimise any potential risk by their involvement in the project was also included. All participants voluntarily signed off the Consent Forms after they were convinced and were sure of participating. The researcher retained the exact expressions of participants in their responses to interview questions and probes except in rare cases when responses were not well articulated but had substance.

## **3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the methodological design and approach used to understand SNPs in the informal printing economy relationally. Because the research intended to gain insights on experiences and perceptions relationally, a social constructivist paradigm reified in

Bourdieuian relational sociology was employed. Hence, an ethnographic case study approach using qualitative techniques was adopted, where varied data sources and cases were used to reflect as much as possible, informal businesses in the printing industry in Ghana and their SNP. A two-phase data analysis strategy was employed to first explore themes that characterise SNP, and then explain these SNP themes with theory so as not to dominate the analysis with theory too early in the process. All steps taken to evaluate and enhance research quality and trustworthiness have also been outlined drawing on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria. The chapter concludes with a discussion on ethical considerations, including how ethics approval prescriptions and processes were implemented in the field and throughout the reporting of the research. After discussing research design and methods in this chapter, the chapter that follows outlines the research findings.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS OF STRATEGIC NETWORKING PRACTICES OF THE INFORMAL BUSINESSES**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reports the findings of the ethnographic case study of the SNP of the informal printing businesses. It outlines the content of the five SNP themes identified during the ‘exploratory’ thematic analysis phase, by drawing on interpretive tools in the ‘explanatory’ Bourdieusian field analysis phase illustrated in Chapter 4. Despite the best attempts to present findings in ways that minimised overlaps in the findings between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), some overlaps and repetitions were unavoidable. These overlaps were therefore not attributable to the construction of the themes per se.

First, an important objective of the thesis in line with the reading of Bourdieu’s practice theory was to demonstrate how the practice of strategic networking by the informal businesses was a reflection of, and reflected in practices and structures at micro, meso and macro-levels. This obviously implied the grasping of a complex set of intertwined phenomena that were in an endless cycle (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008), hence the richness of these findings could potentially be lost by forcing artificial demarcations (Tatli et al., 2014). A second reason was the two-phase analysis that identified instances of SNP with three levels of analysis (micro, meso and macro) that cut across all themes (Tatli et al., 2014).

The approach here therefore employed Bourdieu’s concepts as a lens, interpretive or thinking tools (Hardy, 2014, p. 16), that somewhat aided the navigation of the challenges of operationalising Bourdieu’s practice theory, which requires making explicit links between empirical evidence and his concepts (Karatas-Ozkan, 2011; Vaughan, 2008). The author argues that the structure of the findings presented here offer a better means to showcase the complexity of a practice perspective. This caveat notwithstanding, an attempt was made to present a coherent Bourdieusian account of the SNP of the informal businesses in the sections that follow. Consequently forward and backward references to content and sections are used as pointers to important linkages across this chapter.

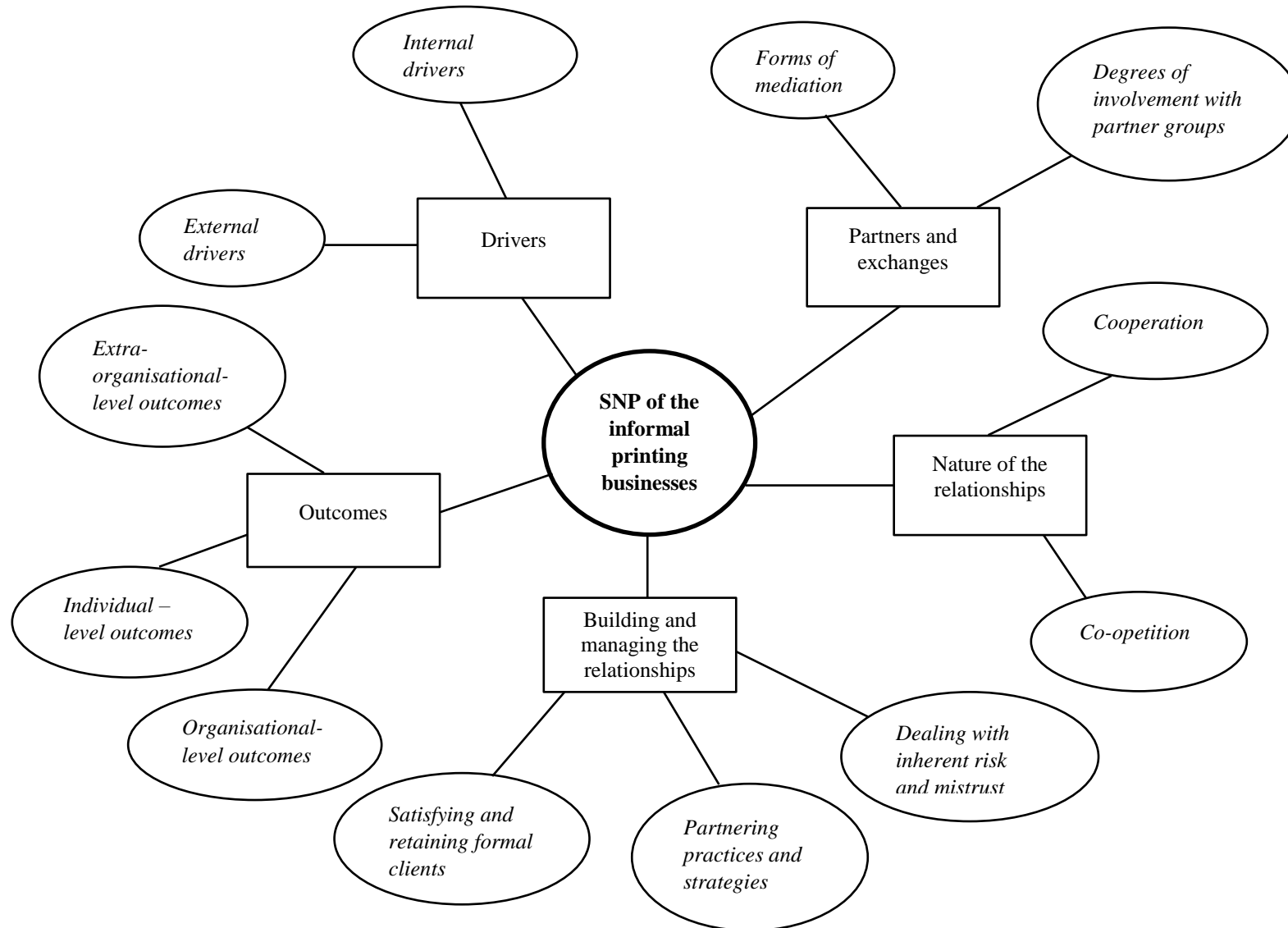


Figure 5.1 Thematic network of the SNP of the informal printing businesses (Source: Author)

The sections in this chapter are structured around the five themes and their respective subthemes illustrated in the thematic network in Figure 5.1. As per the Bourdieusian analytical framework outlined in Section 4.7.2, the SNP identified in the themes are constructed as practices in a field. Consequently, field-specific SNP are mapped, examined, and illuminated at three distinct but interrelated levels (micro, meso, and macro) (Table 4.5). Ultimately, the focus is to highlight how the SNP resonate with the concepts of habitus, capital, and field. The business profiles, biographies, pseudonyms of participants which are referenced constantly in this chapter are shown in Table 4.6. In quoting and referencing specific network partners, the following pseudonyms are used: For example, FPP1 stands for formal printing business partner number 1; FCP2 for formal business client partner number 2; IPP 3 informal printing business partner number 3. It should also be noted that the impressions and quotations of the network partners were not necessarily centred on particular informal printing businesses; instead their practices and experiences with informal printing businesses were investigated more generally.

## **5.2 DRIVERS**

The theme labelled ‘drivers’ relates to enablers and constraints that drove SNP of the informal businesses, they extend beyond the pervasive internal organisational resources and capabilities and market and PESTLE interactions (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Perceptions, dispositions, and practices identified with this theme were somewhat varied and mediated by individual and shared habitus of participants. At the micro-level, these were made intelligible in their individual accounts, experiences, and perceptions regarding their participation in the field, which again was a function of their social, economic, educational, skills and work-related trajectories. For example, their formal sector experience prior to their entry into the informal printing economy was a key issue. Yet at a meso-level, some of the experiences and practices were traceable to shared understanding and appreciation of the social structures that embed their informal printing operations, which more or less drove their SNP.

There was a collective awareness of the deficiency of ‘bureaucratic’ and economic capital amongst informal field agents and businesses (Meagher, 2014), and this deficiency motivated them to seek partners that allowed for the deployment of other kinds of capital in which they were better endowed, through their SNP, so as to achieve individual and collective objectives, that demanded stocks of these kinds of deficient capital. ‘Bureaucratic’ capital here refers to a business’s repertoire of formal mechanisms of written documentation and records,

standardised reporting and verification procedures, as well as rational-legal decision-making rules. To the extent that these bureaucratic mechanisms were resources and convertible currency that held symbolic value for the position occupied by formal organisations and their agents, relative to the informal businesses in the field (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Watson, 2013), bureaucratic arrangements were an important form of capital in understanding the SNP of the informal businesses in the field of the informal printing economy.

Also some of the comments and observations that drove participants' SNP were intricately linked to dominant field organisations and institutions, regulatory environment, industry structures, as well as the 'field of power' at a macro-level. The field of power encapsulates political, technological, socio-cultural, and economic influences, in addition to global trends in international trade that exerted influence on the field, and invariably shaped SNP of the informal businesses. Hence, drivers of SNP amongst informal businesses were both internal and external.

These two are the subthemes under the main theme referred to as 'drivers'. Though discussed separately so as to accord better structure to the thesis, they were not mutually exclusive, neither did one precede the other in their influence on the SNP, instead they were involved in a dynamic overlap that constituted the generative principles of habitus, and thus strategies of action in relation to the field (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Everett, 2002). Furthermore, the way this theme relates to the other four (4) themes is also apparent in the following sections.

### **5.2.1 Internal drivers**

SNP traceable to agency, individual owner/managers, employees, and the informal business and are treated as internal. This subtheme illustrates how the identities of individuals, as based on their personal experiences and circumstances, as well as the printing businesses they operate in resulted in particular SNP. These more or less represented the micro-level influences on SNP in the field, these micro-level effects however drew remotely from meso and macro-level factors as later presentations suggest.

#### *Owner/manager influences*

Owner/managers' habitus, dispositions, belief systems, and capital configurations prior to field entry intersected with each other, and enacted scripts and logics that explained their different motivations. Owner/managers with minimal or no work experience in the formal sector often initiated and established social and business relationships with partners in the

informal printing industry prior to field entry, unlike those with moderate to extensive formal sector experience. They went through apprenticeship and 'initiation-like' experience by virtue of their association with dominant field players before they set up their own businesses, some of these associations were casual whilst others entailed a deeper involvement with dominant incumbents as temporary employees or trainees:

I have been in the industry for 4 years and I know him [owner/manager of IPP1, a dominant informal business player]... when I was in school, I used to print at his' so I've known him for a long time before I set up my own business.... It's been like 8 years now, for 4 years I was a customer to him, for 4 years I was just giving him jobs. I get the jobs but I didn't have my own place so I did it at his end and after I opened my own place, I still send him jobs I cannot do at my place or jobs beyond me. (Teddy)

It [the relationship] started in Osu, actually it's funny. When I was in school, I used to print a lot, I was using only one software (CorelDraw), so after school I decided to... and it was the only thing on my mind –to work for him so when I went to him with my application, he told me no and that I should pay for him to teach me more... so he gave me a few guidelines that I have to go back, and that CorelDraw was not enough. You need to know Photoshop, Illustrator ... and I didn't know about all that (because I used to do everything with one software) - and that there was more to it than what I was doing. He became like a master to me and I always call him when I have problems and even give him jobs that are beyond me. (Teddy)

This early trajectory with the field, in addition to the fact that this group of owner/managers were also relatively more deficient in academic capital, consequently fed into their businesses' limited bureaucratic capital. This group of owner/managers thus strategically imbibed field-specific habitus that invariably shaped their SNP. As a result, they were more embedded in the networks of other informal businesses relative to owner/managers with formal sector experiences:

I started as a hawker; I usually go round the regional and district capitals selling printed books by others [informal businesses]. It got to a point I was not getting supplies from them so I saw an opportunity to reproduce their works. I saved some money so I rented a small place close to them, and started reproducing a few books to start with; I was initially taking most of it to their [informal businesses] print houses for printing and then go hawking to sell it. (Mark)

Additionally, since government and formal firms were the biggest buyers of their products and services, this group of owner/ managers strategically were more inclined to form long-term relationships with agents of these formal organisations. This permitted them to defer the ‘paper work’ or documentation to these formal agents in a manner that took care of their business’s bureaucratic capital deficiency:

But for me I prefer the third party [middlemen] arrangement to going in directly for the contract – because it requires a whole lot of documents and things... and sorry to say I don’t care about that. But for you as a middle person, you must be fully prepared to go in for business, and it doesn’t matter whether the principal contractors have paid or not – I have to get paid once I deliver the job to you and that’s the good thing about the subcontract and that’s what I will chose. (Cephas)

Somehow it was found that even though low levels of education (academic capital) partly contributed to aspects of non-compliance that concerned ‘paperwork’ amongst informal businesses (Joshi, Prichard & Heady, 2014), the doing of ‘paperwork’ was not necessarily beyond their capabilities in all cases. Rather, it became normalised in their habitus by the social structures in which they operated, invariably, the gains in not doing the ‘paperwork’ which in most cases bordered on the illegal, outweighed the risks of not doing so. In essence, this became an acceptable risk and the norm (Vaughan, 2008) for especially this group of owner/managers. A Tax Revenue Officer laments:

Most of the informal businesses are not motivated to meet their tax obligations, they do if they need a tax clearance certificate for some reason; especially to bid or apply for contracts from formal organisations. Businesses are expected to file value added tax, income tax and tax clearance if they are to bid for government contracts for instance. They often use third parties to get around some of the above statutory requirements and tax obligations.

For this group of informal businesses therefore, their long-term relationships and exchanges with formal organisations included deeper levels of mediation by embedded partners relative to other groups.

On the other hand owner/managers who worked with formal firms before setting up their own businesses in the informal printing economy had dissimilar trajectories, and thus drivers, though they shared a lot in common with the others. For instance, they described their participation in the informal economy as entrepreneurial (Table 4.6). Much as their professed entrepreneurial logic resonates with some of their perceptions, dispositions and practices, this



reference to entrepreneurship reflects their greater awareness and appreciation of the phenomenon more than a fundamental departure from the SNP exhibited by the other informal businesses that did not explicitly associate entrepreneurship with their business venturing.

This group of owner/managers drew on a different set of capital configurations in making sense of their motivation and practice of field-specific SNP. Wielding larger stocks of academic capital, they tend to easily form networks with formal organisations at a more 'official' and direct level relative to the group described above. Perhaps, academic capital finds fine expression in the formal sector, and is also easily convertible to bureaucratic capital, at least that which concerns competence in the appreciation, comprehension and preparation of 'paperwork'. Furthermore compared to the other group, this group of owner/managers stressed that formalisation of their business in future was the ultimate goal.

Informal businesses set up by owner/managers with this type of biography thus established business contacts and networks in formal circles that became useful later in the field of the informal economy after entry, so they tended to be more inclined towards formal partner networks. For instance, an owner/manager visualised his business as a response to a 'vertical integration opportunity' outside formal businesses he was involved with:

I practiced marketing and that is why I ventured into advertising and then advertising led me on to printing, because most of the people we [former formal employer] advertised for usually did printing as part of the package in their promotional activities. As we contracted printers to do the printing bit for us and we did not seem to be getting the quality that our clients wanted, I decided to add that also on to my set up, just like the one before with advertising. (Steve)

In another case a highly-educated owner/manager who had an extensive formal sector experience, but moderate informal sector experience, relied mainly on his social capital from his network of friends in formal organisations (Meagher, 2014). However, unlike the other group of owner/managers that drew on their social capital of acquaintances who often were third parties in the network; this owner/manager used his social capital as a conduit for otherwise unavailable bidding information. In order to do this however, some other informality disposition from a repertoire had to be activated:

They are critical because you need networking, somebody must be able to connect you to somebody. I mean you are going to bid for a job and then you will need somebody to

give you the information you require to prepare for and win the bid. So again, friends in your network are able to play that role. Even your clients that you do business for do recommend and give references for other jobs. (Tim)

With high levels of academic capital and formal sector work experience, this owner/manager was more disposed to meeting the ‘paperwork’ requirements. This was also logical because unlike the situation with most informal businesses, he had renewed his business license. The other core requirement was tax compliance, which would not have taken much effort to meet given his moderate level of compliance status (Table 4.1). According to a Tax Revenue Officer, compliance practically meant filing returns on time, making do with payments was yet another. This was what most businesses they described as formal do particularly well unlike the informal ones. As hinted early on, informal businesses devised a strategy of ‘convenience compliance’, that was an enactment of their informality habitus and disposition.

Based on these illustrations, we find that owner/managers influence on SNP may be slightly dissimilar since they were shaped by different kinds of enablers and constraints. These influences are explainable by agents’ social conditioning and internalisation of practices that connected to their historical, spatial, and temporal associations.

#### *Employee influences*

Another important finding was how the social, economic, business trajectories and organisational context of employees influenced their position and hence SNP in the field. Beyond managers, the role of a variety of agents involved in strategising needs to be analysed in terms of how their relative field positions accords them possibilities and impossibilities (Bourdieu, 2000), and this is best explained by their configuration of capital (Gomez, 2010).

Consistent with previous studies of small formal business networks (e.g. Shaw, 2006), employees in the informal setting were given leeway to bring some influence to bear on strategy decisions by using their contacts to glean competitive and other vital information from other related firms (Shaw, 2006). Informal business employees often have greater responsibilities in the recruitment of potential business partners. Perhaps and historically, informal businesses score low on division of labour (specialisation), and because field structures engenders multitasking (Godfrey, 2011; Losby, Kingslow, & Else, 2003). However, employees in most of the businesses did not proactively pursue this agenda as they possessed low levels of the types of capital salient for initiating partnerships with formal organisations and their agents in particular who came across as the most attractive group of

partners, as we will see in later sections. Nevertheless, employees in SSC that possessed relatively higher levels of capital configurations by virtue of their education, formal training and associations, and thus better positioned (have colleagues positioned in formal employment), were also constrained by the near formal internal organisation put in place by an owner/manager with trajectories in a formal setting:

I would say that at this present time, the employee that has interaction with people outside the office is the Business Manager, mostly that person just serves to reinforce our relationship with clients, suppliers and so on through phone calls, personal contacts and so on. All the others do the line jobs assigned to them, you have a designer – the concepts are developed and discussed with him or her, so it's like let me see a sketch or layout and that's it, they work to instructions. (Steve)

These observations may be explained by SSC's organisation-situated scripts and dispositions towards lesser risks given the business's lower levels of informality, and higher levels of bureaucracy and economic capital. SSC was operated like an informal family business; the only family member involved in a day-to-day managerial role was the owner/manager who happened to be the founder of the business. Asked about how networking decisions were made, the owner/manager made this comment:

I have a board in place; the company has a five-member board, even though it is a family board. I serve on it and I have three of my kids who are professionals in their own right working in various places also serve on it, and the Business Manager of the company also serves on it. The board makes the major annual decisions and so on. Basically, my Business Manager and I make the day-to-day decisions as to where we go each day, each week, each month. (Steve)

By eliminating intermediaries in their relationships with formal organisations, and also hiring better educated employees, SSC was positioned as possessing relatively higher economic capital in the field. These were enabled and reinforced by SSC's inclination towards the accumulation of higher volumes of bureaucratic capital that somewhat necessitated the pursuance of division of labour (Godfrey, 2011). In addition, reducing the involvement of employees in networking decisions was part of SSC's approach aimed at reducing inherent risks in field-specific SNP:

I am rather skeptical about hiring such persons [employees who are well connected] because they come over and can cause serious attrition to your portfolio by getting close

to your clients, and taking them along when they leave you, so they don't bring anything at all. (Steve)

However, it was found that the phenomenon of informal business employees driving partnering in the field was a function of their area of business specialisation (Table 4.6). These employees embodied a type of capital, which was better suited for networking than those accumulated and possessed by owner/managers. For businesses involved in book printing especially, machine minders or operators were critical assets because of their scarcity in the field, as well as their relatively longer involvement with the informal printing industry. This scarcity and potential networking opportunities they bring naturally increased their embodied cultural capital operational in the field; in effect, they changed jobs frequently as they were highly sought after. As they located from one business to the next they took with them existing clients and partners in their networks, as well as those of former employers:

I have about 20 to 25 clients in my portfolio who give me contracts on a continuous basis. I am presently working for a client I have known for about 4 years. I have another lady who I have been working for about 5 years. They keep coming and I have a lot. (Andy)

Actually, we the printers don't have big clients, but what we do is that customers know us as machine operators, so when they get the job they call us on the phone. They are people we've worked for in the past and who appreciate how best we can deliver, so we are just a phone call away. (Francis)

This embodied cultural capital influenced their position in the social space which rendered outcomes for SNP and other strategic decisions (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). To an extent, some other strategic decisions were influenced by this group of employees as noted in the comments of an employee of TVC:

Yes, my side I can use my boss's as an experience. He contacted me for advice when contemplating buying a new machine, given my experience in this area. I advised him to buy the folding machine because I know I can draw business from my clients in order to make the investment worthwhile. I cannot be sure of the viability of investments outside my area of specialisation. (Ben)

From these observations, we may argue that perhaps the roles employees played in influencing and driving SNP included active and passive components, which more or less were dependent on symbolic capital, and also firm-conditioned organising assumptions

crafted and perpetuated through organisational structures. These tended to inform strategic action, leading to a 'reversal' in the distribution of power and social positions in some cases. However, these position-takings were deemed legitimate and normalised by actors including employers who somewhat were complicit in their seeming subordination for instance. The following quote illustrates the owner/manager of TVC's acceptance of this position and his strategies intended for position-taking by means of capital reconfiguration:

I'm thinking of buying digital machines that I can operate myself, it promises higher print quality, and also minimises printing processes. I will do the same things with this new machine, which will not require skilled minders. I will avoid the situation where skilled machine minders have high bargaining power. (Tim)

The potential of bringing along clients and partners into a business's network accorded machine minders symbolic power in the SNP, they were therefore given extra rewards in the form of financial token when the volumes of business they brought at any time was large, but they often took everything if the volumes were small. Apparently, this was the source of the subtle power struggle between the machine minders and their employers.



**Figure 5.2** TVC's newly-acquired second-hand Heidelberg QMDI 46-4 (Source: Author)

### *Individual informal business influences*

At the level of the individual informal business, SNP were normally driven by capabilities in terms of equipment and capacity, but these were remotely traceable to the other influences reported above, especially owner/managers' capital configuration, dispositions and habitus. The field relied heavily on capital-intensive industrial machines and equipment (by field-specified standards), and individual businesses possessed these to different extents depending on their economic capital endowment and area of specialisation. These materials, machine, and equipment symbolised clout and thus capital which in turn drove SNP in the field. For instance, these differing levels of capital endowment led to unequal distribution of resources and power, and made intelligible in the SNP by the relationships that existed between the informal businesses and their agents, their positions, stakes, and possibilities in the field. When asked what it meant to be powerful and successful in the field, and therefore have higher bargaining power in the networks, employees of TVC and SGC had these to say:

Yes, I know [informal business name], they do a lot of business, have high capacity and advanced equipment. When you go there, you will see they are not running this kind of 1000 copies but 10,000 copies worth of contract. (Andy)

The relationships stem out of the kind of machines you have – and that gives advantages in the relationship. Let me say right now we have the biggest laser engraving machine so we can do a lot, most people have smaller versions so you can do work to some limit, but we can do broader ones. The advantage we have is the size and the amount of product we can produce per hour. They can't do it so although we have good relationship, the advantage I have over them is I can do more, so even though they may get a lot of business, they must bring it to us. (Allan)

Invariably symbolic capital in the SNP of the informal businesses was value-laden and subject to field exigencies. For example, aside from the legitimisation of symbolic capital in the level of advancement and capabilities of a business's machines and equipment, the countries in which these were manufactured was also of symbolic value. Because informal businesses usually have low levels of economic capital needed for acquiring these equipment, businesses that possessed higher volumes of this type of objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) were more likely to attract partners who lacked this sort of symbolic capital in the field into their network. This objectified cultural capital was appreciated and legitimised in the field by participating businesses including the dominated ones, which were the informal businesses that did not possess this capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In a similar vein, dominant informal businesses that possessed symbolic capital may lack other kinds of capital that were pertinent to the achievement of their objectives. This scarcity further drove SNP in the field. For instance, some dominated partners may employ social or political capital to win contracts for the benefit of the dominant businesses that lacked these types of capital. In effect and as in any other field, the businesses by virtue of their capital accumulation occupied contested positions where power relations regulated their interactions in the networks, as we will see in later sections.

### **5.2.2 External drivers**

SNP of informal businesses were additionally constrained and enabled by external drivers. In keeping with Bourdieusian analysis, these external drivers are attributed to field structural mechanisms such as market and sector/industry, dominant field organisations and institutions, regulatory, societal, and other macro-level influences. Together these constitute meso-level

and macro-level effects, but again each of these is linkable to the other, as well as the micro-level influences outlined above.

### *Influences from dominant field organisations and institutions*

The field of the informal printing economy represented a distinct social space with its unique logic of practice and rules of engagement reflective of the interests of dominant players. These established social structures nurtured a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54), and offered a range of possibilities and impossibilities that were ingrained in agents’ cognitive systems, and made implicit in how the structures were internalised and dictated in SNP.

The field of the informal printing economy straddles those of the formal sector with formal organisations such as government agencies and private businesses as its largest buyers. The field was therefore amenable to the struggles, dynamics, and exigencies at play in these other organisations and field. Though believed to have preceded the formal economy (Nchito, 2011), the informal economy has been dominated by the formal economy; consequently the literature refers to the field as second economy (Gërxhani, 2004). As a result, informal businesses in the field compete unfavourably with formal businesses. This domination and its associated disadvantages formed part of the frames and habitus of agents operating in the field:

Yes you know, in Ghana for instance we have a challenge in the sense that in the industry in which we operate, clients are more inclined towards bigger formal organisations, unless they are able to recognise or can vouch for your capabilities. So, as informal businesses, we are always at a disadvantage even though we might be more capable. (Tim)

Though this may be true for all small businesses including formal sector businesses, the revelation here is the manner in which the informal businesses conceived and coped with the problem. Coming from this disadvantaged position in the social space, and keen to improve their competitiveness (better still ‘attractiveness’ since competition was not a popular business language for the informal businesses) and thus field position, the informal businesses resorted to their informality habitus and dispositions, internalised from field structures to achieve this end. They amongst other things used SNP in this pursuit, for example, businesses were small in size and scale (see Figure 5.3), this therefore provided affordances for SNP where specialisation, outsourcing, inclusiveness, and sharing were encouraged through strategic networks. These were attuned to the generally limited economic





**Figure 5.3 Employees of FPS at work in their small-sized premises** (Source: Author)

and bureaucratic capital associated with field structures, due to their non-compliance and ‘social economy’ origin (Ferman & Berndt, 1981), as well as the unevenly distributed social, political, and field-specific cultural capital amongst field agents. This partnering logic of practice was activated as potential sources of economies of scale and scope, flexibility, resilience, and low price, which underlie their SNP. In addition to the downplay of economic logic, this partnering logic enabled the informal businesses to make concessions that maximised collective business opportunities, and also enabled them compete with formal printing businesses (which were better endowed with economic and bureaucratic capital) for business from formal sector organisations.

These SNP broadly aimed at satisfying the low price and flexibility expectations of dominant formal players identified above. Invariably, SNP were driven by two somewhat competing logics: 1) develop strategies to navigate the bureaucratic rule-following disposition and institutional logic of formal organisations (Vaughan, 2008), and 2) maintaining close adjacencies to their informal non-bureaucratic turf that were sources of their unique market propositions to these formal organisations.

### *Industry and market influences*

The printing industry and the market for their products did have subtle but significant influences on SNP observed (Tatli et al., 2014; Vaughan, 2008). In most cases the influences were inseparable from the others already presented; they were intricately linked and exerted effects on each other, and the accompanying SNP.

Informal businesses despite their lack of bureaucratic capital possessed cultural capital necessary to deliver competitive design and printing products and services. This cultural capital endowment was by virtue of agents' training, work experience and competence in art and design (Karatas-Ozkan, 2011), making them attractive partners to formal client organisations despite their informality and limited bureaucratic capital. Being a creative industry (Jeffcutt; 2000; Karatas-Ozkan, 2011; Shaw, 2006), high levels of competence which translated into this field-specific cultural capital, may be accumulated even for participants with low levels of formal training or academic capital. This was partly the reason why networks with formal organisations were not limited to owner/managers and businesses with higher levels of academic capital, but were a predominant feature of the field-conditioned SNP:

It's amazing, I do not go about telling people but frankly speaking I'm not ashamed telling you or saying it. I dropped out of SHS [Senior High School] because my interests were different from what I was pursuing. Through primary and secondary school, I used to help teachers draw on the blackboard as there were not enough textbooks to go round all the students in the Volta region – this is where I picked the skills from and somehow it developed into something today. (Prince)

Closely linked to this observation was the intertwining of economic and artistic logics (Scott, 2012) which was a significant driver of the observed SNP. Historically, and relative to formal businesses, informal businesses tend to embed social and non-economic considerations in economic action (Henry & Sills 2006). This disposition was reinforced by artistic logics shaped by the industry structure, and was interwoven into the habitus of agents, so in as much as frequent references were made to 'business' which implicitly implied an economic motive, the constraining effects of this habitus was effective in the field:

Doing signage is so interesting that you might work hard and strain yourself not because of the money, but interest. When it's done well everybody appreciates it. It's like molding a new vehicle, you're excited, and it's not about who is going to buy it, or how

much it's being sold, that's the nature of our job. Sometimes as you drive around you see your signs and you get excited ... at that material moment you don't even think about how much you were paid for it (Teddy).

Unlike marginal retailing activities that informal businesses were historically noted for (Hart, 1973), participant informal businesses operated in a relatively more sophisticated industry that required capital-intensive equipment (discussed in Section 5.2.1). As it may appear to an outsider, this industry context sat uncomfortably with field agents' limited economic capital, invariably SNP reflect how the businesses deal with these cultural imperative operative in the industry. They do this through close associations with agents and businesses mostly within the informal economy, and by striving for field 'imposed' objectives that were more cultural than economic. In this regard investment in cooperation was institutionalised as more valuable and presenting better possibilities than in capital equipment. This field-specific *illusio* was believed to offer a better prize, and was hence legitimised by players in the field (Bourdieu, 2000).

As part of situation-specific script that drove SNP, ownership of advanced equipment was the preserve of a dominant few, however not investing in tangibles like equipment in themselves did not imply competitive disadvantage, instead failing to belong to a 'fraternity' with its own rituals, rules of engagement, schemas, and institutional logics that constituted cultural codes which in turn conditioned agents' 'feel for the game'. Hence, there existed intangible support and reciprocity in the relationships in the field; participants thus warn that a business may not succeed if it exhibits non-collaborative tendencies. So aside exigencies of the industry driving the informal businesses to network, other implicit institutional codes at play in the field reinforced this position and imposed a price for extreme agency:

Yes, it [networking] is very strategic because if you decide to be an island, I'm not sure you can survive because you might need somebody's help but because they realise you always want to be alone, nobody is going to help you out. It's very very critical. (Allan)

Yes I think sometimes we invest in whoever we are dealing with to help the person [informal business] out. Me for instance, if a colleague needs money to buy papers to work and calls me, I do help if I can, and I get him [informal business partner] to do jobs for me in return in future. (Teddy)

A corollary finding is the small size of the market for their products relative to installed capacity of equipment as illustrated by this business owner/manager:

Unfortunately the people who are producing plant and equipment for the printing industry are not looking at markets like ours, and the major equipment producer in our business is Heidelberg, a German company. They produce equipment which in a day should be able to produce (if it's a 50 page book) about 20,000 copies in one shift of 8 hours, so 1) the cost of the equipment is high 2) our market scope is so small that you will have a lot of unutilised capacity if you think you want to do most things by yourself. So you can only go in as much, and not beyond the capacity of the market to absorb the products. (Steve)

This observation is in sync with larger macro-level structures that housed the industry and market (discussed in more detail below). Just like most developing economies, Ghana lacks local manufacturers of industrial equipment, coupled with the relatively low economic capital investments, individuals and local businesses in Ghana rely heavily on used imported products, including industrial goods that in many cases were not specifically built for the Ghanaian market:

I did mention our home-used [second-hand] MO machine – I started paying 2 years before the machine was brought from abroad, as we speak I owe 10,000 Ghana Cedis, but we are still managing things. (Mark)

This finding tied closely with the other structural constraints in the field described above, rendering SNP as habitual frames of reference for filling capacity and lowering investment for businesses and agents active in the field (Tatli et al., 2014).

#### *Formal regulatory influences*

Regulatory demand and relationships have also been found to shape strategising practices (Jarzabkowski, Lê, & Van de Ven, 2013; Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen, & Van de Ven, 2009; Whittington et al., 2006). The printing industry in Ghana was not a highly regulated industry hence informal printing businesses were subjected to the common statutory regulations that applied to most small businesses operating in Ghana. A number of factors from the side of the regulatory bodies as well as informal businesses acted as constraints and enablers that drove SNP of the informal businesses. Non-compliance to formal statutory regulations identified in Section 4.4.2 was one of the sources of their informality, and hence low levels of bureaucratic capital that underlay a significant number of the drivers of SNP already discussed above. It was observed that despite high levels of illiteracy in Ghana, regulatory agencies couch literature and information, and compliance to these regulations in ways that made them less accessible to most of the agents of these informal businesses who had low

levels of capital that could facilitate easy comprehension and, maybe improve compliance (Joshi et al., 2014). This more or less reflected formal sector domination of the regulatory mechanism, given that formal arrangements were historically introduced to side-step existing informal ones that existed before the institution of the formal economy (Nchito, 2011). There have been isolated outreach programmes targeted at informal businesses in the past, but the following comments illustrate the problem:

There are challenges, now the major challenge I face is about taxing. In the past I was not too good with that, I had to pay a lot of penalty and all that before I straightened up this business. In the past IRS and VAT were two separate entities, but they are now joined together so it makes things easier. When I did my IRS, I thought it could cover for VAT – later I was charged for violating the law for two years, so I had to pay a huge penalty which really got me stuck, but God being so good I was able to come out of it. I plan to become formal and put accountants; marketers etc. in place in 2 years. (Teddy)

Last year 2013, some auditors came from VAT and IRS offices and requested so many things and I produced what I have according to how the work is going – receipt book, invoice, and everything. The only thing I do not understand even up to today after their auditing is they say after the 15% VAT, I had to calculate and charge another 15% VAT when I'm selling papers to other printing houses – and I do not understand. Every month I do my VAT returns on the small profits I make so when they insist I pay another 15% I do not understand. Meanwhile they have charged me that I did not have proper records and I still do not understand, but after further reflection I did - I still have some penalty to pay, but they are government and I do not want to challenge them. (Mark)

Obviously Mark is not conversant with the fact that VAT and IRS in addition to other revenue agencies have now been merged and operates as one tax collection body called GRA since 2009 (Ghana Revenue Authority [GRA], 2014), it also depicted the dynamics of the on-going power relations between the dominated and the dominant. The informal businesses did not portray resistance to these formal regulatory procedures imposed by dominant formal institutions. Rather, they resort to 'quiet non-compliance' (Bayat, 1997, p. 54) or strategies of what is referred here as 'convenience compliance' to navigate these constraints imposed by formal regulatory structures. Field-specific 'commonsense' (Tatli et al., 2014, p. 11) nurtured the worldview that the enforcement regime provided a leeway to defer compliance on an 'as-is-needed' basis. This logic of comply only when it was convenient and worthwhile, as opposed to proactive continuous compliance was ingrained as the norm, rather than the exception by the informal businesses. In the process, this locally constructed assumption

amongst the informal businesses, which more or less was a deviation from the formal regulatory institution's established ideal, became normalised and reproduced in the dispositions of agents of the formal regulatory agencies:

Deterrent penalties apply, but it is not invoked as a first step, tax collection is devoid of force, the main means by which taxes are retrieved is, if for some reason they need some certification or documentation from the tax office, they are made to pay all arrears that have accrued. (Tax Revenue Officer)

This reactive structurally-mediated disposition, which more or less was a response by tax revenue collectors to the cues they gleaned from practices of informal businesses (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), was further reinforced by other lax enforcement practices including the tax office's tendency to concentrate on large formal tax payers because of the relative ease and lower costs of getting them to comply (Joshi et al., 2014). This, in turn was driven by technical and human resource capacity constraints alluded to by a Tax Revenue Officer. Hence, despite the fact that revenue officers knew the operations and locations of the informal businesses, deferred compliance and enforcement, poor record and book keeping of relevant documents needed for assessing the informal businesses' tax rates (Joshi et al., 2014), uncomfortably long queues at the regulatory offices (GRA and RGD), in addition to other constraints described above, shaped field regulatory structures in which the informal businesses operated.

A chief state attorney who doubles as a registrar of companies at the RGD in response to his experience with business registration and certification compliance made this comment:

Formally, these businesses [informal businesses] were not complying with the annual business registration licence renewal regime, but we have taken steps to ensure they comply, actually by law if you fail to renew it elapses. But we do not enforce it, what we do is that if you need anything on your file in future, we ensure you meet these requirements and pay all monies owed as a condition.

He further admitted their complicity in the tendency of the informal businesses to seek alternative strategies in meeting their business objectives in the following statement:

There is ignorance, some people do not know about these procedures, others know but feel lazy to come to this place [RGD headquarters in Accra]. You see formally we had only one office (just here) in Accra, so which ever region you were in Ghana you had to come down here. But now we have opened three offices in three of the ten regions, so

one factor was the distance they had to travel. Others just do not want to honour these obligations; in fact most of them are right here in Accra.

In most cases, third parties or middlemen with varied interests and stakes (economic, political or social) in the informal businesses, or their agents were deployed in myriad SNP and arrangements to either meet these requirements, exploit business opportunities (economic capital) availed by these regulatory structures, or to overcome constraints they impose on access to economic capital. Non-compliance may raise formidable formal barriers to economic capital from potential formal organisation partners, thus activating other kinds of capital in political, social, and religious ties and associations was a characteristic part of the 'rule of the game' in their SNP (Bayat, 1997; Meagher, 2014).

#### *Macro-level and societal (Field of Power) influences*

As Vaughan (2008) also observed from reading Bourdieu, SNP of informal businesses were driven by the larger field of power in which the informal businesses were nested. These included influences from the broader social space within which SNP of the informal businesses happen, and were identified as economic, socio-cultural, technological and political. Representing an overarching field within which all other social practices function, it is obvious that some of the findings already reported above were mediated by the field of power. For instance, the history and development of the informal economy phenomenon in Ghana may be traced to political and economic decisions taken by governments and those with political power (Breman, 1999; Hart, 1973).

Representing a colonial legacy (Bayat 1997; Demissie, 2007; Meagher, 1990), and coupled with modern globalisation, one of the theories of the informal economy phenomenon postulates the unequal and hierarchical modalities of exchange between informal and formal sectors (Jones et al. 2006; Williams et al. 2012; Chen 2012). These political and economic influences changed its position from a first and dominant economy (Nchito, 2011) to a second and dominated economy as indicated before. This then drove how the informal businesses formed strategic networks, more so, the nature of their relationships with the dominant formal organisations and their institutionalised bureaucracy, as well as the forms of mediation they required in the relationships as they reach for market opportunities controlled by these dominant organisations.

For example, the dominant formal economy represented a field of generalised or large-scale production where economic capital forms were dominant, relative to the informal economy

that is historically a field of restricted cultural production because of its relative autonomy from market considerations in their transactions (Anheier et al., 1995; Everett, 2002). Informal businesses therefore produce ‘cultural goods’ primarily for the consumption of other informal participants of the field, in such cases internal socialised criteria guided production (Everett & Jamal, 2004; Oakes et al., 1998). Again, their products are segmented as ‘cultural goods’ (Anheier et al., 1995; Wacquant, 1993) because compared to the formal economy, the informal economy historically employ atypical resources, management and production practices in their operations (see Section 2.5), these take place in the field of restricted production. However, due to the volume of business, domination, and significant colonisation by the formal sector (Everett, 2002) described above, the informal businesses were disposed to producing competitive ‘economic goods’ for formal sector consumers and agents external to the production of their ‘cultural goods’ (Everett & Jamal, 2004). They thus relied on strategic networks involving partners in informal and formal sectors, by means of capital accumulation and conversion to meet this requirement imposed by a dominant field of power (Hardy & Grenfell, 2003).

Furthermore, the regulatory framework influences on SNP described above is a reflection of the political field or the larger regulatory regime in the country. Capital configurations within the field of the informal economy have also been subject to changes in tandem with political, economic, and technological developments over time. Contrary to early theorisations on the phenomenon, the political will to clamp down on the informal economy phenomenon by developing country governments like that of Ghana is weak as politicians draw on political gains from the masses operating in the informal economy (Dewey, 2014; Gërxhani, 2004). As a result, and unlike in most developed countries (Chen, 2012), the phenomenon has become more or less legitimised. For example, we recall in Chapter 3 that SSNIT recently set up an Informal Sector Fund to cater for the peculiar needs of informal sector participants.

In a related development, an out-going Minister of Employment and Social Welfare at the inauguration of a national secretariat to provide administrative and technical support to the National Committee on Informal Economy, emphasised that the then government’s determination to create decent jobs and reduce poverty could be realised when the informal economy was encouraged to operate efficiently and effectively, by making it more competitive and business-like. A deputy minister of Finance and Economic Planning at the same event decried the situation where hawkers and squatters had been chased and their goods destroyed by city authorities without any appropriate options, suggesting such actions



only aggravated the already high rate of poverty among the citizenry ('New Secretariat for National Committee on Informal Economy', 2010). Thus, far from an agenda to eliminate the phenomenon, the general secretary of the central body of organised labour in Ghana (Trades Union Congress) recently joined other stakeholders in legitimising and calling for the regulation and development of the sector in the following comments at a regional congress on the informal sector:

Government should extend laws regulating the formal sector to the informal sector and ensure they are implemented to the letter, this will ensure a more organised sector, which can greatly contribute to building Ghana's economy. In the formal sector, the employee has a formal contract with the employer, pre-defined work conditions, and job responsibilities. He gets an assured and decent fixed salary with perks and incentives, and has a fixed duration of work time. He is also covered by a social security for health and life risks. However in the informal sector, the employee is not entitled to such privileges. This suggestion, if regulated appropriately, can improve upon even what it contributes to GDP, it will help government in even collecting its taxes. (Extend laws governing formal sector to informal sector-TUC, 2015).

Acting as an 'everyday participant observer' (Watson & Watson, 2012, p. 686), the researcher found that these comments were synonymous with sentiments in the larger Ghanaian society that was calling for better and innovative strategies to get informal sector businesses meet their tax obligations, rather than to bring a stop their operations. This was yet another witness to the legitimacy the phenomenon seemed to be enjoying at the time. This finding further bears witness to neoliberal theories of the informal economy phenomenon espoused in Section 2.5.2, where a group of society may perceive informal economy activities as legitimate rather than illegal, even though their activities may fall partially or wholly outside formal regulatory and institutional boundaries (Webb et al. 2009; Webb et al. 2013). In this particular instance, the union leader was selectively pushing for those provisions in the formal regulatory framework deemed beneficial to this group of informal sector participants.

Coupled with high levels of unemployment (Overa, 2007), more educated participants with academic and other forms of capital by virtue of their training and trajectories have entered the field. This development contrasts the historically poorly-educated participants engaged in marginal and survival activities, who despite providing goods and services that were also consumed in the formal sector (Hart, 1973), were barely involved in long-term business relationships with formal sector organisations. A marketing and communications manager of

a formal firm client network partner (FCP1) explains why he is involved in the networks of informal businesses:

For instance I know this guy [owner/manager of CAS], he was my classmate and in fact he was better than me in university so I'm saying he is suddenly incapable because he set up his own small printing business after failing to find formal employment? No I will reserve some job for people and businesses like these any day.

In addition to affordances provided by the technology field, the informal printing industry which is now engaged in relatively more sophisticated operations, draw on a range of technological artefacts that are sources of influence on SNP of the informal businesses, this is reported in more detail in a later section.

Additionally, dispositions towards strategic networking amongst partners for guaranteeing some supplies were shaped, and reinforced, by macro-level social structures and influences from society or a national habitus (Vaughan, 2008), bearing witness to the influence of the Scottish context, which is characterised by a small economy on the content of small business networks (Shaw, 2006). Every Ghanaian business is conscious of the unreliability of electric power supply and the related power rationing regime. So since informal businesses lack economic capital necessary for the acquisition of alternative sources of supply, their SNP enables them to virtually 'move house' to partners who have uninterrupted power supply, or those that have made alternative arrangements, in order to complete jobs and contracts as scheduled anytime they experience the often unannounced cut in power supply.

As noted above, compared to their formal business competitors, informal businesses have valuable capital in their flexibility and speed, consequently, this practice enhances their ability to deliver these advantages to especially formal client partners. SNP of the sort therefore enhanced their ability to exploit their informality and the associated flexibility habitus as a form of capital, whilst making up for other capital deficiencies. An agent made this comment about their relationship with other informal businesses doing similar things:

We are cool, because for instance if there is power cut now, I have a gen [generator] ok, so if you have to deliver a contract and the lights are out or your machine breaks down, you need to contact someone who has similar equipment or me with a generator to help you out. So to succeed, it pays to be good and nice to everybody in the industry. (Prince)

An informal printing business owner in a news story (Accra New Town: The hub of printing industry, 2013) re-affirmed this point in his submission about how they manage power cut problems:

In order to avoid such embarrassing situations, some of the printers have come up with an arrangement that enables those who do not have electricity to go to their colleagues who have it to continue their printing jobs, after which the two parties share the income according to the volume of job done by each of them.

The global economic field with its new order and trends in international trade, coupled with Ghana government's response resulting in increasing political and economic ties with the East, especially China had effects on the informal businesses and dovetailed into their SNP. The value of trade between Ghana and China reached \$5.6 billion at the end of 2014, surging from less than \$100 million in 2000 (Ghana China Trade Valued at Over \$ 5 billion, 2015).

This fundamental structural shift is 'forcing' the internationalisation of the strategic networks of the informal businesses. Price competition from Chinese printing houses based in China and locally-based ones owned by Chinese, but mostly operated by Ghanaians in the informal economy has been lamented by the informal businesses. In response, there was an increasing trend towards establishing relationships with Chinese partners locally and abroad, since they provided access to cheaper equipment, and also because it was a lot cheaper to produce in China and ship down to Ghana. Invariably these developments were reinforced by the regulatory import tax regime:

It [sector] has changed greatly, business was booming, but now we do not print textbooks in Ghana anymore, we now do small magazines and flyers. The jobs are now in India and China because it's cheaper there, cost of production is low, scale is larger, raw materials are sourced there and also it's tax-free when you import textbooks into Ghana. So they do everything there and ship it down. So, all those network partners who print large volumes like 50,000 or 100,000 books are engaging other partners in based in China.

All the above influences work together at the macro-level, but have significant structural effects on the fine-grained micro SNP activities that strategists of the informal businesses engage in at the micro-level.

### **5.3 NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS**

This theme identified the interdependent behaviours amongst the informal businesses and network partners. Myriad of relationships were found to exist amongst them, which may be

characterised into two broad types: cooperation and co-competition. These had socio-spatial and temporal dimensions, and also varied with partners and exchanges thereof (presented in more detail in Section 4.5). The nature of the relationships was impacted by both structural and agential factors that shaped actors' habitus and dispositions towards these two main interdependence orientations in the networks. In the following, cooperation and co-competition are presented as subthemes of the main theme 'nature of the relationships'.

### 5.3.1 Cooperation

Cooperative relationships existed to a lesser extent than the co-competitive. Cooperative relationships were predominantly with network partners that the informal businesses did not perceive as competitors because they were engaged in dissimilar line of business or activity, over time however, a cooperative relationship may evolve into co-competitive. An important finding in this study, as we will also see in their co-competitive relationships, was how the informal businesses operated with particular rules and expectations that defined and promoted specific notions of competition in their SNP. These rules and expectations were somewhat tied to field exigencies such as capital scarcity and distribution amongst field agents. Perhaps, because of their limitations in critical forms of capital, which reinforced their dominated position in the field (as such forms of capital were defined and safeguarded by dominant formal field players), collaboration in all its facets was salient to their operations and survival:

IPP2 is in a different business. They are into paper printing, books and all that. I am into signage..... papers and books come my way but I can give it to him [partner] if I want a very good job done, so I will not call them competitors because we do not do the same jobs. Printing is very broad and [partner] does not do signage and all that. They also bring work here when need be. (Teddy)

The cooperative relationships primarily involved informal agents and businesses that shared similar informality trajectories and habitus, as well as formal organisation client partners. Through cooperative relationships the informal businesses seized businesses opportunities that otherwise would have eluded the network. Job offers from existing and new clients that fell outside their specialisation and capabilities were not turned down. Instead, and in sync with their social conditioning, that nurtured indifference to probity and moral uprightness relative to tenets in formal setups (Bourdieu, 1981) the jobs were accepted with the intention of getting network partners with that speciality in the industry to execute in return for a 'cut'

(token) as they prefer to call it. They more or less ‘front’ for these partners and assume all the risk that accompany the execution and delivery of the job to the client, which in some cases bore the subcontracting informal business’s trademark and invoice. Somehow, there were socially structured motivation, strategies, and controls (which are elaborated below) that rendered this practice acceptable and good sense of the game in the field (Vaughan, 2008). This SNP accorded the informal businesses scope benefits, which more or less were economic capital investment-free. They instead gained economic capital from job offers from client and potential client partners that were beyond their immediate scope of activities, that otherwise would have eluded them.

Secondly, cooperation with ‘third parties’ and ‘canvassers’ was a field-specific lore that had delivered benefits to individual informal businesses and their networks, since it enabled them execute contracts that ordinarily were outside their configurations of social, economic, and bureaucratic capital. Thus, cooperating with this type of partners rather than competing, was deemed more appropriate and meaningful by the informal businesses, despite the seeming unequal distribution of the value at stake:

Yes, the competition we look at it in two ways: In this sector, there are two sets of players. There are those of us who have machines to operate, but there are others we refer to as ‘canvassers’ who do not own machines but by virtue of their networks with people are able to win contracts – so they sort of go and bargain, get the contract and then come run it on our machines, and pay us a small chunk of the profits they make. We have the machines which incur maintenance costs but they don’t, yet when we go soliciting for jobs somehow they end up winning the jobs, so we end up bearing most of the costs. They do not have the setups but know how to go out there and get the jobs so we no more see them as competitors, we cooperate with them; their offices may be their cars. (Tim)

The operations of these ‘third parties’ and ‘canvassers’ was confirmed by the following comment:

So these are some of the ways we come into contact with them [informal printing businesses]. There are also some kind of middlemen along the way, they do not come in portraying that they do not have the print houses, but come to you for the business and tell you we can do this for you as if they are going to execute the project, but then sublet to these informal businesses. Sometimes if you ask them for formal third party

requirements, they give you all and tell you quietly we do this with this guy, so the middle men also come in. (FCP1)

Apparently it was these cooperative relationships that often metamorphosed into co-opetitive relationships when ‘third parties’ and ‘cavassers’ later set up their own informal printing businesses. For some of these field agents who lack field-specific cultural capital to deliver printing goods, cooperative relationships with the informal businesses were strategies to initiate contact and relationships with field players before entry. For others, this practice was a temporary stopgap measure. For example, an informal business partner of CAS (IPP3) with about five (5) years standing in the industry was at the time of fieldwork operating more or less as a ‘cavasser’ from his car in response to a temporal loss of equipment and premises which were locked out due to rent arrears. In this scenario a previous mostly co-opetitive relationship with network partners became temporarily cooperative. Despite the involvement of a similar set of partners in these cooperative and co-opetitive relationships, the nature of the exchanges in these two types of relationships (discussed later) were dissimilar.

As prior references indicate, these cooperative behaviours and practices take root in field structures, habitus, and capital of the agents involved. In addition to those already identified above, structural features of the informal economy: ease of entry, relocation, displacement, folding-up, and re-opening (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987; Gërkhani, 2004) shaped dispositions and enabled these cooperative behaviours aimed at pursuing varied stakes, interests, and identities (via capital mobilisation and conversion) that alternative courses of action could not afford the cooperating informal field agents and businesses.

### **5.3.2 Coopetition**

Similar to Damayanti (2014), it was found that SNP of the informal businesses and their network partners pivoted around co-opetition, which is the phenomenon of simultaneous competition and cooperation with competitors (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Peng, Pike, Yang, & Roos, 2012). Again, as stipulated by field-specific scripts, a notion of the competitor was culturally constructed. Other informal business network partners that traditional business strategy notion will identify as competitors, since they possessed similar set of capabilities and resources that each can employ to easily produce the other’s products/services (Grant, 1995), and also because they produced same principal goods targeted as the same set of consumers (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008) were not conceived in that light or as rivals per se. Rather they see themselves as colleagues and partners in a similar line of

business, thus making a distinction between this set of partners and those that were involved in the cooperative relationships described above. Co-operative relationships exist amongst formal businesses too, however the degree of concessions made here illustrate differences in these similar set of practices. Also, taking a cue from Tim's verbatim quote about the activities of 'canvassers' above, this group of network partners will include the other set of players with which he identifies his business. The relationship is very cordial and reciprocal, even though all informal business participants acknowledge the fact that they do many similar things:

Even though they are competitors, they are not your enemies. You need to be able to work with them, let's say the work you cannot do, you can be able to refer it for them to do for you. So, although it is a competitive industry, it's a cordial one. We have serious competitors but they send us recommendations on work they cannot do, but think we can do. And some work probably we can, but think we don't have the time to do it, we recommend that it's sent to them. It's a kind of 'formal informal competition', so we are competitors but not enemies. (Allan)

I don't think he [SGC] is my competitor because he has opened up to me to the extent that, if he gets any equipment and he thinks it will be of benefit he doesn't hide it from me. He tells me go in for this and not that, or I went in for this and it did not help me, so don't do this or that. When I get new equipment, he does the installation for me and when he also has difficulties in installation I help out. When he cannot meet a deadline because of workload, I can even go and take control of his machine as well. (Teddy)

Coopetition logic was a shared and co-constructed perspective that promoted a mutuality cultural frame stemmed from myriad micro, meso and macro influences elucidated in section 4.2 above. Amongst other things, economic and bureaucratic constraints, industry exigencies, as well as historical antecedents rendered cooperation with competitors worthwhile, despite the competitive nature of the printing industry (Shaw, 2006). These cultural imperatives may be laden with the historical 'social economy' disposition of informal businesses (Ferman & Berndt, 1981) in which business relationships were conceived to be founded on trust, social obligation, commitment, and reciprocity, rather than pure market exchanges (Henry & Sills, 2006). These findings suggests that a systemic logic (Splitter & Seidl, 2011) operates and acts as frames such that informal business agents in the field (different from outsiders) fail to see competition as competition, risks as risks, performance as performance, or outcomes as

outcomes (Golsorkhi et al., 2010). They rather tended to operate with their own field-conditioned scripts.

Through co-opetition, the informal businesses deploy and share in their variously endowed stocks and configurations of capital (by virtue of both similar and varied sets of social, economic, and political footprints) pertinent to their cultural production of printing goods and services. In the process, they assumed temporary and ever changing roles and positions in the value chain, and also made concessions as needed. Co-opetitive practices were therefore employed to maximise present and future opportunities for the network. This may mean for instance, a partner in a similar line of business losing out in the short term by either securing offers and yet not executing the contract themselves due to limited finances or time constraints for instance:

Sometimes because you are down with a supply [input] that a partner in the same line of business has, or you have loads of work to do, you can pass jobs on because it's like a pool. You try to handle all, you lose all, and you lose your business. But you pass it on to him, he [partner] returns the favour and everybody is happy. (Lenny)

Invariably, co-opetitive relationships and practices enabled the informal businesses to pool both tangible and intangible resources by sharing of equipment, supplies and expertise, which in turn enhanced their speed and flexibility advantage. Additionally, it widened business opportunities by ameliorating individual scarcities in specific and critical stocks of capital, that acted as barriers to securing such opportunities. Like cooperative relationships, co-opetitive relationships represented an arena for capital accumulation, conversion, and exchanges amongst network partners, but importantly, 'favors' (Scott 2012, p. 238) that characterised these capital mobilisation and exchange practices (described in the following section), enabled them overcome their bureaucratic and economic capital deficiency that promoted networking with dominant formal organisations for economic capital.

#### **5.4 PARTNERS AND EXCHANGES**

This theme sketches the identities of network partners, their stocks of capital and field positions, interests, and stakes, as well as the kinds of tangible and intangible exchanges they engage in with the informal businesses.



	Non-competitor	COMPETITIVE NATURE OF ACTIVITIES	Competitor
SOCIAL SPACE	Formal	Formal non-competitor partners (A)	Formal competitor partners (B)
	Informal	Informal non-competitor partners (C)	Informal competitor partners (D)

**Figure 5.4 Categories of network partners of the informal businesses** (Source: Author)

Figure 5.4 illustrates the various categories of network partners of the informal businesses in a 2x2 matrix with the social space of the partner on one axis and the competitive nature of their activities on the other. Formal organisation clients and supplier partners that occupied formal field positions and engaged in non-competitive activities are in the first quadrant (A). The second quadrant (B) represents formal businesses in the printing industry who were involved in competitive activities, and the third quadrant (C) include other informal business and individual agent partners that were either not set-up like, or were not in a similar line of business like the participant informal businesses. Informal business suppliers also belong to this group. This group also involved agents or managers and bureaucrats in formal organisations, acting consciously and unconsciously as per their personal informal social space dispositions, different from, but not necessarily in contradiction, to those of their formal organisational positions. The fourth quadrant (D) captured other informal businesses set up like the participant informal businesses and operating a similar line of business, and therefore engaged in competitive activities.

Depicting a social space of agents, organisations and institutions, and characterised by struggles, interests and stakes, the informal businesses and network partners wield alternative kinds of playing cards (capital) that they brought to the game (Everett, 2002). As indicated above, the informal businesses and their informal business competitor partners (quadrant D) possessed high volumes and configurations of embodied field-specific cultural capital by virtue of their skills and work in art, graphics and design. These were valuable but unavailable to other field agent partners such as formal organisations and their agents. Same applied to the objectified dimension of cultural capital that was possessed in design and

printing equipment and materials, available to informal businesses and their agents to varied extents, depending on their individual stocks of economic capital.

Institutionalised cultural capital (academic capital) which entails educational credentials was generally scarce amongst the informal businesses when compared to formal counterparts in Ghana (see also Koto, 2015). Again, this form of capital varied in volume amongst the informal business agents as a function of their levels of formal education (Table 4.6). However, and as pointed out before, it is the least significant in the cultural production in the field. Even though economic logic is not paramount to the sense of the game, cultural production in the field was primarily targeted at end users in the field of large-scale production where economic logic was given primacy. So economic capital was an essential currency in the exchanges, in this vein the informal businesses generally came from a position of limited economic capital. By virtue of diverse trajectories with social spaces, agents of the informal business had struck many different types and levels of contacts and acquaintances with others in social, religious, economic and political circles, which endowed them to varied extents, social and political capital that they brought to the game of field-specific SNP.

Formal business client partners and their agents (quadrant A) wield higher volumes of economic capital, but require capital embedded in printing, design, and branding products and services for communication, and promoting their brand and corporate image. This was often aimed at increasing stocks of economic capital, which was symbolic in the field of formal business, given the consecration of economic logic in the field (Hardy & Grenfell, 2003). Additionally, formal state organisations (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) and their political agents needed the value embedded in this repertoire of cultural capital possessed by the informal businesses to effectively carry out government business, whilst enhancing their political goodwill (position), and ultimately perpetuating themselves in political power. On the flipside, they occupied a position of economic strength (capital) as they seek to buy the largest chunk of the output of the informal businesses' cultural production.

The only group of input suppliers that the informal business participants made reference to were formal and informal business input material suppliers, but informal business suppliers were more pertinent to their SNP. However, relationships with these informal suppliers were comparatively near arm's-length compared to other business partners. Invariably suppliers had economic capital held in stocks of input material needed by the informal businesses for

cultural production of printing and design products for economic consumption in the field of power.

Formal business competitor partners (quadrant B) like those in quadrant D, that included participant informal businesses were also endowed with embodied and objectified cultural capital for printing, design and branding, but unlike those in quadrant D, agents in quadrant B possessed institutionalised cultural capital, conferred by their formal training which was symbolic and legitimised by the field of formal business. Furthermore, formal business competitor partners possessed higher volumes of economic and bureaucratic capital, which were also valued and symbolic in the field of formal business relative to the informal businesses. Informal non-competitor partners in quadrant C were the most diverse and remote, and included informal businesses and middlemen identified in their cooperative relationships in Section 5.3.1 above.

The informal businesses engaged in noncompetitive activities possessed cultural capital by way of their printing sector specialisation (which was different from those of the informal businesses in quadrant D), whilst the middlemen came to the game with economic and bureaucratic capital that flowed from their other forms of capital such as academic, economic, social and political. They also use these forms of capital to trade for bureaucratic capital that the informal businesses lack, but which they require to access economic capital. Like these ‘professional’ middlemen, a similar configuration of capital was associated with partners who were individual agents positioned in business, social, political, and religious organisations.

As in the field of music production (Scott, 2012), it was found that intermediation was an important logic of practice in the exchanges in the field of the informal printing economy. Partners usually used their stocks and configuration of capital in the exchanges to facilitate and broker the conversion of the cultural capital of the informal businesses into field of large-scale production market opportunities (economic capital). This was enabled by their holding of ‘intermediary’ forms of capital that were necessary passages in lieu of the informal businesses deficiency in these, and other forms of critical capital. In light of this observation, the exchanges of capital between the informal businesses and their partners are best understood in terms of forms of mediation in the transition towards market opportunities (Scott, 2012). In related vein, the informal businesses had affinities for these partners to varied degrees, traceable to identities, biographies, and field positions. These two facets of

‘forms of mediation’ and ‘degrees of involvement with partner groups’ constitute subthemes under the main theme ‘partners and exchanges’ and are described in the following.

#### **5.4.1 Forms of mediation**

Producing cultural goods that had appeal outside the ‘sub-field’ (Watson, 2014, p. 101) of informal businesses, suppliers, and consumers (restricted production), required that the informal businesses found a means to connect the sub-field to the field of the informal printing economy that was wider, and included formal consumers, competitors, suppliers, regulators, and ultimately, the field of power (large-scale production). Their cultural capital thus needed to be converted into economic capital of value to these field players. In the processes, partners played varied mediation roles in consonance with the biographies and capital configurations possessed by the informal businesses, their owner/managers and agents. For instance, this was the reason for the slight differences in the extent of use of ‘third party’ arrangements between the group of owner/managers with higher levels of formal education and formal sector work experience and the group with different set of biography outlined in Section 5.2.1.

So, whilst the owner/manager of SSC for instance was more likely to draw on his academic capital which had higher rate of conversion to bureaucratic capital required to transition towards market opportunities or economic capital in the field, the latter group relied heavily on broker partners such as the middlemen for this stock of capital. In some cases, the middlemen were employees of the formal organisations in the network, in all cases though, the informal businesses deployed their dissimilarly conditioned social and political capital required for accessing formal organisations and their agents, who more or less were the conduits for economic capital:

But you know... one thing about this business is that, for most of the jobs, we are involved as a third party. That’s the nature of the job because the job will not come directly to you from the contracting company. You know everybody has a way of going about this. For instance, you may have a relationship with the manager of Fidelity Bank – you [middleman] will not introduce him to me directly as the boss of this company [informal business]. You will come for a quote from me [informal business] for him as if you are the provider of the services/products. So, most jobs do not come directly to us, apart from few from VFS. We provide the branding, printing and signage for most of them [formal businesses]. (Prince)

For instance, my subcontractor might be a worker in Fidelity, Stanchart, Tullow, VFS, or NHIS. They do not have printing businesses but someone who works there, or, has a friend who works there has links. It's about 'whom you know'. The other good news about this thing is if you school in the city here, you might end up having a lot of friends who work in big companies, so they will link you up to jobs in there. (Teddy)

The informal businesses' deficiency in economic capital and how it engenders mediation by partners endowed with other forms of capital, in order to connect to market opportunities was a defining feature of the exchanges. Aside from capital accruing from their social and political contacts, some of the middlemen held the economic capital needed to fund or pre-finance projects, 'pay their way through' (Tim) or win 'favours' from political and apolitical agents within formal and informal organisations and spaces. Formal business competitor partners with economic interests were also involved as intermediaries, who possessed stocks of capital unavailable to the informal businesses. They therefore form an integral part of the practice of connecting the informal printing business to the field of large-scale production. The following comment by the business development manager of a formal printing business competitor partner (FPP1) further illustrates this point:

They [informal businesses] could be attractive at times because there are times that through their contacts they are able to get some really good business contracts, but because of their informal structure and limited financial capacity, they are unable to undertake such contracts, so they will normally come sit with us and sublet those contracts to us. So at the end of the day, they are still attractive even though they are a form of risk, but certain times they contribute to our overall sales.

An employee of a dominant informal business in the field (SGC) also commented on the role of political capital in the field:

So it's about favouritism when it comes to this type of business, and the issue about political associations comes in, probably they are in the same political group or association, so we don't do politics, like we belong to this party or that party. We are neutral when it comes to those companies that support this or that side, and you know in Africa when the opposition comes they take business from you so we are neutral when it comes to that. (Allan)

Again the forms of mediation and involvement in the networks by partner groups were dependent on the informal business's other stocks of capital and their rates of conversion. 'Favours' were also carried out by individual informal agents who may not necessarily have

economic interests, but positioned in business, social, political, and religious organisations. They intermediated with economic and in some cases, bureaucratic capital by virtue of them being spending officers or occupying formal positions. A manager of a formal printing business competitor partner (FPP2) recounts why the informal businesses often win contracts (economic capital) away from them even when these informal businesses fell short of formal regulatory requirements (bureaucratic capital):

They are able to do that because of the ‘whom you know’ factor, old boys from school, church member connections, and stuff. So they are able to get some of these contracts, more so when the contracting company or client, or the individual there has a stake in the work. He would try and make sure that the contract sum is such that it does not meet the minimum threshold that is required for it to go to tender, even if meant splitting the contracts into bits. So in so far as it’s below the minimum threshold, he can do sole sourcing or limited tendering of a few individuals so he can get to give it to people of his choice to have it done.

Owner/manager of CAS recounts how he draws on favours from his social capital as a Rotarian for the benefit of the network:

I think over the years, Rotary Clubs in various regions in Ghana have become our friends and therefore whenever they have any upcoming events, be they CSR or outreach programmes, and thus require anything that has to do with our industry, they try to fall on us, by virtue of the fact that they acknowledge you as a fellow Rotarian. Also, some of them who are in mainstream corporate environment are able to identify you as somebody they can rely on to deliver for their corporate needs. (Eric)

The Communications Manager of a formal business client partner (FCP2) shares his thoughts on how the informal business’s non-compliance (low bureaucratic capital) dovetails into his business’s own formal reporting requirements (high bureaucratic capital):

Well earlier, I said that we do only about 20% of requirements with them, and these ones are not on large scale so we can find a way round it. But everything is about... if you can prove it with a receipt or invoice – you see private businesses are not like public sector ones where you need to go through tender before getting things done. Private businesses have a leeway. In terms of documentation, I know they themselves do not keep documents, you can imagine if the guy comes in and you ask him how many print outs have you done in a week? Already he is running away from taxes, but whichever way, they must eat.

In effect, these varied group of partners described above, through their capital accumulation, conversion, and exchanges effectively mediated the relationships by unleashing the economic potential (which is symbolic in the field of large-scale production) of the cultural capital and production of the informal businesses. These alternative forms of capital and the manner in which their exchange acted as resources for mobilising this economic capital is referred to as the generation of exchange-value (Scott, 2012; Skeggs, 2004). The informal businesses through their SNP strive to consolidate this exchange-value in order to sustain the interest of audiences and consumers from the field of large scale production, to whom they and their cultural goods as objects of exchange appeal (this process is discussed in more detail later). Of course, this process was effective within the dictates of their individual dispositions and strategies, shaped by their individual stocks of capital, field conditions, as well as the larger macro-structures within which they operate. An excited employee of SGC illustrates how their association with middlemen enable them to transition towards market opportunities (exchange-value) in the following comments (see also Figure 5.5):

It's about 'third party' and you wouldn't believe a small company like us go about branding a whole lot of banks... I don't know if you've been to the banking hall of Stanchart or Ecobank – you see the branding of the wall, hall, and whole place? We did it, you will think a big formal company sitting somewhere did it, but it's a third party arrangement. (Lenny)



**Figure 5.5 Liberia-bound finished job executed by FPS via ‘third party’ arrangements** (Source: Author)

In another vein, exchanges amongst informal competitor businesses were concentrated on the actual business of cultural production of printing goods of economic value, through the deployment of field-specific cultural capital and systemic logic. In effect, this was where the actual nurturing of the exchange-value happens, where the alternative forms of capital were harnessed into economic products. Thus, far from competition logic that characterises the consolidation of exchange-value by agents (Skeggs, 2004), informal business actors mobilised and deployed alternative forms of ‘intermediary’ capital to enhance the network’s future exchange-value, rather than individual business’s or agent’s exchange-value. This is similar to the case of all contributors to a product or event in the field of music production (Scott, 2012). This process entailed the ‘sharing’ of cultural capital in all three major dimensions (embodied, objectified, and institutionalised) as well as social and political capital variously distributed amongst the informal business competitor partners.

Those companies [informal business partners] will get it from political associations but they still will bring it to us if they think we can help them. We may not have access to those things [political capital] but when they beat us to get the job which they know we can do, they definitely bring it to us. We don’t have problems with that. [Cephas]

More knowledgeable agents (often associated with tenure in the informal printing sector), be they owner/managers or employees, and who were better endowed with embodied cultural



capital, were accorded symbolic status and expected to play important mediatory, mentoring and value addition roles in the network. Similarly, informal businesses endowed with more advanced equipment and materials enjoyed a dominant status which stemmed from their higher volumes of objectified cultural capital. These individually possessed capitals were availed to dominated network partners, who often combined business and contracts that may also manifest from their higher stocks of social and political capital, with these symbolic forms of capital, resulting in the production of cultural goods with economic value for the network to exchange. Speaking on networking opportunities available to their business and others in the field, an employee of SGC shared his thoughts:

His [informal business owner/manager] wealth of knowledge, because he has been in the business for a very long time – it's his wealth of knowledge and contacts both in the business [as in the same kind of business] and clients. (Lenny)

Owner/manager of a partner informal business to SGC espouses the symbolic nature of printing equipment, their manufacturing origin and their power of domination.

Yes, it's [SGC's laser engraver] one of the most expensive and most advanced machines we have in Accra. People have the Chinese version, Korean and all but his is from America, and I'm into that. All my equipment here are from America, I have the table-top one – this is the table-top version of the engraver (this is Roller and his is Epilog). So since I cannot afford, I have smaller versions of the machines to do my indoor ones and when it's beyond me, I send it to him.

Through this capital mobilisation, conversion and exchanges, the informal business competitor partners use the scale, scope, speed, flexibility, and low cost generated as potential exchange-value, which engendered future market opportunities in the field of large-scale production. This exchange-value accrued as long as players from this field of large-scale production assigned value to this potential. Recounting the reasons why his business involved informal businesses in their networks, the Publicity Manager of a formal business client partner (FCP2) opined:

Interestingly another reason we go to them [informal businesses] is to do with when we need very emergent jobs, jobs that require that you know... like yesterday we needed some print-out to be done and we've run out of time, so we approached this people and immediately the job was done in less than 24 hours. The issue to do with the cost is also a factor but we do not look at the cost bit that much, we still have a few that anytime we go down to them; we get our jobs done faster and cheaper relatively.

These findings thus demonstrate how partners were mediating access to market opportunities in many different ways, through capital exchanges that were deemed valuable in the field, but even more importantly, those that were pertinent to the informal businesses' practice of strategic networking *in situ*.

#### **5.4.2 Degrees of involvement with partner groups**

Having outlined how capital types, volumes, and configurations possessed by the informal businesses and their partners mediated the exchanges, the production of goods, and the development of exchange-value, this section explores how and why field positions, habitus and dispositions shaped the way the informal businesses identified with particular groups of partners relative to others.

Consistent with group and collective identity literature (Polletta & Jasper, 2001), informal businesses having owner/managers with minimal formal sector experience tended to be involved in closer long-term relationships with other informal business competitor partners relative to formal counterparts, despite this groups' possession of critical stocks of capital that potentially opened market opportunities for the informal businesses. A number of reasons may be attributed to this, an example is homophily (Brass et al., 2004) that seemed to thrive amongst the owner/managers of the informal business and their businesses because of similar social structural trajectories:

If I have to enter that kind of relationship with some other company or any big company, it's gonna be too formal and restrictive and ... you'll be restricted, I mean there will be boundaries. They give you a lot of limits, you can't go beyond this – you have to come... you'll be called to come and bid. When you deal with companies that don't come to you and you are the only one going to them all the time...but I am happy he [dominant informal business partner] comes to me to work and I also go to him and that's the good thing that I'm not getting from big companies'. (Teddy)

“You do not need too many red tapes to be able to take decisions...with them [formal businesses], they have everything set up, everything in place but here we do a lot of multitasking, and so for us to do anything with anybody, the person should be like-minded otherwise it is not worth it”. [Cephas]

The following comment by a formal printing business partner of one of the informal businesses (FPP3) confirms some of Teddy's concerns in the above quote:

No we don't do those things [legally-binding written contracts and documents] because the point is even if you do it, the person is informal and even finding him... Because many of them you do not even know where they operate from, they have no operational bases so if you are dealing with them, I mean unless he comes to you it's difficult to track him down so how then do you get to do some of these things? It just wouldn't work.

The 'avoidance' of direct involvement with formal businesses by this group of informal businesses, in spite of the business opportunities (economic capital) that were lost, were partly a result of unconscious scripts, defined by field-specified co-competitive disposition and practices (extensively outlined above). This script promised them benefits that flowed from other partner groups, especially those from formal organisation clients, even if they were not directly involved with them. This finding replays the relatedness and embeddedness of single instances of strategic practice in a broader set of field-conditioned logic of practice. For example, and as noted above, relationships with suppliers were more arm's-length, because from experience credit facilities to most of the informal printing businesses that established long-term relationships with suppliers had been abused, and fraught with defaults. Somehow this situation was instigated by amongst other things, their field-conditioned disposition towards pre-financing jobs brought in by partners, who in the end fail to pay in some instances.

Most of the things we do work more or less in the abstract, because there are no concrete agreements on the financial details before work on projects are done, faith and trust become very important in the relationship. The sub-contractor [informal business] most of the times has to pre-finance, so we all work first in anticipation of a future payment when work is finally delivered to the client. (Lenny)

Over time, this practice became normalised as part of their habitus, and was reinforced by their improvised coping strategy that disposed them to sourcing inputs from other informal business competitor partners that were in good standing with the suppliers, even if they were not directly involved with these suppliers.

It [long-term relationships with suppliers] places me in a better position, if I work with suppliers, I'm honest, and pay on time, it helps my business. It gives me urge over others who don't because - I have competitors who anytime they get a job/contract have to come to me, or go round to look for finances before they go do it, but with me I make a phone call and I get my supplies. (Eric)

Sometimes it's even with suppliers, because of your track record with them some suppliers exhibit a level of trust, so by just saying I have contract but money to buy paper to execute it, the supplier agrees to meet your paper needs on condition that maybe you produce a post-dated cheque. We do that for them [partners]. (Steve)

Another important finding here were undertones of power play by owner/managers with higher levels of formal education and those with some formal sector work experience. Some agents and informal businesses with longstanding experience in the informal printing industry also portrayed similar tendencies. Historically, the informal economy is characterised by low entry barriers (Gërkhani, 2004), consequently the informal printing industry had been witnessing large numbers of new entrants, which has invariably heightened competition in the field. Facing high levels of competition, the above field agents were engaged in position-taking by questioning the legitimacy of most of these new entrants whom they blame for the declining quality of output, and hence fortunes of the businesses in the informal printing industry. In effect, they consciously avoid doing business with this group of informal business competitors, who in some cases were middlemen partners who later integrated forward to set up their own printing and design businesses:

I consider them not really professionals because these days we have a lot of Art colleges and others around, so because businesses are scared of large budgets, immediately they perceive your quotes to be on the higher side, especially if they compare them to the larger formal firms, they rather look further down, I mean those I will call amateur who somehow compete with us for business but fail to do a good job. (Eric)

They [middlemen new entrants] are amongst those who are compromising quality in the industry and thus bringing all players into disrepute you see, and they often charge ridiculously low prices because of their low quality. Another development is that Ghanaian business people are collaborating with Chinese, who bring down equipment and materials from China to set up and compete with us, but the problem with them is that the Chinese printing materials are not well conditioned for our kind of weather so they easily and almost immediately fade because of the high temperatures. But we insist on quality, and we have quality machine bought from US, as well as quality materials, so we do not do business with them. (Prince)

As we will see in a later theme on 'building and managing the relationships' quality in the network is very key to retaining high value clients because of the disposition of the informal businesses to passing jobs from even their most valued clients to partners. In addition,

because referrals were commonplace in the field, some partners were wary of the extents of their involvement with agents that they consider to be not up to the task.

We've had situations when people bring jobs and we don't do it because we do not want to be associated with something shabby, because most of our work is by reference so it's our hallmark, so if you move away from it you lose your business, so we try to put in maximum effort every time. (Lenny)

Within the field therefore, and despite the high levels of cooperation and co-opetition, power struggles amongst agents prevail thus shaping partnering affinities.

## **5.5 BUILDING AND MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIPS**

This theme deals with key activities, praxis, heuristics, and processes involved in forming, governing, utilising, and dealing with partners in the relationships. This theme literally captures how the SNP identified in the previous themes were 'operationalised', in that it sketches the contours of the underlying field-conditioned micro-practices and everyday routines that embed the broader set of SNP of the informal businesses. This theme includes three subthemes: 'partnering practices and strategies', 'dealing with inherent risk and mistrust', 'satisfying and retaining clients' and are presented next.

### **5.5.1 Partnering practices and strategies**

Contrary to received notions of strategy as secretive and non-transparent endeavor (Whittington, Cailluet, & Yakis-Douglas, 2011), a shared disposition towards open communication was internalised by the informal businesses and their partners as an important factor that drove their networking activities. This disposition was reinforced by way of praxis and artefacts employed in the SNP (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Mobile phones, PDAs, emails, text messages, and WhatsApp messenger for instance were technological artefacts used by the informal businesses and their network partners for continuous sharing of ideas, and impressions about partners and their conduct, as well as businesses' strategic conceptions. The popularity of mobile phone use in SNP for instance is not surprising, as this may be considered standard business practice, including in formal businesses, however what is insightful is 1) the seeming significance studies on informal business attach to it and 2) their 'situatedness' and divergent meanings we may gain from the way they are used here (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Schatzki, 2006).

Meagher (2014) for instance reported that mobile phones and business cards were critical to the extension and strengthening of local and international business relationships of informal business owners in Nigeria's informal sector, despite the tendency to associate agents and their activities with low educational and technological capital. Donner (2006) also showed the affordances mobile phones provided for business networks of informal businesses in a low tele-density context in Rwanda. He found that a large proportion of respondents bought their first mobile phone for business purposes, and illustrated how by integrating personal and business use of mobile phones their business networks grew. The use of mobile phones and the other technological artefacts engendered flexible SNP, by allowing and normalising information sharing and the 'signing off' of business agreements and transactions on the move, in light of their aversion to bureaucratic rule following.

As indicated before, bureaucracy runs counter to field structures and practices, as participants believe these often impose restrictions and red-taping. The level of openness amongst partners includes sharing experiences with particular inputs, machines, and supplies and advising partners accordingly. Demonstrations of machines and equipment partners intend to buy are sometimes shared with others. This habitus of open communication also involved file transfers via emails, pen drives, and CDs as well as site visits. When asked about what expectations they had of partners and what makes the relationships last, the owner/manager of an informal business had this to say:

Aside designing he [ informal business owner/manager] is very technical, like two weeks ago on a Sunday, I had to call him and ask him – I'm working on a glass (two glasses), how do I join them together? I mean he solved my problem for me just on the phone. You understand? It's not about money, he just went like – use clear silicone, that's it. I used it and it worked for me, so he is very skilful and does not hide anything from anybody, he is open to everybody and I have learnt that – so this whole place is open (Teddy).

Others responded to a question about how their relationships with others doing similar things were:

Oh, you have to have a good relationship with them, if your machine breaks down, you have to link up with another company to sort you out. Most of them bring their jobs here, so as far as that kind of communication in the industry is there you have no problems – do you understand? (Evans)

Sometimes it's also difficult to have all equipment installed in your own place, so at a certain point, somebody [partner] will have to do something for you. Similarly some others also contract to us, so on the basis of doing open business, we do have good relationships with organisations we consider in very positive light, in terms of output and so on and so forth. (Steve)

Unlike popular notions in formal businesses, most of the informal business owner/managers and their agents did not have significant formal sector work experience, and therefore had peculiar historical and structural trajectories, which led to their 'localised' construction of risk and decision heuristics. As such, a habitus that facilitated open communication inclined their disposition towards sharing resources and experiences. Relative to formal businesses, informal businesses are known to embed social and non-economic considerations in economic action (Godfrey, 2011). This disposition is interwoven into the habitus of agents, so in as much as the informal businesses made references to 'business' and 'price competition' in their discourse, competition of exclusiveness aimed at maximising profits was not necessarily the norm.

Informal meetings and brainstorming sessions were included in the management of the on-going relationship. In some instances, and far from a hard and fast rule, network partners who were drafted into a project go over to the office of the (sub)contracting informal business for an initial understanding of the specifications and deliverables before the actual work gets to other partners' offices. Furthermore, as it often took a lot to exclude partners from the network, such meetings were also held when need be to discuss the progress and performance of particular partners. This practice has also been observed elsewhere (Larson, 1992). The owner of an informal business recounted the chitchats and gossips that characterised the beginning of his relationship with most of the partners he currently works with in the industry:

At that time, that was the only printing shop for digital paper works and all the printers I know used to meet there so it became like a 'joint'... even if you do not have a job, you still want to go there and meet people so if you're not there for a day, it was like you were missing something. That was the main place. (Teddy)

Relationally, this habitus of open communication and informal sessions nurtured a culture of references, which characterised the relationships in the network. References were critical for establishing new and maintaining old relationships with suppliers, competitors and clients alike (see also Gulati, 1993). Even though owner/managers with formal work experience and

trajectories mentioned active marketing campaigns in their initial stages of business set up, references largely substituted for marketing and advertising for potential clients and other partners in the field.

Well in the past we went around a lot, knocking on doors and selling our services to people very vigorously, and because I was coming from a marketing background, it was easy for us, and that is how we built our portfolio. But today, it is mostly by referrals.  
(Steve)

While the incidence of small businesses establishing close business relationships with client firms to reduce formal marketing expense is not novel as previous research supports this finding (Baines & Robson, 2001; Shaw, 2006), what is interesting however is the level of practice-structure consistency that underpinned this finding, and also how these references were utilised. In contrast to traditional reading of strategy, and the normative business disposition to exclusively maximise such opportunities (Shaw, 2006; Whittington, Cailluet, & Yakis-Douglas, 2011) partners even recommended their competitors to clients for business. Partners did not necessarily consider this practice as competitive disadvantage or high risk. However, institutional logic and implicit codes of conduct, which foregrounded openness and fine-grained information exchanges amongst network partners on a continuous basis, rendered this practice meaningful and manageable. Subsequently, this and other networking opportunities opened or closed to partners because of the level of open discussions, interactions, ‘whistleblowing’ and references which acted as social controls amongst network members (Larson, 1992).

At some point, it could be referrals where a client or partner will call you and ask what you think about giving some work to a company [informal printing business]. (Allan)

Yeah, virtually per our good works, we do not have to advertise. Because of the nature of our good work, the quality we offer, we have clients who have come to us advertise for us instead of us going to advertise ourselves. (Lenny)

Open communications and references were more or less the conduits through which business and networking opportunities with certain partner groups, that might otherwise be unavailable or closed to some of the informal businesses (by virtue of limitations imposed by their capital volume and configuration) flow. According to the owner/manager of SGC, personal association-related references did not make much difference in his networking opportunities compared to business-related ones, which underscored the importance of a good testimonial



from clients and other partners in the field. An MCS employee describes a referral practice in the field:

When you are unavailable to take up a job from a client, we first call the company [partner] and ask if they have the chance to execute the specified work, after which the contact and direction [address] is given to the client. (Francis)

The open communication logic is partly encouraged by a disposition towards unwritten and undocumented forms of communication. In fact, from the thread that runs through the accounts and observations of the SNP of the informal businesses, these artefacts limit the performance of their field-conditioned practices (Rasche and Chia, 2009).

It's [documents] only done when requested, because most of the contracts allow very short time for delivery, so the time required to do those documents and paper work could as well be used in executing the job. The job is like military, it requires a whole lot of discipline and long working hours. (Prince)

The main document however, that came across as a symbolic artefact (Whittington et al., 2006) in the relationship was the invoice. Invoices are common artefacts in business transactions, but again, they were put to non-traditional uses besides the conventional. Invoices were mainly used to keep track of partners' accounts and indebtedness for future and periodic 'settling or balancing' (as field agents preferred to describe it), via bartering exchanges in some cases. Invoices were also used to record payments done or received from other partners on a partner's behalf by another. They were symbolic, as they have largely replaced more detailed, written and legally-binding contracts and agreements, receipts, as well as accounting and finance records amongst the participant informal business and other partners.

It gets to a time we can work for about a year or two without payments, he [informal business partner] notes everything down –we all have our invoices. I can work for him to the tune of [amount] and he can also work for me the tune of [amount]. We just have to sit down later and balance ourselves, so when I get a job; there is no need for me to pile up money to go to him. I readily go there to do whatever, however we have a limit. (Cephas)

Owner/manager of FPS in responding to the salience of signing contracts and agreements or otherwise in their relationships with partner informal businesses retorted:

No, because of the nature of the relationship you just have to note your invoice and date as to what you did, and sometimes we don't even talk about costs till it's time to sort it out together – this is how much I charged the client, how much are you giving me? (Teddy)

That of TVC distinguishes practices with formal clients from those amongst themselves:

Most of the jobs we do are paid upon delivery so there is not much of a contract. If I have a contract with a formal client, in that case I need to sign a bond of contract, for formal clients we may do contracts but amongst ourselves we do invoices, sometimes on the phone. (Tim)

Even with most formal organisations, invoices from informal business partners have become established or normalised as the only requirement as they found ways to reconcile their bureaucratic institutional logics with the largely non-bureaucratic logics of the informal business and their agents. Owner/manager of MCS and a branding manager of a formal business client partner illustrate this in the following comments respectively:

Hmmm that's [documentation] another issue that we normally overlook. They do not demand it; they only expect you to give them an invoice (Mark)

Some few weeks ago, I was working with some guys who do my billboards for me, they are always at your beg and call. I asked how much they will charge, and they mentioned a paltry figure, and I know a formal firm would have charged 5 times more. So I chose to top-up and made an offer but they couldn't produce even an invoice I asked for, the next day they brought a bad one and I advised them to go for something better, and come back. By the third day they came with it and issued me an invoice. (FCP3)

This finding however, contrasts with that of Sleuwaegen and Goeduys (2002) who found that large formal firms are unwilling to engage informal businesses because of the difficulty in entering related tax information, and accounting system that arise from such transactions. Invoices were also used as tools for collusion amongst informal business partners when pursuing particular jobs or contracts. Some client partners often compare invoices; especially middlemen need information to seal contracts so they often consult the informal businesses about price, quality, and delivery times in order to make informed decision. For instance, who does what, and how long it takes for each of the processes along the way so he or she could have a fair idea about how the whole project will pan out before a contract is secured from a principal contractor:

Sometimes we even swap invoices and all that just to chase a job, because there are some of the jobs when you go for it, you need to add up invoices, raise up invoices, lower some to see how best you can work around. So that's how it is, you need to have good relationship with them [informal business partners], whether they are close or far away. (Teddy)

Partnering strategies and practices therefore illustrated how the informal businesses deployed material and technological artefacts, and work flows, which interconnected the actions of different socially dispersed individuals and groups, in their conduct of SNP in the field.

### **5.5.2 Dealing with inherent risk and mistrust**

The informal businesses acknowledged that risks were inherently associated with the field in which they operated. This derived mainly from their creative industry perspective, their informality habitus, as well as the informal aspects of their operations, which were characterised by non-existing copyright protection practices and limited opportunities for legal remedies. This generated a set of socially-constructed risk, and its associated definitions of trust and mistrust, all of which resonated with the interests and stakes at play in the field (Vaughan, 2008). The major forms of risk and mistrust identified concerned non-payment or under-payment for work done, appropriation of partners' samples, backbiting partners to formal organisation client partners in an attempt to take over their contracts, and poor performance by network partners. Some of these were hinted above in connection with the other themes, however a deeper and more extensive account is provided here.

When you send soft copies of designs and samples, unscrupulous partners steal them, ask someone else to print and thus are able to offer clients a cheaper quote, and by so doing take the contract away from you. Also because we do not sign contracts we sometimes lose money to subcontractors. (Pearl)

There are several risks. For example, I had a client we were doing an in-house monthly newsletter for; we had signed our first agreement to do a 2 year programme. At the end of the 2 years the client was so happy that we signed a contract for 5 years, but we were not doing everything by ourselves, so a certain aspect of the work we contracted out. The person [informal business partner] we contracted picked one of the works, went to the client and said I do this job for this person [SSC] to bring to you so you are better off dealing directly with me. (Steve)

Trust is very important, for example, if I take a job from Nestle and I cannot do it, and I give it out to a partner – there are people who can even run at your back and go get it

directly from Nestle, so it will not come to you in future, so trust is very necessary in all these. (Allan)

In dealing with these, a shared understanding of inherent risk was internalised as normal and bearable, they were therefore not managed with dedicated governance mechanisms. Drawing on a shared habitus, they cope by subtly deferring to more ‘off-the-cuff’ strategies, as well as social controls, and sanctions that were an inherent part of the logic of practice in the field. Furthermore, non-compliance and informality have conferred some gains to these informal businesses through the passage of time despite the associated risks; this ingrained schema was thus more or less cultural. The informal businesses had therefore normalised risks as a major component of their habitus, that shaped owner/managers’ and agents’ cognitive processes and actions. This kind of risk disposition is also predisposed in the informal businesses’ seeming ‘disinterestedness’ in economic capital (Bourdieu, 1998), which is further structured by the history of the informal economy phenomenon, and espoused in their preparedness to ‘accept anything small that will enable one feed at the least’ according to Allan, an employee of SGC. A similar disposition was portrayed in the following statement made by the owner/manager of MCS:

In the past, we only had a few titles and types of books but now others have also found opportunities and are now competing with us. But, I do not know – God being so good, everybody gets his or her daily bread from it. It means as suppliers are increasing, demand is also going up, we are getting that hint.

The informal businesses drew on the open communication, ‘whistleblowing’, and reference practices in the field to identify suitable partnering candidates by asking other partners (see also Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999), as they cannot rely exclusively on tangible cues in the form of samples alone. However, they acknowledge an element of gamble as part of the game, since the informal business may have to deal with this candidate on the first few occasions before deciding whether to keep the relationship for the long-term. Depicting a kind of fraternity with its own rules of engagement, schemas, and institutional logics, informal business agents were aware of each partners’ clients, especially high value formal organisation client partners. Hence, news quickly went round anytime a partner seemed not to be in charge of a job from his known client, and instead a competitor partner who is not known to be the main point of contact of that client. This kind of social control included implicit unwritten sanctions such as alienation from the network, leading to loss of future opportunities, more so

if it turned out that this competitor unduly short changed the ‘legitimate’ informal business partner.

Maybe others have seen you working for a company like Unilever and then somebody else brings the same Unilever job to their office, they will often call you and it’s like – how come you lost that job? Maybe your prices were on the higher side or what? Or you lost because of this or that. (Teddy)

If you try to cheat in this industry, there is no problem, you will win but when something goes wrong, you bear the cost/risk alone. (Francis)

Yes, everybody must exude a certain amount of power to be able to convince the target [client] that they are in a better position to satisfy them than the other person [partner], this is rife so we all do it. But, you must do it within acceptable parameters because if you don’t and you are found out you lose out eventually. (Steve)

Additionally, in dealing with risk and mistrust, the informal businesses tended to be more inclined towards performance-related understanding of trust in consonance with their field-specific exigencies identified and reported above. In particular, partner group affiliation amongst the informal businesses in the printing industry pivoted around performance-related issues, as some partners eschewed association with those that delivered poor quality output. This was also due to the practice where jobs were easily passed on, to the extent that the informal businesses may risk reputation and brand by asking partners to execute jobs in their business names.

We do most of the things they do, and we do most of their stuff. In fact, we have situations where they bring their stuff for us to do for them; because of confidentiality clause, you can’t just disclose their identities, so sometimes we just do it in the background. (Lenny)

For the informal businesses therefore, trusting a partner meant the partner had what it took to deliver comparable levels of quality, service and dependability, since these were essential ingredients for building switching costs for formal business client partners especially. There is also a sense that the products or outputs of these informal printing businesses go a long way to define the formal organisations in most cases, as these have implications for their brand, identity, publicity and market positioning. The formal organisations, especially formal business client partners were therefore confronted with high switching costs, so they tended

to stick to few suppliers of these products, and when they had a reason to switch, they did not return easily.

Yes, you have to think about it because printing is such that if you for instance create a concept for a bank and you are not reliable, consistent, and they switch to another company, it's like you've lost the opportunity/client for life. Because the clients, anytime they start with you, they go with you each and every day. But, once you play lazy you lose them and when somebody takes them that will be the end, they will not come back to you again. (Teddy)

Yes, they [relationships] are strategic. There is a deliberate attempt to get certain types of clients, develop their trust level for you to that extent that without you they cannot get their needs met, so they always will come back to you to get the quality you have always delivered to them, your timely delivery and flexible payment options. (Eric)

Conscious of this field and industry-conditioned habitus, the informal businesses employed SNP, including those to do with dispositions towards managing risks and mistrust in ways that were attuned to this habitus. Through a performance-related definition of trust, the informal businesses reduced the risk of non-payment or under-payment, especially those to do with clients rejecting jobs, whilst retaining their most valued formal organisation client partners. Invariably, they did not have to deal with a greater task of acquiring new ones given their limited economic and bureaucratic capital, which often imposed barriers. Additionally they did not have to attempt winning lost formal client partners back, given the low prospects of success, because of high switching costs that tied them to existing suppliers. Employees of the informal businesses remarked when asked about the role of trust in the relationships:

Trust is that let's say you entrust something to somebody [partner] to deliver work to you at a specified time and quality but returns with substandard work, delivered late and tries to find excuses whilst they have assured you they will deliver at the right time and quality. At the first instance, we might let it pass but if it continues, it means we have to change whoever no matter what the fellow did for you, so the trust is important. (Allan)

It's [trust] the basis of everything in this sector. If I don't have trust in you that you gonna do the work at the specified time and the best quality for that matter, I cannot give you anything because if you don't have trust in this business [partner], you'll definitely lose your clients and your partners. If you are not trustworthy, why would someone entrust something to you? (Rose)

The trust is built on your ability to always deliver on time and doing a neat job with minimal waste of clients' paper and materials. They would have paid for prior aspects of the work before your turn, so you can imagine if you have to discard them because of defects. Just imagine he brought you 1000 pieces and ends up with 800, they will not come tomorrow because trust has been breached. (Ben)

Despite the salience of good performance amongst the informal businesses and network partners, an implicit rather than explicit rule is the level of tolerance businesses were expected to have for 'non-performing' partners in the network unlike findings in formal businesses (Larson, 1992; Uzzi, 1997). The relationships often existed informally and indefinitely as partners may be temporarily side-lined, hence to be blacklisted totally, a partner must have done something grievous. This further illustrates a disposition towards the use of social controls and sanctions to cope with inherent risk and mistrust in the relationships:

It takes a lot to do that [dissolve a relationship]; unless the person [partner] is really terrible, it takes a lot. In such situations we [partners] do not totally cut the person off - we get somebody else. Because they [some partners] get the opportunity most of the time they take advantage of that and begin to misbehave - we have a lot of people we can choose from, so we deal with this guy today and the next could be three months' time. They say familiarity breeds contempt so if he doesn't see you for so long, he [partner] will exert more effort in the next job. This is one way we manage the situation because you deal with them for so long and they take you for granted. (Lenny)

If we need to get involved with somebody [partner], we consider 2 or 3 and then decide who are the best in price, time of delivery, and the best of payment plans. Once we are able to do one or two businesses with them and it goes well, we include them as part of the people we work with. We do not however entirely exclude the others but keep them in our system so that as and when we need them we are able to fall on them. (Eric)

Again, these cultural imperatives may be laden with the historical 'social economy' (Ferman & Berndt, 1981) disposition of informal businesses, where business relationships were conceived to be founded on trust, social obligation, commitment and reciprocity, rather than pure market exchanges as referred to early on.

### **5.5.3 Satisfying and retaining formal clients**

This final subtheme under the main theme more or less describes the overarching objective of the practices in the other two subthemes, which were primarily aimed at satisfying and

retaining formal clients. This objective was the most salient of all the reasons identified in the literature that informed why and how businesses build and manage strategic networks. Amongst others, received strategic management knowledge identifies competitive advantage, at least over businesses outside the network, as a pervasive objective (Jarillo, 1988). This could be achieved through superior performance in the satisfaction and retention of customers, however for the informal businesses their outmost aim was to satisfy and retain this this group of clients, even if it does not necessarily lead to identifiable competitive advantages for the individual businesses or the network. An owner/manager makes a distinction between this group of partners they refer to as clients and their informal business competitor partners that contract jobs to them:

It happens [contracts from informal business competitors]; I will say the fellow is my colleague, not my client. I will use the word colleague rather than client. (Eric)

This may partly be due to the fact that economic performance measures and indicators were not foreground in their SNP and discourse, and also because the informal businesses and their partners were less disposed to proactive analysis as part of their strategising activities that may reveal underlying competitive (dis)advantages. Furthermore, the informal businesses were less pressured to achieve short-term economic goals, which also played into their laissez-faire competitive disposition. This is coupled with their heavy reliance on network partners to achieve their objectives, and meet obligations to formal clients. A minimum requirement that guaranteed business for the long-term were practices that collectively satisfied and retained this group of valued clients.

Also, if you do not have the financial resources, you may accept a job and subcontract it to someone you believe can deliver the level of quality you expect. So you supervise and monitor to be sure that quality is not compromised. So what it means is that you could have executed that job if your financial situation were ok. The main motivation is that you wouldn't want your client to go about looking for someone to do the job, you will rather take it and deliver the job to the client as if you executed the contract. (Tim)

We would let the fellow down, I mean the client through someone's recommendation came to you and if you can't help the fellow out, it is better for you to find where they can do it from your collection of business in a similar line and recommend the fellow so that they can achieve their objective. (Allan)

Additionally, the informal businesses were satisfied as long as they got repeat business from this client group, invariably other business flows from the references of these existing formal



business clients so long as they defer to the whims and caprices of this dominant partner group. Reflecting a system of domination suggested above, some scholars suspect formal firms use these relationships to manage risk at the expense of informal businesses. For instance, costs associated with rejected goods and delayed payments may be borne by informal businesses (Chen, 2006). The following comment from the Communications, Marketing and Branding managers of formal client partners illustrate some of these points:

Yes, contracts may not come in here, they don't go into contracts like if there is force majeure I will pay for instance, and they do not do it. But only simple things like invoice when you ask for. Most of them when you go to complain after a job is done, and there is a problem, will agree to redo it for you, in most cases they are more interested in getting the job than anything else. (FCP4)

Xmas is around the corner so a lot of jobs are coming up, and there are certain jobs you may not get from the bigger formal players. For instance, things like these souvenirs [in the office] you don't get it, but you go to these smaller ones [informal businesses] and they quickly get them for you. Sometimes they look at the profit margins that they will make, the bigger ones may consider whether it's cost effective or very profitable and say we cannot do it. (FCP1)

In essence, the informal businesses fail to admit competition was an issue they were wide awake to. Instead, and partly traceable to the salience of switching costs and social controls in the field, they find satisfaction in doing what they do best for their existing clients with the ultimate aim of keeping the client in their portfolio. If in the process of satisfying and retaining existing client partners, new ones come along in the form of references from existing clients and other informal business partners, their pre-occupation was just to keep satisfying any new client partners to the best of their ability over the long-term, even if in a subcontracting role, for as long as the client could be retained in the network. Effectively, the informal businesses were 'caught up in the game' (Baxter & Chua, 2008, p. 214) of making do with existing high value clients partners relative to actively pursuing new and maybe more rewarding possibilities.

You know it's about corporate identity so you have to be specific about their colours, branding... You can't just do it anyhow – there is no competition so you have to take your time and do it best and provide good quality, that's the only way you could keep their contract. Going after business from my established clients is not a bother since you might not understand the client as well as we do. More so it's one thing winning a

contract and another delivering the required quality. For instance, I might appreciate their payment regime, which you are not privy to. (Prince)

It's all about the quality of work that you do – when you fail to deliver quality, the customer will not give you repeat business, so the main thing is the quality of the job, that's what brings them back, so competition is not a concern.(Andy)

I think I mentioned that we work with two banks; as a matter of fact, those are the ones we work with on a very regular basis. There is the prospect of having a long-term relationship with them once you satisfy them, so when we get such ones we make sure that we satisfy them so we can always be in business relationship with them. (Steve)

Thus in building and managing the relationships in the networks, the informal businesses aim individually and collectively to target this group of partners amongst the network of partners for special attention no matter in what capacity. This provided the operating principles that guided the workings and practical logic of the networks, networking practices, and their outcomes.

## **5.6 OUTCOMES**

This theme encapsulates influences and results that SNP of the informal businesses had for the individual agents and businesses, their partners, including formal organisation clients and agents, regulatory agencies and institutions, field, the state, society, and other macro social structures. SAP scholarship promotes a multifaceted understanding of strategy and strategising outcomes, that extends beyond economic or financial performance of firms, that traditional strategic management research emphasises (Jarzabkowski et. al, 2007; Whittington et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). This shift provided affordances to broaden strategy and strategising outcomes to cover their consequences for the direction, survival and practices of a range of units at various levels of analysis, including but not limited to the individual, group, organisations, industry, and institutions (Jarzabkowski et. al, 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

Organised into three subthemes, SNP of the informal businesses had outcomes at the individual, organizational, and extra-organisational levels which is covered in the following. It is instructive to note that these outcomes were not mutually exclusive, as an outcome may have influences on the others. This is because the underlying SNP influences may cut across units and levels of analysis (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). For example, it was found that the separation between an informal business and their agents, particularly the owner/manager

were blurred, even for those registered as companies (see Table 4.1). Additionally, and from a Bourdieusian perspective that eschews sharp and false distinctions between internal or external, micro or macro, objective or subjective, cognition or practice, mind or body (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Everett, 2002; Nicolini, 2013), the findings show that most of the practices identified as ‘drivers’ may well qualify as ‘outcomes’. This bears witness to how Bourdieu’s framework links the social past and social present, and thus how ‘outcomes’ may be conceptualised as structuring ‘drivers’, and ‘drivers’ as structuring ‘outcomes’ in an on-going cycle (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). A corollary finding was that some aspects of the SNP already described above explain outcomes in strategising processes that were linkable to agential influences at the individual, organisational, and extra-organisational levels (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009).

### **5.6.1 Individual-level outcomes**

This outcome analysed the personal experiences of strategising agents/strategists as individuals at a micro-level (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). SNP of the informal businesses permitted some field agents to have significant trajectories with the field before entry to set up their own businesses. Like the ‘fish in water’ metaphor (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Watson, 2014), this practice promoted habitus and dispositions that were congruent with the social space within which the SNP of the informal businesses happen. In effect, these agents became complicit in the production of this social world, which went a long way to ease their barriers to entry. It further enhanced their acceptance and legitimisation as field players, since they were able to easily fit-in and enact field-conditioned habitus (De Clercq & Voronov, 2009; De Clercq & Honig, 2011). These possibilities were also enhanced because they had to go through a shorter learning curve after setting up their operations.

No, we all have our own clients, he [IPP4] does clientele –bid for jobs and all that, but I don’t bid for jobs. I basically try to have the equipment for people to walk in or contact me. I don’t bid for jobs but they do because they are quite bigger than me and they’ve been in the industry longer than me...I used to do my works at his, so we had a relationship going before I established my own business. I did not have machines in my early years of establishment, so most of the jobs that came my way went to him, and most of the equipment I thought I will need were introduced to me by him. (Mark)

On the other hand though, the early immersion and embeddedness in the networks of the informal businesses more less constrained capital configurations and dispositions, that

somewhat may have limited the exploration of other possibilities, and courses of action in their SNP as noted in the findings outlined in Section 5.2.1 above.

As Mantere (2005) also observed, field agents conferred value-laden dominant and symbolic status to book printing machine minders, longstanding field players as well as informal business owner/managers endowed with superior machines and equipment as they had significant influences on strategic networking and business practices in the field as a whole. The personal outcome for this group of individuals was a feeling of power and mastery of the art, which they brought to bear on their relationships with field agents, in addition to field-defined gains that accrued to them from these relationships. In the process, they became attractive network partners, since an important passage in the creation of economic capital from the other forms of capital in the network was the more dominant and symbolic cultural capital, such as knowledge, experience, and advanced equipment that were associated with these dominant players. All forms of capital must somewhat be combined or traded with their stocks of cultural capital to enable partners and the network gain economic capital from the production of goods valued by the field of large-scale production. Even though an employee of SGC attempted to play it down, his subsequent submission only went to further amplify the show of power:

We are big guys but power play doesn't come in when we are dealing with others – the issue is that, let posterity judge you, let what you do talk for you. You don't twist somebody's hands to get business... No, prove that you can do it and when you do, it will come your way. (Allan)

Other comments made by the owner/manager and another employee reinforce this observation:

We don't have too much of a problem with competition. We have a niche, we aim at doing things in a certain way and most people wouldn't want to do it that way, most people are not ready for that. (Cephas)

We came to meet a lot of people, I mean a lot of people... because it's like you can't do without branding, and nobody can do without branding. Brand creates a lot of influence. (Lenny)

It is also important to note that since this dominant status is value-laden, and thus subject to current stakes and interests, the associated personal outcome may therefore be transient, and thus change as field exigencies 'renegotiate' the configurations of capital that were

legitimised as symbolic in SNP in the field. This observation is particularly revealing more so when field agents noticed that a fundamental change in the field was the increasing trend towards partnering and production in China.

The bigger informal ones [businesses] can now afford to go and print their jobs in China, they do not mind selling off their machines, get the contract and go and print from outside especially China and India. (Tim)

It will therefore be interesting to know how this particular personal outcome finding will be shaped by future trends in international trade, in addition to the underlying import tax dispensation that gave impetus to this practice.

### **5.6.2 Organisational-level outcomes**

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) defined this to mean for instance, how strategy praxis may influence firm performance, which may not be financial. From another perspective, firm-level outcome may be viewed in how mundane instances of praxis or micro-mechanisms are employed to accomplish wider strategic activity (Jarzabkowski et. al, 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). It was noted that the informal businesses did not foreground economic performance in their SNP, but strive to enhance their exchange-value intended to appeal to agents in the field of large-scale, which were largely formal organisation clients. Their field-conditioned performance therefore hinged on meeting these objectives. Asked about the main benefits that arose as a result of these relationships with partners, an employee of SGC recounted:

It is difficult to pencil down because it's a broad relationship. In all, every now and then because you have... as at now we have to send somebody [client] to a different company to work because we can't do it. We are tied up with something we are doing now, so that company [partner] invariably will do a good job for the client as we're doing here. (Allan)

An organisation was better placed in achieving the ultimate performance outcome of satisfying and retaining formal organisation clients by not competing with others per se, since they collectively mobilised and deployed alternative forms of 'intermediary' capital to enhance the network's future exchange-value rather than individual business's or agent's exchange-value. However, organisations that exhibited mistrust as well as those labelled under-performers as per subjective field practice-specific definition, tended to suffer a different set of outcomes that arose from these practices. This practice also affected outcomes

that may have accrued to organisations that exhibited extreme forms of agency in pursuing profit maximisation strategies at the expense of the other informal business partners in the network. This finding further illustrates the outcomes of power struggles and political consequences of strategising practices (Bourdieu, 1988), which serves to include and exclude, as well as to legitimise and deligitimise specific actors, choices, or practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

It was also found that SNP of the informal businesses shaped the successful performance outcomes of the businesses even in circumstances when a business was going through difficulties. Temporary situations of physical absence from the field did not adversely affect performance of business, if at all, it was the performance of roles (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) that usually assumed a different mode. Drawing on field-conditioned habitus and dispositions, the informal business had the latitude to effortlessly switch from the role of active field participants, physical located, and operating with dedicated machine and equipment at one time, to a canvasser or middlemen at another.

With this second arrangement, they engaged in cooperative relationships with partners that entailed the exchange of a different set of capital to those of their prior co-opetitive relationships with these same partners. Their value-adding role in the network was usually not hampered under such situations, to the extent that even in their passive role, their business names and trademarks remained relevant to the network, as partners in some cases executed projects with these intangible resources (capital) of passive partners. The other outcome is the leverage these SNP provided 'absentee' informal businesses to continue delivering products and services towards meeting client partner objectives.

For example, even when I'm closed down and not in the country, I am able to execute and deliver jobs to clients because all we [network partners] need to do is emails. (Eric)

Again, even though field and social structures conditioned the vast majority of field-specific SNP that were observed, agency manifested in isolated activities that underpinned the SNP of the informal businesses. Reflecting how variations in doing strategy between organisations may produce different strategising outcomes for the organisations (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), informal businesses owned by better educated owner/managers, plus those with appreciable level of formal work experience engaged in strategising choices which delivered outcomes that were somewhat different from those of the less educated owner/managers with virtually no formal sector trajectories. For instance, they were relatively more inclined to

dealing directly with the formal organisations, and also relied less on intermediaries that were active in the field. This practice was reinforced by their dispositions towards doing some initial or minimal level of active advertising and marketing, as well as their stock of academic and bureaucratic capital that was better attuned to the ‘feel for game’ of the formal organisations. In terms of outcomes for their organisations, they were better positioned in excluding so-called unprofessional and amateurish informal business agents that they believed compromised product quality and service levels expected by these dominant formal organisation client partners.

### **5.6.3 Extra-organisational-level outcomes**

An important call of the SAP perspective is to widen the definition of the strategist to include actors (practitioners) that are external to the organisation, yet have profound influences on strategy and strategising. Amongst these are myriad individual and institutional actors, and interest groups that more or less shape, and are influenced by an organisation’s strategy and strategising activities (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Strategy may therefore be construed as an institutionalised practice with outcomes for various actors or agents in several social spaces including the larger society. Hence mundane micro-details or minutiae of SNP of the informal businesses may have unexpected and significant outcomes at the meso and macro-levels (Jarzabkowski et. al, 2007; Whittington, 2007).

An extra-organisational-level outcome, which qualifies as a field outcome of SNP of the informal businesses was how they were naturalised as inevitable strategic choice. Vaara, Kleymann, and Seristö (2004), for instance made similar findings of naturalisation of strategic alliances in the discursive constructions of agents in the global airline sector. It was found that strategic networking decisions were not planned, purposefully couched and calculated, they were instead, a *modus operandi* and a case of practical coping *in situ* (Chia & Holt, 2006). Far from the lack of documented data, academic capital, and competence required for formal strategic planning, field structures often pre-empted the adoption of field-specific networking practices as a *sine qua non* if a business was to thrive in the field, thus constraining choice or agency. Because of the opportunity cost in exercising choice, other courses of action became practically unavailable to either existing or new businesses entering the field (Mutch et al., 2006), as noted in other themes and subthemes.

Another finding sheds some light on the conditions under which an agent is likely to contribute to the stabilising or effecting of strategic changes in a field of practice as an

outcome of strategising practices (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). It was found (also noted above) that some characteristics of habitus were acquired by some agents before field entry (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Vaara & Fay, 2011). For example, owner/manager of FPS established social and business relationships with partners in the informal printing industry, especially SGC, for four years before entering the field. Aside from the trajectories of potential participants with the field contributing to their legitimisation, their dispositions towards accepting field-conditioned SNP as natural would have been long internalised in their habitus before field entry.

In a related scenario, having acquired university degree at business school (academic capital) whilst working in the informal economy, an employee of SGC continued to perceive and experience SNP through an ‘informality’ lens, and thus continued to ‘comply with’ and had virtually no motivation to ‘challenge’ existing norms and practices (De Clercq & Honig, 2011). This was despite the leeway provided for influencing such decisions and practices according to own accounts (see also Shaw, 2006; Anderson et al. 2010). In effect the agent’s longstanding occupationally-oriented cultural capital undermined his newly acquired academically-oriented cultural capital, and thus habitus (Watson, 2013). Apparently, since university graduates were not dominant actors in the informal printing economy, academic capital from university education, and its associated habitus and practices were not valuable in the field. However it will be interesting to know the case of university graduates with no previous trajectory within the formal and informal economies in a future study.

Industry and informal business characteristics also had subtle but significant influences on the naturalisation of SNP as field-specific outcome. The informal businesses kept their businesses small, with the small room sizes dominated by bulky imported machines and equipment (Figure 5.6)





**Figure 5.6** TVC's bulky second-hand MBO folding machine (Source: Author)

In light of the limited space, informal businesses relied on others in their networks for inputs, services, and products they were unable to produce in-house due to amongst other things, space constraints inherited from social structures of the field including the history of the hub (Section 4.4.1). However, and true to their field-conditioned habitus, partners did not perceive the small operating spaces and scale as weakness, competitive disadvantage or constraint, in fact it was historic and a symbolic artefact, as history documents this 'smallness' of informal businesses (Blunch et al., 2001; Hart, 1973). They were therefore not vigorously pursuing growth in size as a strategic imperative, as suggested by owner/manager of FPS in the following vignette:

Graphics is so wide that it's not all the equipment you can afford or even it's not all the equipment you need to have. If you intend to have all the machines you need, you'll even not have space so you specialise on one side, and somebody else specialises on another side. So sometimes we have to swap works, like he [partner] can do something and I can finish it for him – like laminating, cutting, trimming and all that. (Teddy)



**Figure 5.7 Work-in-progress at MCS** (Source: Author)

Figure 5.7 depicts a stage in the wide range of processes in graphics described by Teddy above. Supported by the other findings, it was found that unlike received knowledge that privileges agency over structure, and treats specialisation and strategic networking by small formal businesses as one of the many options to overcome size constraints and competitive disadvantage (e.g. Dana, Etemad & Wright, 2001), a Bourdieusian analysis revealed the dynamic interplay amongst agency, capacity, strategies, and structural conditions (Gomez, 2010) that shaped this naturalisation outcome.

Additionally, it was found that situated SNP of the informal businesses was subject to influences from embedded agents positioned in formal and informal spaces; invariably the SNP had outcomes for these extra-organisational actors. For example, they included government employees or bureaucrats, as well as business managers and executives noted above. Some of their dispositions towards partnering with informal businesses were shaped by their own personal experiences, trajectories, and beliefs about the informal economy phenomenon. For example, some formal firm managers own/have owned informal businesses

and are thus more inclined to engaging informal businesses in their firm's strategic networks. Others revealed different reasons as illustrated in the following comments:

I do not agree with that argument [activities of informal businesses must be curtailed]. I strongly don't agree. Well if you like, when I step out of the four walls of this premise [formal firm where he works], I will say I am a development theorist – I subscribe to the tenet that the common good of humanity must thrive, which helps a nation to grow. If people are unemployed why do you have to go and ... mind you some of these multinationals that are into printing are not local so they repatriate their profits abroad, so why don't you give these businesses some trade? (FCP3)

I think that it is something that will be difficult to do away with – difficult because we are working in an environment or an industry where the 'whom you know' factor is rife so people will always want to favour here or there. Then again, their [the informal businesses] nature makes it such that they also serve some particular segment of the market so you cannot do away with them, and because hey... they are part of it – I mean it's a human institution ... don't forget, and there are people who will always want things to trickle down to the minors so they are there to serve that interest. (FPP4)

So in as much as they may make rational strategic and economic decisions in the business interests of their organisations, some of these business managers projected and served their personal interests and stakes alongside business interests:

Strategically, I would really love to do more work with them if their structures were OK. Notwithstanding that, we will continue with the small percentage of work reserved for them you know, to let them be a sort of a backup for us, because there are times that you want the job done tomorrow, or power is cut in that formal company or probably their system has broken down, where do you go? But I think we also have a responsibility to help them to also develop. For instance, I want to do this with you but let's put it into contract, over time they will formalise. (FCP2)

Invariably, SNP of the informal business may not be fully understood in the absence of these kinds of 'remote' influences and outcomes for embedded extra-organisational actors. These extra-organisational actors matter as they often act as preservers, carriers, or creators of strategy practices (Whittington, 2006, p. 625).

Another extra-organisational outcome of the SNP of the informal businesses was that the normalising of the reactive and convenience compliance practices of the informal businesses (with the complicity of network partners) was bringing about shifts in the enforcement of

regulations by agents within state regulatory agencies, rather than shifts in the regulations per se (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Drawing on their experiences with the activities and practices of the informal businesses, which more or less conditioned their interpretative schemes, their response to this field practice was to render provisions provided in the regulations as exceptions, rather as rules. Of course, a point made before, which needs echoing, is the role or complicity of other constraints and enablers, such as logistics needed to proactively enforce compliance. A more remote outcome, which is corollary to this finding, is how these observations may dovetail into the larger macro and societal issue of the legitimacy of the activities of the informal economy and its participants, and therefore any future efforts targeted at formalising the sector.

The SNP also had outcomes for the structure of the larger printing industry in Ghana. The informal printing businesses occupied a strategic group within the printing industry, however not as individual players competing in that social space in the industry, instead as networks of informal businesses delivering value to customers on the basis of field-conditioned systemic logics and practices. Their SNP engender resilience in dealing with power cuts, equipment breakdowns, and continuity in their operations. Also their atypical capabilities and SNP largely deliver flexibility, on-time service delivery and responsiveness, scale and scope economies, in addition to low price, relative to formal printing businesses in the industry.

## **5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the empirical findings of the SNP of the informal businesses which was socially constructed to have taken place in the field of the informal printing economy. The themes identified in the exploratory thematic analysis phase in the previous chapter were interpreted using Bourdieu's concepts outlined in the explanatory phase. The theme 'Drivers' related to enablers and constraints that drove SNP of the informal businesses, the 'internal drivers' subtheme illustrated how the identities of individuals, as based on their personal experiences and circumstances, as well as the printing businesses they operate in, shaped their particular SNP. These bordered on micro-level influences, whilst the 'external drivers' captured the meso and macro-levels', and represented field structural mechanisms such as market and sector/industry, dominant field organisations and institutions, regulatory, and societal influences. The dialectic between the internal and external drivers was noted and illustrated.

The second theme 'Nature of the relationships' described the kinds of interdependent behaviours and relationships associated with the SNP of the informal businesses. This was characterised by a notion of who the competitor was, the 'cooperative' subtheme involved partners who were considered to be in a dissimilar line of business, whilst those in similar line of business (competitors) were not treated as competitors. This group of partners were involved in the 'co-opetitive' relationships observed, which was captured as the other subtheme.

The third theme: 'Partners and exchanges' identified partners in the network, their positions in the field, and the configurations of capital they brought to the game of the SNP. A 2x2 matrix was constructed to sketch partner groups. A sub-theme referred to as 'forms of mediation' illustrated capital mobilisation and exchanges that the informal businesses and network partners were engaged in, whilst a second called 'degree of involvement with partner groups' sought to elucidate partner affinities amongst network partners. A fourth theme was 'Building and managing the relationships' which did shed some light on the micro-activities of the SNP, first the use of artefacts and workflows were captured in the subtheme 'partnering strategies and practices', a second subtheme, 'dealing with inherent risk and mistrust' reported the logic of practice that underlay the approaches to coping with risks and potential mistrust that might arise in the networks, by virtue of the informal businesses' peculiar field conditions.

The last subtheme, 'satisfying and retaining formal client partners' showed how the practices in the other themes were intended to achieve an overarching objective of satisfying and retaining this group of customers. The final theme: 'Outcomes' looked beyond economics and the local to illustrate other kinds of outcome that the SNP had at the 'individual', 'organisational' and 'extra-organisational' levels, these were the subthemes for the main theme. These included effects on strategising practices, business performance, regulatory mechanisms, and the informal economy phenomenon generally.

**Table 5.1 Exemplar Bourdieusian analytical questions answered by findings**

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Analytical questions answered by findings</b>	<b>Theme/Section</b>
Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within which regulatory, societal, and sectorial contexts do SNP take place?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.2.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of opportunities and constraints do the contextual factors generate for SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.2.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the key stakeholders with an influence to shape the SNP context?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.2.2</li> <li>• Section 5.4</li> <li>• Section 5.4.1</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are the practices of different players fed into the field in such a way as to maintain/or change the field-specific SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.4.2</li> <li>• Section 5.6.1</li> <li>• Section 5.6.2</li> <li>• Section 5.6.3</li> </ul>
Habitus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the habitual factors that inform SNP decisions and success?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.3.1</li> <li>• Section 5.3.2</li> <li>• Section 5.5.1</li> <li>• Section 5.5.2</li> <li>• Section 5.5.3</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the SNP learning and legitimising processes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.6.1</li> <li>• Section 5.6.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways is legitimisation impacted by capitals and strategies in the SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.4.1</li> <li>• Section 5.4.2</li> <li>• Section 5.5.1</li> <li>• Section 5.5.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are field forces constructed and legitimised in the SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.2.2</li> <li>• Section 5.6.3</li> </ul>
Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the social, cultural, and economic capitals that are deemed valuable, and how do informal businesses and agents access them in the SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.4.1</li> <li>• Section 5.4.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does ownership of, and access to, different forms of capital generate the location, influence, and legitimacy of field actors in the SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.4</li> <li>• Section 5.4.1</li> <li>• Section 5.4.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the dynamics of capital conversion between social, cultural, and economic forms in the SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.4.2</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the conditions under which social, cultural, and economic capital are translated into symbolic capital in SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.4.1</li> <li>• Section 5.6.1</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which forms of capital take precedence for success and survival in the SNP?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5.2.1</li> <li>• Section 5.4.1</li> <li>• Section 5.6.1</li> </ul>

Table 5.1 illustrates a summary of some of Bourdieusian-framed analytical questions that the thesis addressed in this chapter. There is a movement from agential to structural, and also from macro to micro, however these classifications are not mutually exclusive, since each of the concepts may embrace more than one dimension. Table 5.1 is an adaption of Tatli et al.'s

(2014, p. 9) proposed Bourdieusian relationality framework aimed at overcoming the pervasive dominant dichotomies in the study of entrepreneurial phenomenon.

The sections included in the table only point to snapshots of answers to the analytical questions in the findings, as these answers cut across the entire sections in the chapter. Thus, a fuller appreciation of each of these answers must be considered in light of all the other sections, but not limited to those illustrated in the table. Also the findings of the thesis included in this chapter provided answers to other related analytical questions that Tatli et al. (2014) treated under different Bourdieusian concepts to those emphasised by this thesis.

An overarching contribution this thesis wishes to make is to illustrate the generative mechanisms of strategising practices, the manner in which they are socially constructed and internalised by actors or strategists, and their influence on choices and outcomes. Given this backdrop, the discussion of the major findings, which is outlined in the next chapter is organised around the research questions identified above, rather than the five SNP themes uncovered and outlined in this chapter. This structure thus provides a better way to focus the explication of the aims and contributions of the thesis, whilst amplifying the interrelatedness of the five SNP themes. The subsequent conceptual framework developed and presented in the next chapter attempts to illustrate this broad organising frame for making sense of the relationships between generative mechanisms, social construction, internalisation, choices and outcomes.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This thesis has addressed three research questions set out in Chapter 1: (1) How do the informal printing businesses in Ghana practice strategic networking in the field?; (2) How is the practice of strategic networking by the informal printing businesses a reflection of, and reflected in social structures and practices at micro, meso, and macro levels?; and (3) How are the SNP by agents in the field of the informal printing economy contributing to the durability of field structures and practices? Within each of these questions, a number of pertinent research and analytical issues were identified in the theoretical framework (Figure 3.1) outlined in Chapter 3. This chapter synthesises and discusses the main findings from the research questions and analytical issues presented in Chapter 5 (see also Table 5.1), in light of the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. Figure 6.1 enriches Figure 3.1 by abstracting the empirical findings into a conceptual framework that depicts SNP as an enactment of field logic of practice. Again, whilst each subsection of the discussion chapter is organised into short sub-themes to enhance readers' comprehension of the main themes around which the discussion is focused, the subthemes are not definitive. Contents may overlap, this is due to the relational approach adopted here, and so each incidence of SNP observed was more or less an input into, or output of other incidents and practices (Nicolini, 2009).

#### **6.2 HOW DO INFORMAL PRINTING BUSINESSES IN GHANA PRACTICE STRATEGIC NETWORKING?**

The study has drawn on the SAP perspective to reveal how SNP unfolded in a related set of micro-activities that we may associate with network formation, governance, behavior, utilisation, and outcomes. The empirical study addresses calls in the network literature for this kind of research (Chell & Baines, 2000; Jack, 2010). The findings show that SNP are implicated in the construction of field-wide practices, and thus strategy practice of the informal businesses. This is illustrated in the intersection of the three dotted circles that symbolise socially-conditioned capital, habitus, and dispositions in the framework in Figure 6.1. Additionally, the SNP were value, power and sociomaterially-laden, as these took on particular significance in the understanding of how the informal businesses practice of strategic networking.



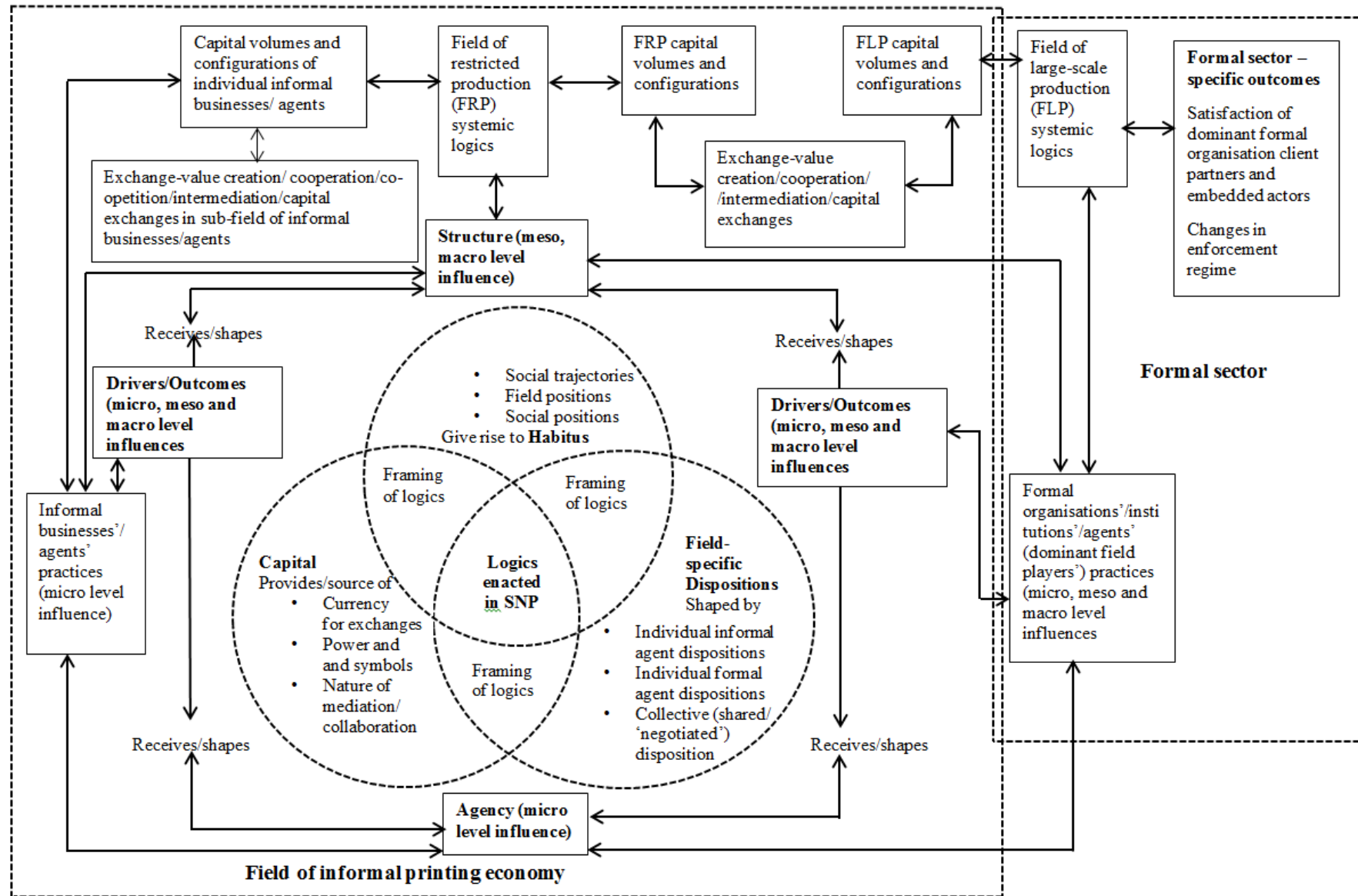


Figure 6.1 Strategic networking enacted as logic of practice in field of informal printing economy in Ghana (Source: Author)

### *Strategic networking as everyday practical coping activity for building exchange-value*

Consistent with the small business network literature, especially network content-themed research reviewed in Section 2.5.2, this analysis shows that the informal businesses engaged in networking in order to access resources and market opportunities (Grandi & Grimaldi, 2003; Lee & Tsang, 2001; Shaw, 2006), and less as competitive strategy as in Jarillo (1988). Chell and Baines (2000) for instance found that ties differ by purposes, and that there is positive association between the type of ties (weak or strong) used, for what purposes, and performance outcome in a study of entrepreneurs in England. This approach to network content research has been criticised for relying on weak or strong dichotomy in networks to the detriment of actual human interactions (Hite, 2003; Kim & Aldrich, 2005). This study extends this work by showcasing the fine-grained on-goings in the networks of the informal businesses, as well as outcomes that extent beyond internal subjective and objective measures of growth, survival, prosperity, economic, and financial performance that dominates small business network research (see Jack, 2010; Street & Cameron, 2007).

The findings reveal that the informal businesses form strategic networks for the sake of coping with capital deficiencies, and thus, strategic networking entailed the practice of capital accumulation, conversion, and exchanges via which the informal businesses drew upon alternative sources of capital, to make up for their informality-conditioned capital deficiencies as they reach for market opportunities. More so, and shown in the top right corner of Figure 6.1, the ultimate aim of the informal printing businesses was to satisfy and keep high value formal organisation clients (especially formal businesses) who were their largest buyers in their networks. In pursuance of this aim, and therefore business and market opportunities provided by this group of dominant field players, the informal businesses were confronted with dissimilar sets of logic, which were on the one side operational in their field of restricted production, and on the other, the field of large scale production that offered and controlled the market opportunities they were seeking (see top of Figure 6.1).

The informal business therefore considered the building of exchange-value imperative, a finding similar to Scott's (2012) cultural entrepreneurs who had to build exchange-value through 'buzz' because they were pursuing market opportunities from a position of limited economic capital, despite their stocks of cultural capital. Exchange-value was created when the informal businesses (subjects of value) and the cultural goods (objects of value) produced in the field of restricted production were deemed subjects/objects of exchange (Skeggs, 2004)

by the field of large scale production. Through mediation by network partners, this potential was unleashed. In effect, strategic networks were employed in an attempt to produce economic goods that had market appeal beyond the immediate field of restricted production of the informal businesses, in a manner that sustains the interest of audience and consumers from the field of large scale production. See how mediation bridges the ‘distance’ (Splitter & Seidl, 2011) between agents in the two fields at the top of the Figure 6.1, the double-headed arrows indicates their mutual influence in the framing of the logic of SNP.

Network partners were socially positioned and empowered to mediate in capital exchanges since they possessed alternative, supplementary, and critical forms of capital required to access this market opportunity the informal businesses ultimately aimed for. This research confirms Anderson and Jack’s (2002) observation that social capital for instance is a process rather than a thing, and that the process creates the condition for social capital to materialise, rendering social capital a relational artefact. However, a richer notion of the materialisation of social capital is provided in the current study. Whilst they show how social capital is built, and potentially utilised as a two-way process amongst two agents, the analysis demonstrates how social capital and its benefits were accessed through mediation in a more complex practice of capital exchanges, amongst a group of agents who were variedly endowed with assorted types of capital. Furthermore, this finding provides evidence of small business embeddedness: the subtle separation between the social capital of owner/manager as an agent and his/her informal business in the exchanges (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Johannisson, Alexanderson, Nowicki, & Senneseth, 1994).

Despite endowment with different (unique) stocks of social, cultural, political, bureaucratic, and economic capital, the informal businesses did not employ these to achieve individual business opportunity maximisation ends through pure market arrangements (Hennart, 1988; Parkhe, 1993; Thorelli, 1986). The practice was rather to maximise collective exchange-value through collaborations and concessions via networks as illustrated in the capital exchanges in Figure 6.1. To ‘practice’ networking, the social structures within which the informal businesses were embedded generated implicit codes of conduct and practices that the informal businesses by their field-conditioned dispositions deemed natural, acceptable, and worth investing in (see framing of logics component of the framework in Figure 6.1). Thus, the formation of the networks were characterised by extreme levels of collaborations and concessions despite the potential risks and competitive disadvantages that such a practice may portray from the perspectives of outsiders to the field, especially those of formal

business field players. This practice supports Jack and Anderson's (2002) finding in which rural entrepreneurs in Scotland sacrificed profit maximisation for the benefits of 'ruralness' and 'localness' since a rationale was to optimise all benefits including recognition, viability, and varied perspectives, through embeddedness in local social structures. As a condition, the entrepreneurs defined their own individual subjective perceptions of risk.

***Interdependence behaviours and relationships: logic framing and dynamics***

SNP in the current study were characterised by cooperation and cooptation, which were the two broad categories of interdependence behaviours found in the study. These behaviours were ingrained in the habitus of agents, and partly contributed to an understanding of how the informal businesses socially constructed risk, and how their trajectories over time shaped its construction. It was found that competition was hardly a business language used by the informal businesses. Assuming they do, conscious efforts were made to define the notion of competition as a field imperative, thus specific notions of competition were cardinal to these interdependent behaviours. Invariably, the informal businesses consciously and unconsciously played down threats of competition from their network partners, irrespective of their location in social spaces.

The study further shows that high levels of collaboration have historically delivered market opportunity benefits to the informal businesses given their capital deficiencies. It has also accorded scope and scale benefits that flow from income they receive by taken on risks from jobs they lack the capabilities, supplies, or time to deliver, but pass to informal business partners whilst retaining 'ownership' from the perspective of clients. Coupled with the flexibility of 'staying in business' whilst moving in and out of the market (a situation made possible by collaborative relationships with partners who may, or may not be competitors), the informal businesses normalised this type of collaborative behaviour, sensing that the benefits over time outweighed perceived risks. In contrast to Jack and Anderson (2002) therefore, the current study illustrates how agents socially-constructed risk, more importantly it explicates the complicity between objective local, historical, and extra-local social structures, and subjective informal business agents and network partners in the construction of risk. This example of 'framing of logics' illustrated in Figure 6.1 is fed by micro, meso, and macro level influences and outcomes that straddle the fields of restricted and large-scale production. The porous circles also show how the framing of logics in turn 'rewrite this

history' by feeding back to reinforce these generative devices, that are concurrently receiving and shaping in character.

The study also revealed the role of cooperation in the 'nurturing' of field participants amongst other things. It further explains the sequential and spatial relationship between cooperative and co-opetitive behaviours in the networks. Some informal business owner/managers as well as agents, demonstrated a tendency to cooperate with incumbents prior to, and during early stages of business set up. Aside from jobs that their capabilities did not permit, other jobs that they could have executed internally were secured with the ultimate aim to sublet to these 'mentors'. At this stage of field participation, providing custom to dominant incumbents was a normalised practice. By demonstrating co-operative behaviours, new entrants learnt, and worked towards consecration as legitimate field players. On the flipside, there were implicit rather than explicit sanctions and price to pay when competitive tendencies were displayed.

Middlemen, who were major mediators in the networks, and thus pivotal to the creation of exchange-value also rode on cooperative relationships as stepping stones for field entry. Even though they eroded margins as a result of the mark-ups that accrued to them, they were not perceived by informal businesses to engage in similar kind of business (competition). They were perceived as competitors once they set up physically in the field. However, this development only changed the nature of the interdependence, as they now engage in co-opetitive rather than cooperative relationships. This finding demonstrates how a cooperative relationship may evolve over time into a co-opetitive relationship, in a similar way an informal business's co-opetitive relationship may switch to cooperative, if for some reason the business closes its physical setup but operates more remotely.

These findings reveal that the nature of the relationships and interdependent behaviours amongst the informal business and their partners were not static, but rather fluid, mediated by place and time (Damayanti, 2014), and were also value-laden. Together with an appreciation of the social space occupied by agents, the nature of the interdependence behaviour outlined above was salient to the categorisation of network partners of the informal businesses. This provided the bedrock for the resilience that field-specified SNP built for the individual informal businesses and the networks. It further determined and described the relationality amongst different forms of mediation in the networks, partnering logics, capital endowments, and exchanges at play amongst partners in the development of exchange-value (Tatli et al.,

2014). This is depicted by the different sets of logics brought to game, the two different sets of capital volumes and configurations, as well as the two different exchange-value/mediation/collaboration mechanisms at the top of Figure 6.1. These symbolise varied influences from two different sets of social space, and their respective practices (informal and formal), which are shown on the wide left and right side of the figure respectively.

***Types of interdependence behaviours and relationships: implications for capital mix, network diversity, and outcomes***

Given the salience of a variety of capital types in the SNP, the current research largely concurs with small business network structure-themed literature that posits that a business's network diversity measured by resource varieties that flow to the business, influences network outcomes (Davis et al., 2006; Nicalou & Birley, 2003a, b). Network diversity is usually conceptualised in consonance with the presence or absence of structural holes (Burt, 1992), the strength of ties (Granovetter, 1973), and network density (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). The current research however extends these conceptions by offering additional notion of network diversity, referred to as 'variety of interdependence behaviours and relationships' (cooperative and/or co-opetitive). Put another way, the 'nature of ties', thus building on the 'strength of ties' (weak or strong) conception.

These two types of collaborative and interdependence behaviours and relationships provided more or less different mix of capital (resources), and thus played somewhat different roles in the development of exchange-value that was critical to the SNP, as well as the outcomes for the informal businesses and networks. In effect, this new conceptualisation adds texture to network studies and illustrates further, how network diversity may be utilised by businesses. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, co-operative interdependences are only enough as potential sources of capital flows from agents and businesses in the field of large-scale production. However, co-opetition, which is a dominant systemic logic amongst the informal businesses in the field of restricted production, is a necessary interdependence behaviour required to collectively configure and stock capital, that is capable of exchange-value enhancement, in addition to the subsequent materialisation and utilisation of this potential.

***Co-opetitive behaviours and relationships: salience, construction, and utilisation***

The study also reveals that co-opetition more than anything else was pivotal to SNP of the informal businesses (see also Damayanti, 2014). It additionally illustrates that co-opetitive

logic enabled the high levels of cooperation amongst informal business competitors in an industry considered to be very competitive (Shaw, 2006). To socially-construct this field logic, agents developed shared frames of reference that were attuned to their capital deficiencies and affordances, as well as other social structures that conditioned their social practices. Co-opetition characterised and dominated the relationships amongst informal business partners, because they more or less shared similar trajectories, and thus drew on collectively conditioned habitus, that shaped their co-opetitive dispositions. Co-opetition was therefore the basis for concessions, sharing, and a rallying point for building collective exchange-value. It accorded the informal businesses a platform to draw on differently endowed capital to pursue market opportunities that were impossible to do individually, as shown in the inclusion of co-opetition in the exchange value creation on the top left side of the figure. The figure links this to the definition of systemic logics of the sub-field, as well as the capital volumes and configurations the sub-field as a network of informal businesses bring to these capital exchanges that involve other agents with trajectories with other fields.

In this regard, and with this co-opetitive logic, the informal businesses played ‘mutual surrogacy’ roles as suppliers, brokers of supplies, contractors, subcontractors, advisors, ‘consultants’, and ‘clients’. In the end, field-specified strategic networking objectives and outcomes (to ultimately keep formal organisation clients in the networks) rendered co-opetitive behaviours a particularly fundamental and rewarding practice. This finding thus extends Peng et al.’s (2012, p. 549) study on ‘how co-opetition works’ by showing that it may involve partners assuming multiple temporal positions in the value chain, aside from co-managing a set of activities that their study reveals. The current study additionally reveals that field-specified notion of competition, performance, benefits or outcomes were critical to the understanding of this strategy practice (Nicolini, 2013). Also, in a study of co-opetition as small business strategy, Morris et al. (2007) quantitatively measured the propensity of co-opetition amongst small businesses based on three dimensions: trust, mutual benefit, and commitment. This current study complements their work by providing insights into the micro-details of the practice, and possible generative mechanisms of some of these dimensions.

Again, the study revealed the underlying micro-activities that underpin most of the other practices described above. The thesis illustrates the role of open communication as a fundamental praxis associated with SNP of the informal businesses. Through this praxis of open communication, a host of information that relate to competitive advantages, strategic

conception, and avoiding business pitfalls were freely and openly shared with network partners (including competitors), in contradiction to received strategic management knowledge (Lorenzoni & Baden-Fuller, 1995; Whittington, Caillaet, & Yakis-Douglas, 2011). This praxis is a demonstration that competition of exclusiveness was not normalised in the SNP of the informal businesses, and that their strategising instead gravitated towards inclusiveness.

This finding contrasts with that of Miller et al. (2007), who found that small formal US-based businesses in a network considered sharing of information with competitors about new techniques and technologies as high risk, even though they are more inclined to sharing employees or equipment, purchasing supplies/materials together, or engaging in joint product development. The result points to how agents operating from dissimilar scripts (formal field of businesses on one hand, and informal field of business on the other) interpret and act on similar situations to the extent allowed by their idiosyncrasies, historical, and structural trajectories, leading to localised construction of risk and decision heuristics.

#### ***Materiality: practices, praxis, and internalisation***

In accordance with field-conditioned dispositions, open, unwritten, and undocumented communications facilitated the negotiation and execution of jobs and contracts with virtually no concern for appropriation and opportunism. The praxis of open communication observed in the current study is consistent with Hanna and Walsh's (2008) study of networks of small formal manufacturing businesses. They found that open communication was as an integral part of a dedicated accord, aimed at improving coordination efforts and stemming appropriation. In the field of the informal printing economy however, the role of a coordination agreement was instead fulfilled by a socially-constructed diminution of appropriation concerns rooted in history and field structures.

Furthermore, key assumptions underlying this open communication praxis were contingent on situated use of technological and material artefacts. Consistent with Donner (2006) and Meagher's (2014) studies, mobile phones and related technologies were instrumental in operationalising open communication in the SNP of the informal businesses. Like the current study, both studies point to the affordances an otherwise standard business artefact provided agents, with particular emphasis on the salience of context, whilst explicating the many different uses and ends a particular artifact may be appropriated for (Kaplan, 2011; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Given that flexibility was a source of differentiation and



competitiveness over formal printing businesses in reaching for market opportunities in the field of large-scale production, coupled with advantages from the informal printing businesses' aversion to bureaucratic rule-following, these technological artefacts were instrumental, and more or less replaced the need for normative networking artefacts such as legally-binding written documents, and also symbolic network-related meetings and episodes.

Again to ease red-taping and facilitate open communication as an integral component of field-conditioned SNP, the functionality of the invoice was subjected to extension and improvisation in complicity with formal business client partners. Figure 1.6 depicts how collective, shared, and 'negotiated' dispositions are framed amongst the informal and formal agent partners in the field, in close connection with social structures and agency that act as drivers and outcomes of their enactment. The invoice thus assumed symbolic role as an artefact for recording, accounting, colluding, contracting, receipting, as well as financial documenting purposes.

Previous SAP studies have examined materiality in strategising in the context of single organisations (Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Kaplan, 2011; Vaara, et al., 2010; Werle & Seidl, 2015; Whittington et al., 2006). However, this study extends these works by offering insight into how materiality was co-constructed, 'negotiated', legitimised, symbolised, and utilised as a shared practice in a field comprising many different agents and organisations. This notion of 'material-in-use' associated with use of invoices observed here represented an everyday situational practice, consistent with other field practices, unlike the isolated, and individual strategy work and episodic uses reported in these previous studies. This thesis thus provides some insights into the institutionalisation of materiality in a field (Suddaby et al., 2013).

### ***Relational network governance: generative mechanisms, praxis, and internalisation***

Trust-based relational governance practices were found to characterise the SNP of the informal businesses, this evidence is consistent with other studies on small formal business networks (Larson, 1991, 1992; Uzzi, 1997). This study, however, presents a richer understanding by revealing the micro-details of how the informal businesses employ social controls and sanctions in order to cope with inherent risk and mistrust in the relationships. As a consequence of the creative nature of the industry, as well as the limited opportunities to seek court redress due to informality and thus limited bureaucratic capital, the informal businesses have had to deal with inherent mistrust within the relationships. This often arose

from risks associated with network partners acting in their individual interest, to the detriment of the network through opportunism and appropriation tendencies. But while this inherent risk was acknowledged, the overall concern were more about practices, behaviours, and conduct that potentially detracted from their ability to satisfy and retain high value formal organisation client partners. As indicated in Figure 6.1, these concerns have to be understood in terms of the influences that go into the framing of logics that define interests and stakes. Following from this, the research show that performance-constructed notion of (mis)trust was foreground in their coping strategies. As we recall, the networks were founded on high levels of cooperation and competition behaviours to the extent that brands, trademarks, and business names were easily ‘exchanged’ amongst the informal business partners as they worked towards enhancing their exchange-value aimed at pursuing market opportunities in the field of large-scale production.

The findings thus highlight how implicit rules, rewards, assumptions, rules of engagement, schemas, institutional logics, and cultural imperatives were ingrained in social controls and sanctions that guided how the informal business network partners dealt with each other in the relationships. An important source of benefit of the network to individual informal businesses was the utilisation of ‘references’ by network partners. References served as reward, and were integral to the functioning of the co-operative and co-opetitive relationships; it was also a means to the ultimate satisfaction and maintenance of formal business organisation clients in the networks. Through references, informal businesses that were less endowed with capital stocks required to transition to market opportunities at any instance got referrals from network partners (including competitors) who were well endowed, and hence better positioned for transitioning towards market opportunities (a description of what the micro activities of the exchange value creation depicted at the top left corner of Figure 6.1 could entail).

However, an implicit assumption and expectation was that the ‘beneficiary’ informal business delivered quality output in the manner that the principal client is satisfied and retained by the network. In other cases, in order to give this valued client assurances of quality and perceived consistency that builds switching costs, the ‘beneficiary’ informal business was sub-contracted to, and tasked to deliver the job in the business name of the subcontracting business that happened to be the first point of contact for the valued client partner. References further served as a ‘quality control’ tool that was appropriated to temporarily include and exclude partners in response to their cultural production output and social conduct, though

total alienation from the network was not a common practice. Perhaps, inclusiveness is a result of a cultural imperative rooted in history including the ‘social economy’ connotation of the informal economy, which foregrounds social obligation, commitment and reciprocity, rather than pure market exchanges. These practices were intertwined with how the networks were governed and by extension, the managing of mistrust and risks inherent in the relationships.

Reference practices were made plausible in the field, and were enhanced by the open communication disposition of the informal businesses, open communication was therefore instrumental in the identification and selection of suitable partnering candidates through references (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). Moreover, the ‘open communication-references’ mechanism acted as a formidable social control measure that proactively guarded against opportunism. It was often deployed in a ‘whistleblowing-like’ fashion to immediately report, and disclose the identity of informal business network partners, who were suspected to have used field-specified illegitimate means to maximise opportunities at the expense of other partners, or the broader network.

The study shows that these social controls and sanctions were intertwined with broader field practices that conditioned agents ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54), consequently the field logic of practice made it intelligible in the SNP (see Figure 6.1). The study thus demonstrates how social controls as a network governance mechanism were structurally constructed by these informal businesses. More significantly, it illustrates how strategising agents structure and internalise the widely cited enablers of relational trust-based network governance: complementarity, reputation, fine-grained information exchanges, and reciprocity reported in Larson (1991, 1992), Uzzi (1997) and elsewhere (Becerra et al., 2008; Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Jones et al., 1997; Poppo, Zhou, & Ryu, 2008; Powell, 1990).

### ***Outcomes: value-laden and beyond economic and local domains***

The research also found (as illustrated in Figure 6.1 above) that SNP of the informal businesses had largely non-economic outcomes for the individual agent, the informal business, as well as the social structures within which they are embedded. The study shows empirically how strategy and strategising had consequences beyond the immediate sphere of activity to include far reaching effects on practices at varied levels of analysis. Some agents employed SNP to establish significant trajectories and familiarities with field practices and agents prior to entry, this practice had important outcomes for their learning, barriers to entry,

and field legitimisation. However these outcomes that resulted from early immersion in the field and networks must not be read to be optimal, since the downside is a possible limitation of worldviews, scripts and logics which may intend limit opportunities and possibilities.

The research further highlights that SNP were not neutral but value and power-laden, in the process agents were complicit in the conferring of symbolic status to other field agents, on the basis of field-specific exigencies that included longevity in the field, perceived knowledgeable, and other capital endowments (see Figure 6.1). By this conferment, these privileged field agents derived outcomes that enhanced their power, social positions, and their ability to define regularities in the field by acting as mentors for instance. The thesis further reveals that at the organisational level, the informal businesses did not emphasise economic measures and competitive outcomes for reasons that have been outlined early on. Thus the objective of enhancing exchange-value and retaining high value formal organisation clients, more or less defined outcomes. So businesses considered not capable of contributing to this task experienced different set of outcomes that the networks deemed sub-optimal.

Another significant organisational outcome of the SNP identified in the study was the ease and flexibility with which the informal businesses hibernate and activate their operations, without it necessarily affecting their ability to consistently satisfy and retain valued client partners. The SNP of the informal businesses therefore provided a sort of in-built resilience that accorded field agents the leverage to always 'bounce back' or remain relevant during and after adverse business events. At the extra-organisational level, the most immediate and significant was the naturalisation of field-specific SNP as the inevitable strategy choice similar to Vaara and colleagues's (2004) global airline industry study. However, their industry structure and competition attribution is somewhat limited (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Instead, the current study extends their interpretation by suggesting other possible influences such as power relations, history, habitus and dispositions, capital configurations, and field structures, as depicted by the double-headed convergent arrows between the various components of the framework in Figure 1.6. See also how these influences are subsumed in the drivers/outcomes, agency, and structure components of the framework.

The study additionally revealed that SNP may be employed by embedded actors to simultaneously achieve more 'obvious' rational, economic, and organisational ends; as well as 'remote' non-economic, social, and personal outcomes. The literature often highlights the economic stakes that individual organisational strategists bring to bear on strategy decision-

making since received strategic management knowledge tends to treat strategic decisions such as these long-term relationships as rational, economic, and organisation-centred. However, the study shows how strategists brought personal, non-economic, and social considerations to bear on strategic decisions they made on behalf of their organisations, unlike a shared organisation-wide corporate social responsibility programme (see Porter & Kramer, 2006). This finding further lends SAP-framed empirical support to Van Aaken et al.'s (2013) Bourdieusian construction of how pro-social activities and practices by individual managers may follow a 'practical' rather than rational logic, and how they are aimed at accumulating social power, rather than economic power.

These types of remote extra-organisational actor outcomes also shape field-specific dispositions. For example those of individual formal agents illustrated at the bottom right in Figure 6.1 have important implications for our understanding of strategic networking. Our knowledge of the SNP will be limited in the absence of these kinds of outcomes. In effect, this finding highlights the potential influence of strategists, who are external to the organisation (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). Granted this, these strategists may be major actors in the preservation or recreation of the SNP, and therefore strategy practices in the field (Whittington, 2006). In another case of how collective and shared dispositions are framed amongst the actors in the field illustrated in Figure 6.1, the study further shows how the reactive and convenience compliance practices by the informal businesses (in league with network partners) were complicit in shaping regulatory agents' cognition and sense-making, and thus enforcement practices (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). The outcome has been a shift in the enforcement regime, as exceptions have been made the rules; this finding highlights the potential of local practices (supported by social structures) having far-reaching outcomes that may include the subversion of received order.

### **6.3 HOW IS THE PRACTICE OF STRATEGIC NETWORKING BY THE INFORMAL PRINTING BUSINESSES A REFLECTION OF, AND REFLECTED IN SOCIAL PRACTICES AND INFLUENCES AT MICRO, MESO AND MACRO LEVELS?**

The study reveals a fluid linkage and overlap between field agents, field structure, and the SNP of the informal businesses (see Figure 6.1). It shows that the SNP did not occur in isolation as previous discussion in Section 6.2 implicitly portrays. Instead, they were driven by, and also drove myriad influences at the individual agent and informal business level

(micro); the sector, industry, market, institutional, and field level (meso); as well as the larger field of power and societal level (macro). These findings extend previous work on small business network reviewed in Section 2.5.2 that somewhat failed to account for this dialectic between micro, meso and macro-levels of influence, in addition to the generative mechanisms that shape how strategists internalise practices which led to particular choices and outcomes (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Wittington, 2012). Additionally, the findings account for some of the under-researched multi-level locales in SAP scholarship reviewed in Section 2.4.

### ***Strategy practitioner identity, agency, and SNP***

SNP took place in a field representing capital configurations, habitus and dispositions that more or less define, and are defined by agents' social positions, and determined exigencies practical concerns, possibilities, and impossibilities. Owner/managers of the informal businesses portrayed some differences in approach, choices, and practices in the SNP as they collectively developed exchange-value. These differences were attributable to their varied capital configurations, which intricately linked with how the informal printing businesses were established and managed. The levels of formal education, as well as formal and informal sector experience of owner/managers and their agents/employees which were associated with different sets of capital were found to explain variations in field trajectories before entry, partner affinities, and the forms of intermediaries required by the informal businesses in their SNP.

Also the approach to utilising a specific form of capital sometimes varied amongst these groups of agents, this finding supports Baron and Markman's (2003) argument that social capital for instance assists in gaining access to persons important for success, however social competence influences the outcomes. However, this study highlights the micro-detail of this practice as well as the SNP outcome for these agents, rather than a demonstration of competence. These differences further explain the extent to which owner/managers were able to accumulate the generally scarce bureaucratic capital for their businesses, and thus their disposition towards the use of middlemen. Certain forms of capital were found to be more easily convertible to the bureaucratic capital required to access the market opportunities offered by high value bureaucratic rule-following formal organisations in the field of large-scale production. For those with limited stock of this type of capital, the extensive use of

collaborations and middlemen as intermediaries have become normalised as the most optimal route to this market opportunity.

This later group of owner/managers historically is in the majority in the field, invariably their convenience compliance practices have mostly shaped the SNP, and thus the shifts in the regulatory enforcement regime observed in the current study. The study also show empirically that the informal economy setting investigated included participants with moderate to high levels of formal education and training, contrary to extant informal economy literature that have in most cases associated participants of the informal economy with low education and formal training (Blunch et al., 2001; Gërkhani, 2004). The study further found that the social structures of the field of the informal printing economy had both constraining and enabling effects on their ability to bring this biography to bear on SNP in the field of the informal printing economy. While Gomez and Bouty (2011) demonstrated the role of an incumbent and powerful socially-positioned individual in the emergence of an influential practice, in interaction with a field, this study accounted for the fine devices by which dominant field practices shape the selection and de-selection of facets of ‘imported’ practices.

This group of agents, who usually had no prior trajectories with the field before entry, was disposed to portraying less informality (entrepreneurs in transition to formality). They were therefore more inclined towards for instance, the use of normative tools like proactive marketing and advertising, however field-specified mediation, collaborative, and reference practices had constraining (yet field-defined beneficial) effect on their previously acquired habitus and dispositions (see Figure 6.1 for an illustration of the varied influences on drivers, dispositions, and outcomes that characterised this observation). Hence the research shows how owner/managers internalise practices, and how such practices are conditioned by their movement in time through different formal and informal social spaces. The analysis further illustrates that the differences in the identities and biographies of the informal business owner/managers and their agents, was a starting point in understanding the heterogeneity of the informal businesses. Previous studies often privilege legal non-compliance conceptualisation over others (Godfrey, 2011). The study thus gives an empirical account of the categorisation of informal businesses in Figure 2.1. It highlights the fact that some of the informal businesses were more informal than others, as demonstrated in their owner/managers’ inclinations and approaches to setting up, compliance, internal organisation, and route to market opportunities.

### *Field positions, domination, and SNP*

The findings of the research also illustrate the implicit power-laden contestations over field positions, and how that played into which network partner's interests were privileged, which types of capital were deemed symbolic and more valuable, and which SNP practices were projected in the field. The study shows that having historically, and through socialisation and reproduction relegated the informal economy to a subordinate position (Golsorkhi, Leca, Lounsbury, & Ramirez, 2009), dominant formal sector organisations and their agents in the field of the informal printing economy controlled the market opportunities in the resultant field of large-scale production, that the informal businesses were seeking. These dominant players privilege economic and bureaucratic rule-following logic, whilst the informal businesses traditionally operated with a different set of logic as shown by the two fields of practice in Figure 6.1.

Apparently in attempt to reach for these opportunities controlled by these dominant players, the informal businesses were 'forced' to develop strategies that on the one hand aligned with the logics of the dominant players, as well as a familiar one from their field of restricted production, which matched their internalised habitus and dispositions on the other. This gave rise to the consistency in the practice of developing exchange-value that was largely aimed at mediating these two sets of logics, and to ultimately satisfy and retain this group of powerful network partners. This finding demonstrates an encounter between dominant and dominated fields, where the dominated has gone through substantive colonisation (Everett, 2002; Oakes et al., 1998). Invariably, attention is drawn to how the extent of domination and colonisation of a field by other fields, may play out in strategising practices. This has implications for the use of normative tools, language (in this case business language), and logics of practice, which are subjected to different extents of emphasis and de-emphasis (Oakes et al., 1998; Golsorkhi et al., 2009).

Again amongst the informal businesses, capital endowments have shaped field positions and conferred symbolic status in various objectified and embodied cultural forms; this partly determined networking opportunities and outcomes for agents. The study however reveals that developments in the field of power, which were leading to an increasing integration between the Chinese and Ghanaian markets, were changing the dynamics of SNP. Invariably, the symbols and value held in these objectified forms of cultural capital are more or less becoming contested; as agents have started selling them off in order to get Chinese partners



do jobs for them. The research therefore demonstrates circumstances under which value-laden symbolic capital or power may be subject to degradation, which in turn has implications for the re-shaping and foregrounding of particular strategising practices in a manner consistent with Oakes et al.'s (1998) study.

***Dealing with liability of smallness: the role of history, industry, materiality, and systemic logics***

The analysis reveals that collaboration through cooperative and co-opetitive behaviours profoundly defined the SNP as noted above. This practice which was dependent on an intricate mix of historical, agential, and structural factors provided the most discernable field-specified possibilities for accessing alternative stocks of capital required to offset field-conditioned capital deficiencies. These field-specified scripts endowed the informal business agents with meaning and value that enacted their SNP (see how the double-headed arrows illustrate these in Figure 6.1). The cognitive schema acquired through socialisation in the field: smallness is structural, historic, and normal, conditioned the habitus of the informal business agents. Concurrently, in the presence of choice (hence strategies), the pattern of information drawn upon by the informal businesses and partners was mediated by the assumptions of field-specific systemic logics, that led to the judgement that given the exigencies of their social space including irregular power supplies amongst other things, specialisation and investment in collaboration was more valuable and presented better possibilities than in equipment or larger size.

These scripts and systemic logic were more or less the basis of their naturalisation of field-conditioned SNP, their failure to perceive small size as competitive disadvantage, and their disinterest in the pursuance of growth as a strategic imperative. Through their own doings and those of other field agents, legitimacy was conferred on small size, and collaborations were projected as the most optimal solution in strategising (this illustrates how capital, habitus, and dispositions, drawing on structural and agential factors frame logics as captured in the framework in Figure 6.1). Hence, this revelation shows that space was an important socio-material that shaped SNP of the informal businesses. Thus far, SAP studies have investigated materiality of physical and built spaces in strategic episodes (Cornelissen, Mantere & Vaara, 2014; Hodgkinson & Wright, 2002; Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015). By studying the context of fields, this research adds texture and reveals the way the social construction of space and strategy are intertwined, it does so by demonstrating how small

scale and physical work spaces simultaneously produced, and acted as products of strategy work in the field of informal printing economy (Dameron et al., 2015).

Again, this finding on materiality and strategy work is somewhat inconsistent with received knowledge on small formal businesses that privileges agency over structure (e.g. Etemad et al., 2001; Hanna & Walsh, 2008). These studies usually treat collaboration decisions and choices as independent of the social structures within which this agency is embedded. Without accounting for the affordances of macro structures illustrated here (see Figure 6.1), these extant works limit context to only market interactions (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). Another salient analytic issue addressed by this thesis is what the generative mechanisms for the open communication praxis and its associated practices observed in the SNP of the informal businesses were. The study reveals that the informal businesses generally possessed limited economic capital, and compared to formal businesses, economic logic was not foregrounded in their SNP. As we recall, social structures such as history has a role to play, since the informal economy has been characterised as ‘social economy’.

In addition to a creative industry-type rather than informality-type influence, artistic logic further detracted from economic logic, hence there was less concern for competitive risks (Jeffcutt, 2000). Additionally, the analysis shows that aversion to bureaucratic rule-following meant disposition towards informal, unwritten, and undocumented forms of communication. These also explained why normative formal competitive analysis and measurement of economic outcomes amongst competitor partners were not consecrated field practices contrary to Hamel et al. (1989). Surprisingly, this was the case with owner/managers and informal business that possessed requisite capabilities for these kinds of analysis and assessments by virtue of their social trajectories through formal training and work experience for instance. Invariably, there was virtually no intelligible basis to assess competitive risks or disadvantage that may be associated with open communication practices, neither were such performance metrics aligned with field-structures.

These together promoted the open communication disposition; again this praxis was imperative to the practice of cooperative and co-opetitive behaviours that underlie the SNP, this finding thus reveals that collectively, these set of factors both shaped and received practices as indicated in Figure 6.1. In support of Gomez and Bouty (2011), the study notes that an industry other than the one studied here for instance could have shaped and received

these practices differently, granted that an industry-type, other than an informality-type influence was also at play.

Previous studies found that the competitive nature of this creative industry was the reason small businesses did not network with competitors, as this engendered low trust amongst competitors (Llyod-Smith, Dickson, & Woods, 1993; Shaw, 2006). A common practice is therefore to develop exclusive relationships with clients in order to gain competitive advantages, the reverse was however the case in the current study. The thesis therefore builds on their interpretation, and suggests that although the informal businesses studied here were also subject to similar (creative) industry influences, a broader set of intricately linked constraining and enabling structurally embedded factors provide a richer explanation for these differences in competitive and co-competitive dispositions, choices, and outcomes.

### ***Agency, structure, drivers, and outcomes of SNP: a co-construction***

The analysis found that most of the micro, meso, and macro-level practices identified as internal and external drivers of the SNP, more or less doubled as outcomes of the SNP in an on-going interaction (Figure 6.1), so drivers and outcomes had both structuring and structured effects on each other (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). This further demonstrates the generative principles of Bourdieu's framework outlined in Section 3.2.4. The study revealed that early association with the field and its practices had outcomes for agents as mentioned above, however this outcome also highlights how agents became an intricate part of the construction and conservation of the social structures, and practices of the field.

Similarly, the thesis illustrates how agents of formal organisations who socially constructed developments in the larger society such as concern for unemployment, wealth redistribution, and profit expatriation by multinationals, as entwined with the informal economy phenomenon shaped SNP. This finding highlights how individual managers' social position in formal and informal spaces informed 'managerial social responsibility' via field-specified SNP. This new insight despite its close adjacencies with agency and governance theory is somewhat not captured in the corporate social responsibility literature (Aaken, Splitter, & Seidl, 2013). A point of departure here is that the business managers did not necessarily employ, or channel this practical concern for society through their organisation's corporate social responsibility programme.

### *Networks as a strategic group*

The analysis further illustrate that the SNP of the informal businesses had outcomes for the structure of the larger printing industry in Ghana. Through SNP, the informal businesses as networks, more than individual businesses, constituted a strategic group in the printing industry with a well-defined set of strategic characteristics, basis of competition, and mobility barriers (Johnson et al., 2008). Their field-specific atypical capabilities and logic of practice constructed a bundle of resources and competences that their formal sector competitors that were better endowed with academic, bureaucratic, and economic capital lacked. Through their high levels of collaboration (discussed throughout the thesis), the informal businesses developed economies of scale and scope advantages, which in turn delivered flexibility, on-time service delivery, responsiveness, and low price.

Again their home-grown resilience mechanisms contributed to these strategic characteristics, bases of intra and inter-group competition, and mobility barriers. By virtue of their SNP, the informal businesses consciously and unconsciously built in resilience to power cuts, equipment breakdowns, and continuity in their operations during adverse business events to any informal business partner. These together carved a competitive position for the informal businesses in the printing industry different from that occupied by formal printing businesses that seem to differ in their strategic characteristics, basis of competition, and mobility barriers by virtue of their dominant field-specific capital configurations and systemic logics.

### **6.4 HOW ARE THE SNP BY AGENTS IN THE FIELD OF THE INFORMAL PRINTING ECONOMY CONTRIBUTING TO THE DURABILITY OF FIELD STRUCTURES?**

Nicolini (2009, p. 1405) opined that the question organisational practice scholars should ask is: ‘Through which mechanisms does practice achieve durability in time? But not: do practices change?’ Given discussions in the preceding sections, answers to this question are already apparent as a chunk is covered in the above sections. However, in this section, a few more specific ones are elucidated, while light is thrown on some of those previously mentioned.

#### *Investing in the game: symbols, familiar recipes, interests and stakes, and trajectories*

The study depicts how fields legitimise some forms of capital whilst delegitimising others, by showing how an agents’ longstanding occupationally-oriented capital (Watson, 2013, 2014)

in the field of informal printing economy undermined a more recently acquired academic capital (institutionalised cultural capital) from university-based business school (Vaara & Fay, 2011). Apparently the field of the informal printing economy curtailed agency by devaluing the newly internalised habitus and dispositions, in effect university education-acquired academic capital, which was valuable in the formal sector was not symbolic in the field of the informal printing economy. This detracted from its ability to effect changes in habitus, dispositions, and thus field practices, as the agent continued to perceive SNP in informal economy field-specified terms (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This finding may further explain why despite an increasing number of participation of field agents, especially owner/managers with higher levels of education (who have internalised a set of habitus and disposition historically different from those of participants of the informal economy), the underlying structures reported in the informal economy literature largely remain intact.

The analysis further shows that agents in the informal printing economy did not demonstrate high levels of agency, and thus a desire to challenge and destabilise field structures via instigation of changes in existing field norms and practices. This may be attributable to their collaborative practices. Competition often promotes agency and therefore challenge and change, however it took back stage in the SNP. Instead, collaboration was foregrounded in tandem with the logic of practice in the field as depicted in Figure 6.1. Whilst the fact that collaborations are used elsewhere for the purposes of innovation and change is acknowledged, collaboration practices in the field of the informal printing economy took on a different condor. They were more or less a *modus operandi* geared towards practical day-to-day coping with capital deficiencies and limited market opportunities *in situ*. This practice therefore ensured a high degree of consistency of action and continuity (Chia & Holt, 2006; Gomez & Bouty, 2011). The fact that SNP was naturalised by the informal businesses as *sine qua non* strategy if a business was to survive further demonstrates the level of consistency observed here, as well as the recursive cycles of logic framing and enactment between agents and their material practices in the field. Consistently, other courses of action were rendered practically unavailable to either existing or new businesses entering the field (Mutch et al., 2006).

Relatedly, the contribution of market entry strategies to the preservation of field structures and practices has also been hinted above. As most new entrants were socialised into the field before active field participation, their cognitive schemas and dispositions to accepting and

internalising existing field-specified norms and practices as natural was facilitated (De Clercq & Honig, 2011). This was by virtue of their developing feel for the game, reminiscent of Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) 'fish in water' metaphor, and further traceable to apprenticeship practices that were historical and typical of the social structures of the informal economy (Lubell, 1993; Blunch et al., 2001). Having succeeded in effecting and perpetuating shifts in enforcement of regulations, through the effective use of middlemen as improvised coping strategies, SNP in the field can be described as characteristic of this on-going practice of convenience compliance. This is attributable to the fact that the dominant informal businesses seem to benefit from this practice of convenience compliance, which more or less disposed them to pursue a conservation strategy (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).

## **6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter analysed the major findings that arose from the research questions and analytical issues identified above. The findings were discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. As part of this exercise, the contributions of this thesis are highlighted through an interrogation of how the findings here contrast and agree with those of earlier studies. Subsequently a conceptual framework summarising and abstracting the major findings has been developed and outlined. Now the next chapter summarises the contributions, it then draws and presents general conclusions from this thesis.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The first sections of this chapter present a summary of the theoretical contribution of this thesis to the SAP, network, and informal economy literatures based on the discussion of the major findings presented in Chapter 5. As part of the general conclusions drawn from this research and the main lines of argument, practical and policy implications are then discussed, prior to a notification of the limitations of the study. Their implications for future research are highlighted in the section that follows; the chapter then closes with final concluding remarks.

#### **7.2 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

This thesis was framed within the SAP literature. Golden-Biddle & Azuma (2010) offer alternative ways to construct contribution to SAP scholarship. This rubric is drawn upon to summarise the contributions of the thesis to theory. First, the thesis contributes to the burgeoning and cumulating knowledge on the SAP perspective, specifically on the structural and relational linkages in strategy practice. Second, it contributes to the network literature that is in need of elaboration, and finally, it advances the informal economy literature that is under-explored in strategic management scholarship, and thus requiring illumination (Golden-Biddle & Azuma, 2010).

##### **7.2.1 Contribution to SAP literature**

As indicated in Section 2.4, a number of SAP researchers have studied strategising in ways that identify with calls for structural and relational linkages in strategy practice, in opposition to ‘methodological individualism’ that dominates traditional strategy research (Gomez, 2010; Vaara & Durand, 2012; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). However, response to a related demand for more studies that treat macro-institutions and structures as units of analyses (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) is somewhat slow, save for Gomez and Bouty (2011).

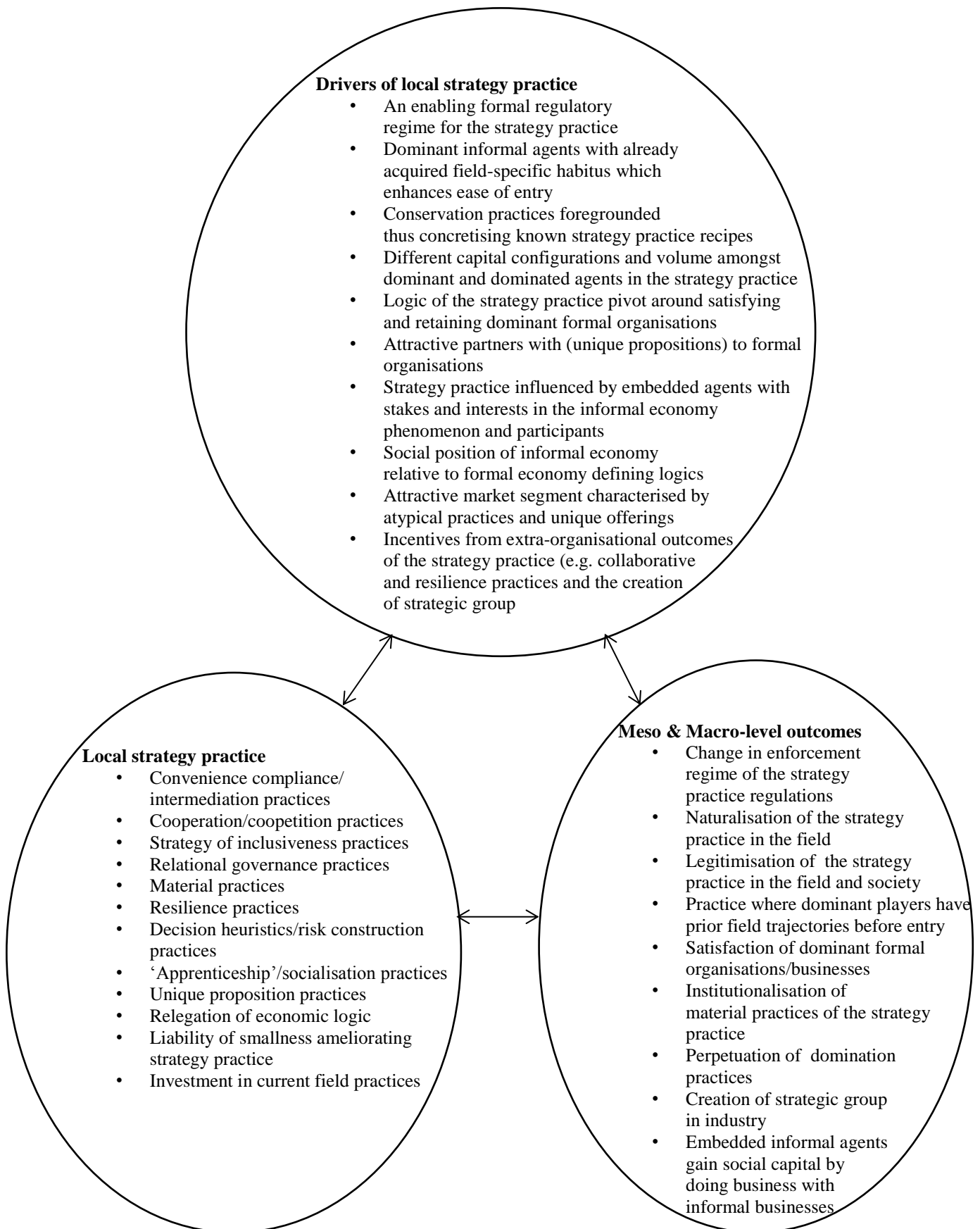
The current research is thus one of the first SAP studies that have addressed this concern, the research has investigated the interplay amongst micro, meso, and macro-level practices and influences on strategy practice. In the process, the thesis explicates how the focal strategy

practice was shaped by these influences, and how these influences were in turn shaped by the focal strategy practice. The most important contribution therefore lies in the demonstration of how local strategy practice accomplishes meso and macro-level outcomes, and how these outcomes come to shape the drivers of the local strategy practice in an iterative cycle (Figure 7.1). The thesis suggests that a deeper understanding of strategy practice is sacrificed if SAP studies account for micro and local influences (Section 2.4), but gives lesser or no significance to extra-organisational including macro-level social structures, institutions and practices. The thesis thus broadens our understanding of how the macro both shapes and receives micro practices; invariably the analysis suggests the need to expand the micro orientation in SAP scholarship in order to represent strategy practice as mutually constitutive more explicitly.

Thus far, the incorporation of Bourdieu's theory of practice in SAP is still under-developed (Hurtado, 2010) despite the seeming acclamation it has received as a potential framework for studying strategy work (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Gomez, 2010; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Whittington, 2003). Aside from the dearth of empirical SAP studies drawing on Bourdieu, the few theoretical papers that do, apply his concepts in a limited fashion (Hurtado, 2010). For example, in an empirical study, Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) found evidence of habitus where top managers demonstrated shared interpretations and orientations towards familiar recipes therefore reinforcing existing patterns of action that are representative of the context. The other two related concepts of capital and field, which together completes Bourdieu's relational system or logic of practice (Gomez, 2010; Hurtado, 2010) were somewhat not acknowledged.

This thesis is therefore one of the first SAP-framed empirical studies to deploy the concepts of habitus, capital, and field to examine strategy practice (see also Gomez & Bouty, 2011). A deeper engagement with Bourdieu's concepts provided fine-grained analytical tools for framing the strategising practices of the informal businesses at multiple levels of analysis described above. The current study therefore elaborates our knowledge of strategy as situated practice by overcoming rudimentary micro/macro dichotomies, and instead, offer a more nuanced understanding of the subtle relation between the agents (with varied biographies), and the structures of the field (which extend beyond informal printing businesses) that embed their practices.





**Figure 7.1 Dynamic relationships between local strategy practice, extra-organisational-level outcomes, and its drivers** (Source: Author)

It shows how alternative forms of capital reify interests and stakes at play, and thus power and resources that agents directly or indirectly draw upon in strategy work, given the varied set of institutional resources possessed by, and accessible to agents. It also showed how habitus structured, and was structured by dispositions that agents developed in pursuing their practical sense of collaborative and inclusive strategising.

Methodologically, by means of a Bourdieusian specification of the field that extended and empirically investigated the informal printing economy beyond the informal businesses, the thesis is better positioned to reveal aspects of strategy practice invisible under traditional strategy content research approaches and strategies. The subtle but significant influence that remote and embedded agents in formal organisations had on strategy practice, as well as how the outcomes these strategists experience from strategy practice they co-constructed, may shape the future of the strategy practice was a case in point (see Figure 7.1). Similar to Nordqvist's (2012) 'Simmelian strangers', this approach advances SAP research by providing evidence of another type of indirect influence by external strategy practitioners on strategy practice of an organisation. Previous SAP studies have largely identified policy makers, consultants, regulators, trade unions, business schools, strategy scholars, and the media (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008).

The role of power in strategy practice has been of great interest to SAP scholars (see Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vaara & Whittington, 2012); these prior studies have employed discourse theories (e.g. Levina & Orlikowski, 2009; Kaplan, 2011; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; McCabe, 2010; Vaara et al., 2010) to examine power positions, dynamics, relations and effects in strategy work. This study advances the SAP agenda by responding to calls for studies that demonstrate how the above power and discursive practices may be adopted and internalised (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). From a Bourdieusian perspective, the study illustrates that the focal strategy practice was inherently power and value-laden, much the same way that the concept of the informal economy has historically been a subject of conscious and unconscious domination (Golsorkhi et al., 2009, p. 782).

Their strategy practice therefore privileged the interests of particular actors that were 'declared' defacto dominant players (amongst the informal businesses, as well as the larger field of the informal printing economy) by virtue of their capital configurations, and thus symbolic significance assigned by field agents. It further highlights how agents' spatial and temporal trajectories in formal and informal social spaces bestowed them with the different

assortments of capital and dispositions, and how this defined power relations and positions in the field. The research further highlights that field positions, symbols, capital and power, last as long as the 'values' or logic that underpin their consecration remain. It is therefore shown that power positions which were co-constructed by the field and its agents are not 'eternal', but only 'become' in relation to particular 'values', practice, space, and time.

A corollary contribution is a demonstration of the conditions under which the strategy practice maintains or destabilises the status quo in the field. The study reveals that the outcome is a function of the dialectic between subjective destabilising agent, other subjective field agents, as well as the receiving objective field structures. For the focal strategy practice, destabilisation or agency was not rife because there was not enough evidence to suggest destabilising agent(s) will benefit from shifts in field practices and positions, by virtue of alterations to capital primacies of the field. Concurrently, dominant informal business agents benefited from the established order (development of exchange-value by means of intermediaries), primarily because of their limited bureaucratic and economic capital. Meanwhile, field structures perpetuated the scarcity of these stocks of capital in complicity with the (in) actions of these agents, and thus promoted and perpetuated the domination by the formal organisations, their capital configurations, and systemic logics, this in turn concretised field practices and structures (see also Wright, 2009).

It is however suggested that recent macro-level developments in international trade between Ghana and China may destabilise these interactions and thus field practice and structures in future, though the extent still remains speculative at this stage (see Sections 5.2.2, 5.4.2 and 5.6.1). Last, but not least, similar to Gomez and Bouty (2011), this research illustrates the extent to which neo-institutional theory could complement the SAP approach in explaining organisational and strategy practice (Battilana et al., 2009; Suddaby et al., 2013). An important finding and thus contribution of the current study is an illustration of the on-going micro-dynamics underpinning the institutionalisation of materiality (the invoice) in the field of the informal printing economy in consent and interaction with formal business network partners.

### **7.2.2 Contributions to network literature**

The current study has also made contributions to the network literature. As hinted in the discussion section, first this study has responded to calls and found evidence of interrelated networking activities such as network formation, relations, behaviour, and utilisation (Chell

& Baines, 2000; Coviello, 2005; Hite, 2005; Jack, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2001). A second strand of contributions borders on the 'broadening and deepening' of context, in contrast to extant network studies especially those on small business networks. By treating context more intensively and extensively, the study contributes to an understanding of the adoption and internalisation of practices, in addition to their generative mechanisms.

To a certain extent, this research can be considered as one of the first to reveal that small business networks were a result of unfolding everyday practical coping strategy that occurred simultaneously, and in tandem with field practices and structures (Chia, 2004). It shows how networks comprise a bundle of doings, materials, and spaces that were co-constructed. The study therefore offers a different notion of networking and network formation by small businesses. Previous studies have investigated small business networks as calculated orchestrations at various times and stages of business development (e.g. Anderson et al., 2010; Chell & Baines, 2000; Havnes & Senneseth; 2001; Lee & Tsang 2001; Soh, 2003). In effect, these extant studies demonstrate that networks are formed for many different purposes unlike the more routinised cases reported here (Chia & MacKay, 2007).

The current study also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of agency in networks by accounting for agency in a more fundamental fashion, through an exposition of the unplanned and unconscious aspects of networking. Existing research gives primacy to conscious and purposeful action on the part of small business owner/managers as they make network decisions (O'Donnell, 2004; Shaw, 2006). The thesis however traced the possible influences of network decisions and choices by agents to their social trajectories in history and real time. This was subsumed in their biographies, habitus, and dispositions they brought to bear on the practice of networking. It is therefore suggested that such stylised aspects of engaging with network decision-making are given more prominence in future small business network research (Chia, 2004). Unlike previous studies, the study further demonstrated how these practices through which agents draw on unconscious cues may be identified with social structures within which the networking decisions were made.

This thesis complements existing studies (Anderson et al. 2010; Foster, Borgatti & Jones, 2011) and highlights the utilisation of capital within networks. It illustrates that capital exchanges within networks were more complex, and entailed direct and indirect components and flows amongst agents, including embedded agents. Similar to Baron and Markman (2003), the study further showcased agency in capital utilisation, however the current study

foreground practices, and linked them with agents' cultural, social and economic capital. Extant studies somewhat concentrated on the role of social, economic, and some aspects of objectified cultural capital (e.g. capital equipment), but have given less attention to equally significant embodied and institutionalised cultural capital. These two types accounted for the different biographies, habitus and dispositions discussed above. Indeed these are also missing from Anderson et al.'s (2010) study that aimed to demonstrate that networking extends beyond physical capital to include influences from agents' social environment. This is because unlike the current study, their Bourdieusian analysis was limited to the concept of habitus. Again, the analysis reveals that contrary to Ahuja (2000), network partners need not have three specific, accumulated, and tenured types of capital (technical, commercial and social) in order to induce or have opportunities to network. Moreover, not all of these types of capital were valued in the field, let alone valuable in the practice of strategic networking.

Consistent with previous small business network studies (Fuller-Love, 2009; Hanna & Walsh, 2008; Morris et al., 2007), cooptation was salient in the networking practices; however the thesis advances this insight by showing how co-opetitive behaviours were socially-constructed. It shows that certain unwritten implicit codes and rules of engagement that required field-conditioned notions of, for instance competition, performance, and outcome were unconsciously evoked. Together with cooperative behaviours, the study additionally contributes a new conception of network diversity (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003), defined by the variety of cooperative and co-opetitive interdependences and relationships in a business's network. Furthermore, the current research has contributed to trust-based relational governance literature. Unlike previous work (Besser & Miller, 2011; Larson, 1992; Uzzi, 1997), the fine-grained details and mechanisms that underpin this type of governance arrangement are illustrated. It further showed how the governance arrangements were implicitly subsumed in social controls and sanctions, which were socially enabled and constructed by agents in interaction with the field. Extant works have cited enablers of this governance type without accounting for their social construction.

The thesis also shows that in dealing with liability of smallness (Baum, Calabrese, & Silverman, 2000), the informal businesses pursued immanent strategies that structurally reinforced and legitimised smallness. This observation is somewhat dissimilar to previous work (Anderson et al., 2010; Jarillo, 1989; Lechner & Dowling; 2003). The analysis further showed how field structures and systemic logics of the field acted as frames in the decisions to overcome the shortcomings of smallness, and was captured as a kind of 'agential-structural

small size-specialisation-strategic networking practice' dialectic. The thesis therefore makes another contribution by demonstrating how the *nature* and *drivers* of similar set of practices or findings may be subject to dissimilar logics. This may also be likened to the differences in the ways co-opetition worked here and elsewhere discussed above.

Finally yet importantly, an alternative explanation of alliance portfolio development is offered. The analysis suggests that the types, distribution, volume, and convertibility of capital possessed by businesses and their agents at any point in time, may influence the future direction and structure of networks, alongside extant research findings of businesses' prior network history and structural embeddedness in network ties (see for example Anderson et al., 2010; Larson, 1992; Uzzi, 1997; Shaw, 2006;). The thesis therefore demonstrates how a practice-based micro-level approach can inform and advance network literature.

### **7.2.3 Contributions to informal economy literature**

Being an under-researched setting, some of the contributions may be described as simply providing empirical evidence, or otherwise on propositions and theories espoused elsewhere. The current study is unique in that it is one of the first empirical works to study the informal economy phenomenon from a management perspective, more especially in strategic management. Extant management and organisation scholarship on the informal economy mostly take an entrepreneurship focus (e.g. De Castro et al., 2014; Thai & Turkina 2013; Williams et al., 2012; Williams & Sahid, 2014; Siqueira, Webb & Bruton, 2014; Webb et. al, 2014) even though the activities of the informal businesses were not necessarily entrepreneurial (Watson, 2013).

An important contribution of the current study is the development and empirical 'testing' of a formality-informality model for delineating businesses. The model identified businesses along a 'formal-informal' spectrum, in response to calls for the dissolution of the sharp 'formal-informal' business boundaries (McGahan, 2012). The model brought management and organisation conceptualisation into sharper focus, to complement the received legal non-compliance conceptualisation that is partly the reason for the conceptual difficulties associated with the phenomenon. A related contribution is the identification of one of the participant informal businesses (SSC) with position H in Figure 2.1, which includes highly-structured informal businesses. SSC was a family business with management and organisation structures that were near formal, the owner/manager also exhibited comparatively higher levels of formality and agency as described in Chapter 5. This study is

thus an important addition to Uzo and Mair (2014), given that informal businesses in this category are under-researched (Godfrey, 2011).

Studies have established that relationships exist between formal and informal economies and businesses (Gowan 1997; Holt & Littlewood, 2014; Jones et al. 2006). However, this is one of the first strategic management studies to explicate the fine-grained on-goings in the relationships and how they are managed. The findings also support Williams and Martinez-Perez (2014) who found social redistribution to be one of the many motivations for patronising informal economy goods and services, yet whilst they studied individual purchases, the current study made the observations in the context of corporate consumption. In a related vein, the study further uncovers circumstances under which economic and social value for the customer, and other stakeholders may be maximised through informal, rather than formal production arrangements (Godfrey, 2011).

Further, the Bourdieusian analysis employed here demonstrates that significant differences exist between strategy practice in the formal and informal economies, since they are attuned to different sets of systemic logics and field structures. This social distance (Splitter & Seidl, 2011, p. 105) must therefore be accounted for in studying the strategy work of agents from these two dissimilar fields. There was also evidence of structuralist theories of the informal economy that focuses on structural, unequal, and hierarchical modalities of exchange between informal and formal economies (Chen, 2012; Jones et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2012). Consciously or unconsciously the SNP show that the informal businesses were complicit in the reproduction of the domination which relegated it to a subordinate position (Golsorkhi et al., 2009). The thesis also addressed one of the limitations alluded to in a recent study of co-competition in the informal economy (Damayanti, 2014) by accounting for the process of 'rules' construction, and how they are internalised in the everyday activities of agents. Finally, the study illustrates the affordances social practice theories provide for investigating such non-traditional settings that traditional strategy content approach rendered almost non-plausible.

### **7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERIAL PRACTICE AND POLICY**

The study reveals that perhaps the campaign by government and policy makers over the years to more or less legitimise the informal economy in Ghana is in the right direction, and could be extended to other countries with similar social structures. The informal businesses working with their network partners have shown potential, this insight therefore provides

basis for an alternative microenterprise development strategy. More so, the study indicates that the informal printing businesses were far from engaging in marginal activities (Hart, 1973), instead their business practices, including their SNP play a crucial role in the efficiency and output of formal businesses. In fact their relationships with formal organisations largely explain the level of resilience they have developed, as well as the unique market proposition they offer clients.

Logically, any attempts to formalise these informal businesses investigated here is most likely to detract from their socially-constructed resilience and uniqueness. Subsequently, their propositions could be undermined which may result in their inability to contribute to the efficiency of their formal organisation client partners. In most part, these efficiency-enhancing capabilities bordered on their organisation and management practices, and less on their non-compliance (the main reason given by advocates for their formalisation), though these two cannot be completely divorced from each other. In effect, formalisation could predispose the informal businesses to imbibing new field logics that may not align with the logic of practice that embed their current business and SNP. Meanwhile, the study found that ignorance and arduous processes were the reasons for non-compliance in some instances. So, instead of attempting to bring the informal businesses onto the mainstream, special dispensations like the flagship SSNIT Informal Sector Fund must be encouraged and scaled up across all regulatory spheres. For example, the SSNIT Informal Sector Fund Area Manager for Accra explained that flexibility in payment cycles, quantum of contribution, accessing contributions, publicity, as well as the demonstration of tangible benefits have contributed to high rates of compliance amongst informal businesses in his jurisdiction.

Again the study has provided insights for formal firms seeking guidance on how to navigate relationships with these informal businesses, by offering a conceptual framework that details the influence of field logics in engagement of these informal businesses, in addition to transactional artefacts. This further offers a tool for identifying which performance/outcome measures are most salient for the informal businesses in long-term relationships with formal firms. Additionally, it reveals how the formal firms may juxtapose their own logics and performance metrics vis-à-vis those of the informal businesses, in the management of the ongoing relationships. Also, the informal printing businesses and their network partners present an example of a strategic group position in the printing industry in Ghana that businesses can target with their business models. Being a competitive industry with large multinational players, this strategic group provides a point of reference for strategic choice and positioning,



more so when the study revealed that practices amongst the businesses in this strategic group were amenable to a combination of formal and informal arrangements.

#### **7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Despite efforts to enhance the knowledge claims made in this research, a number of limitations were encountered and are acknowledged. As indicated in Chapter 4, the findings of this research must be treated with caution since statistical generalisation does not apply in this thesis. The findings arose from qualitative study that was focused on a particular industry and country, so the study does not assume these findings apply broadly to other industries or countries. Whilst qualitative case studies are often criticised for the lack of empirical generalisation (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Myers, 2009), the author maintains that social phenomena are not context-free. Instead, the context-rich data that resulted from the researcher's immersion in the field supports 'inferential generalisation' into similar contexts (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 275).

Although deep insights were uncovered on the SNP of the informal printing businesses during the five months field work, additional and more valuable information may have been obtained from a longer period of ethnographic data collection and engagement with participants. For instance, how context changed over the years, and how this change may have influenced some of the observations made in the current study, and is clearly a potential area for future research. The limitation in time in the field was ameliorated by the extra time spent conducting fieldwork as part of the pilot study that provided access to more data (McKinnon, 1988). Additionally, and more importantly the author's familiarity and previous participation in the informal economy which more or less rendered him an 'everyday ethnographer' and 'participant observer' (Watson, 2012) was the other ameliorator.

There was also the possibility of bias during data collection and analysis. Bringing strategic management theories and concepts framed in formal economy contexts to bear on an under-researched informal economy setting may have influenced the researcher's *a priori* assumptions, and thus interpretation of the data. This possibility was somewhat exacerbated by a general lack of interest in receiving feedback (member checking) which is a common practice with ethnographic data collection techniques in formal settings (e.g. Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Jorgensen & Messner, 2010). This possible limitation was minimised by providing thick description of the views, processes, and experiences through the use of multiple sources of data and approaches to data collection (Ritchie & Lewis 2003).

Additionally, open-ended questioning and storytelling approaches that aim to project the voice of the respondents were included as interview and informal chat data collection strategies. Finally, as mentioned above, in analysing how the SNP contribute to the durability of field practices and structures, the current study used historical data as a point of reference rather than primary sources that provide more context-specific, fine-grained, and consistent data.

## **7.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This thesis has provided insights into strategy practice generally, and SNP more specifically in the informal printing economy. Nonetheless, some issues were identified that offer opportunities for studies that could explicate the specific topic, as well as related ones further. As one of the first strategic management studies in an informal economy setting, this research provides basic conceptual framework and entry points for specific areas of future strategic management scholarship. Therefore, future scholarship could extend empirical studies into contexts elsewhere, in order to ascertain the extent to which the findings and framework are applicable to other contexts.

For example, structural variations exist between the informal economy phenomenon in developed and less developed economies (Gërkhani, 2004; Webb et al., 2014), thus studies that explore a developed country context may reveal different perspectives. This line of inquiry could be taken further through cross-country comparisons that reveal how the different macro-structures influence the phenomenon, and therefore SNP. In a similar vein, the conceptual framework developed from the summary of the findings could be subjected to future ‘testing’, adaption, and extension beyond the current context. It may be particularly useful to scholars interested in understanding how and why communities of practice with different logics are un(able) to work together, as well as the enablers and constraints in importing practices across fields.

The research found that actor identities and trajectories were a significant factor in understanding SNP of the informal businesses; however, the current research did not capture some equally important actor biographies. For example, future research needs to investigate the SNP of owner/managers with high levels of formal education but limited or no formal and informal sector work experience. Additionally, future longitudinal studies could extend and provide more nuanced insights on how strategy practices in the informal economy are impacting the durability of field structures and practices, in response to the limitation

identified in Section 7.4. Especially how context has evolved over time with practices, and how this change impacts observed SNP. This research has adopted Bourdieusian practice theory to examine SNP by the informal printing businesses; however it is by no means an exhaustive explication of Bourdieu's practice theory as other concepts such as *illusio*, *doxa*, and symbolic violence (Golsorkhi et al., 2009; Tatli et al., 2014), which were not foregrounded in the current study awaits future study. Additionally, the explication of the full tenets of 'participant objectivation' as a sole researcher here is limited, a challenge acknowledged in Bourdieusian scholarship (Golsorkhi et al., 2009; Grenfell, 2014). Again, future research may build on the Bourdieusian approach adopted here by applying other influential practice theories amongst those identified in Section 2.3 to this rather under-researched setting.

Finally, this thesis studied SNP as a case of strategy practice in an informal economy context; further studies are required to explore other aspects of strategy work such as acquisition of other informal businesses and their capabilities, in order to provide a richer notion of the informal economy phenomenon from a strategic management scholarship perspective. This type of research could be particularly insightful as the empirical findings suggest some of the informal businesses were selling off machines and businesses in order to engage Chinese partners to provide those services and products more efficiently, invariably participants foresee this trend increasing in future.

## **7.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In response to calls for more SAP studies that foreground structural and relational linkages in strategy practice (Gomez, 2010; Vaara & Durand, 2012; Vaara & Whittington, 2012), this thesis explored SNP of informal printing businesses in Ghana, in an attempt to illuminate strategy practice in the informal economy. Bourdieu's (1977; 1990) logic of practice, which encapsulates the concepts of capital, habitus, and field, was utilised as a guiding frame to 'think' about the themes that emerged from thematic analysis of the empirical data. Five (5) themes representing major categories under which SNP of the informal businesses clustered were identified, each with a number of sub-themes: 1) 'Drivers' which included internal and external components; 2) 'Nature of relationships' made up of cooperative and competitive aspects; 3) 'Partners and exchanges' including extent of mediation and degree of involvement with partner groups components; 4) 'Building and managing relationships' that encapsulates partnering practices and strategies, dealing with inherent mistrust and risk, satisfying and

retaining clients aspects; and 5) 'Outcomes' categorised into individual-level, organisational-level and extra-organisational-level components.

Bourdieuian analysis suggested that strategic networks by small businesses may be formed for the sake of practical coping in the light of capital deficiencies, and not necessarily as competitive or calculative strategies employed by small businesses at various stages of business development. SNP under these circumstances were aimed at developing exchange-value to make up for capital deficiencies required to transition to market opportunities controlled by dominant formal organisation field players. Capital exchanges and the benefits that flow from them to small businesses and their agents can be more complex than the two-way direct relationships depicted in some parts of the network literature, especially those that study social capital. In order for capital to 'materialise' through these exchanges however, interdependence behaviours (cooperative and/or co-opetitive) that sit comfortably with the focal field's social structures and therefore agents' dispositions and implicit codes of conduct, are structured conditions.

Construction of risk and mis(trust) are thus part of this process, as agents work with, and internalise socially-framed scripts and notions of risks and mis(trust), in addition to field-conditioned risk coping and management practices. Relatedly, the research draws attention to field-specified performance outcomes or benefits from strategic networking as an integral part of understanding SNP, as it has become clear from this study that these frames could be fundamental to the enactment of practice logics that shape SNP. Together, these observations highlight the fine-grained on-goings in the relationships between formal and informal businesses which is yet to be captured in the strategic management literature.

The research also highlights the importance of agents' trajectories before and during field entry in making sense of the role of agency in defining dominant practices, motivation and capacity to stabilise or destabilise field practices and structures, as well as the definition and perpetuation of regularities and irregularities in SNP in the field. Again, the thesis demonstrates that this kind of agency is both shaped, and received by macro-level structures and practices, thereby demonstrating the need to give greater significance to macro-level influences on strategy practice. For example, the empirical evidence from the study suggests that the 'drivers' and 'outcomes' identified as themes of the SNP of the informal businesses construct, and are constructed by each other in a continuous cycle. This observation is partly attributable to the identification of outcomes beyond economics and finance, and also by

extending outcomes farther than the local. In the current study, outcomes were revealed at multiple levels including individual, organisational, and extra-organisational levels. This research therefore captures the contextual complexities that are often treated lightly in traditional strategy scholarship generally, and network studies specifically.

In a corollary fashion, the research has given impetus to generative mechanisms that underlie strategy practice. It highlights the emancipating and constraining role of individuals, businesses, organisations, institutions, industries/sectors, fields, the state, global trade, and society (micro, meso and macro influences) in the SNP of the informal businesses. The thesis thus demonstrates how by steering away from the pervasive internal/external environment treatment of context, more nuanced influences on, and influences from strategy practice may be uncovered. Thanks to this structural and relational approach to the study of strategy work, the thesis was able to showcase the underlying mechanisms of trust-based relational network governance, social controls, and sanction practices, in addition to how agents internalised these, unlike extant studies. Furthermore, the evidence from the thesis suggests that scholars may employ this approach to understand why the *nature* and *drivers* of similar set of practices or findings may be subject to dissimilar logics since the generative mechanisms are likely to be differently configured. For example, the research reveals that network partners may assume multiple temporal positions in the value chain, aside from co-managing a set of activities revealed in an earlier study on how cooperation works.

Materiality proved to be an important revelation in this thesis. First, small spaces and size, strategy work, and SNP of the informal businesses were shown to be in a dialectic relationship, and thus one cannot be fully understood without recourse to the others. Invariably the thesis argues that making efforts to explicate such relational and structural relationships in SAP scholarship is a meaningful step towards explicating how work spaces could produce strategy, and at the same time, be products of strategy work. Second, institutionalisation of materiality by the informal businesses, and their network partners deserve particular mention as previous studies limited the study of materiality to the organisational level. The current research suggests materiality (in this case the use of the invoice) was socially constructed, ‘negotiated’, and legitimised at the field level, with the complicity of formal organisation agents from the field of large-scale production where bureaucratic rule-following would ordinarily render the manner in which this particular artefact was used in the SNP as ‘illogical’, given the exigencies of their field logics.

Finally, the thesis summarised the empirical findings in a conceptual framework for examining SNP as an enactment of field logics. The fact that the current study was focused on SNP in a specific context, which invariably limits its applicability elsewhere notwithstanding, there is potential for ‘testing’ the framework in similar contexts. For example, the relationships between organisations and agents in other fields of restricted production such as other creative industries (see Jeffcutt, 2000), and those of the field of large-scale production could be studied with this framework. The practices in these relationships, just like those studied here, will also require framing and ‘negotiation’ of logics shaped by myriad agential and structural influences, which may then be enacted in a field logic of practice. Conceptually, the model may also be applied to understanding the dynamics of interactions between different communities of practice working together on a common project, for example those involving academics, practitioners and consultants. Additionally, this framework perhaps provides a starting point for Jeffcutt’s (2000) dilemma regarding the complexity of successfully transplanting creative practices from creative industries into bureaucratic business organisations, whilst leaving enough room for adaption and extension.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Field Guide

#### Agent profile

- Formal education
- Other training
- Informal employment skills
- Position/role
- Work experience in formal and informal businesses
- Influential formal and informal associations and affiliations

#### Profile and business description

- History
- Number of years of operation in the informal economy
- Location
- Size and space
- Products/services
- Markets/customers
- Strategy awareness
- Strategic or business plan and documentation?
- Strategists/practitioners
- Motivation/reasons for operating in the informal economy
- Business advantages from operating as an informal business
- Problems/challenges of operating as an informal business
- How does an informal business survive and become successful

#### Internal organisation and infrastructure

- Displayed publications, literature, information, wall hangings
- Organisational structure/hierarchies/responsibilities
- Daily routines/timing of activities/meetings etc.
- Space and materials
- Number of employees

#### Reasons for strategic networking

- What strategic reasoning behind decision
- What strategic benefits
- How networking positions business relative to competitors
- Under what circumstances is networking critical
- Why form networks to 'buy' instead of incorporating activities that can be done in-house
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of vertical integration
- How easy or otherwise is it to replace a relationship/partner with in-house production/service

- What are the likely benefits/gains/costs if a currently 'bought' activity is 'made' in future
- Is it possible for a competitor (or new entrant) to decide to vertically integrate and 'make' most of the things that others currently 'buy'
- How will businesses react/respond to such strategic decision

#### **Deciding on strategic network formation**

- What is the primary reason for the decision to form networks - financial, organisational, historic etc
- Who decides
- How and where are decisions taken
- What forms do the decision making take
- What events characterise decision making
- What documents, materials and technologies are used
- What methods, strategy decision/analytical tools/frames or heuristics are employed

#### **Content/relations in on-going relationship**

- What kinds of relationships and power manoeuvres
- Which agents are involved or responsible
- Nature of contracts/agreements and documentation
- What are the standard operating procedures
- How long are the relationships and what accounts for longevity
- What are the risks and how are they shared/ managed
- What are expectations from partners
- What are your network and business performance/evaluative criteria
- What objects, software, and technology
- What meetings or events
- What circumstances may lead to replacing, exiting, or rejecting a relationship
- How has the market/industry/field changed over the past few years
- How has these relationships and networks enabled the business to adapt to the changes
- What are some of the resultant changes in the terms, procedures and practice in the relationships
- How has the business practically adapted to these changes in the relationship

#### **Network partners**

- History of partnerships/partnering
- Where business is located in the supply or value chain
- Where are partners physically located
- Which agents of partners are involved or responsible for the relationship
- What is the source of attraction for the partner
- What is the source of attraction for the business

#### **Networking opportunities**

- How are new network partners identified, contacted, and recruited

- What is the influence of manager/owner's personal associations
- What is the influence of manager/owner's business associations
- What is the influence of other associations and affiliations
- What influences do individual agents have on networking opportunities

**Delineate field broadly (prior to field entry and empirically)**

- Identify specific networks/relationships with clients, same business-types, competitors, suppliers, state agencies, business and professional associations
- What is the nature of each type of these relationships, and what are the differences
- What goods or services are exchanged and how is that done in practice
- What are the power structures and manoeuvrings, and stakes in each relationship
- How does each type contribute to the competitiveness and success of the business

**Multi-level (micro, meso and macro; individual, organisation and organisational field and societal) practices**

- What is the role of each level in understanding networking and field practices
- What is the contribution of each level of analysis to durability and (any) changes in field practices and structures
- How have these roles and contributions changed over time
- What is the history and developments in the informal economy in Ghana

**Case selection**

- How do cases reflect types/levels of informality
- How do cases reflect varied agent characteristics like levels of education and tenure of operation in the field
- How much do cases capture field characteristics broadly

## APENDIX B: Human Ethics Approval



### HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen  
Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Ref: HEC 2013/129

29 November 2013

William Kofi Darbi  
Department of Management, Marketing & Entrepreneurship  
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear William

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal “The informal economy and strategic networking: a practice perspective” has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 26 November 2013.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L MacDonal'.

Lindsey MacDonal  
**Chair**  
*University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee*

## Appendix C: Interview protocol/questions

Name of business: .....

Location: .....

Name of interviewee: .....

Position/role of interviewee: .....

Name of interviewer: .....

Date/Time: .....

### 1. Introduction of interviewer, research project and audio recording prompt

### 2. Response from interviewee, reading and signing of consent form

**3. This research is aimed at understating your practices rather than best practices; the interviewer therefore has no opinion on the issues to be discussed but rather interested in how you conduct your business as far as the practices to be discussed are concerned.**

### 4. Profile, internal organisation, and business description

- Could you please tell me about the history and operations of your business? For example when it was started, your products/services, customers, business relationships, number of employees, roles and responsibilities etc.?
- What motivated/motivates you to operate an informal business and can you tell me about some of the advantages and challenges you face?
- Who are your competitors and where are they located?
- What particular actions do you take to win customers away from or perform better than your competitors?
- What does it take to survive and succeed as an informal business

### 5. Interviewee profile

- Could you please tell me about yourself? For instance age, school, education, training, work/business experience, skills, learning, position/role etc.
- Could you please mention five (5) individuals or groups that you are associated with that have the most influence on your work/business success/performance? For example church members, co-workers, friends, members of professional group, family etc.

### 6. Reasons for strategic networking

- Could you please tell me about other businesses and organisations that your business has long-term relationships with and what your practical experiences have been generally? This includes with clients, same business-types, competitors, suppliers, state agencies, business and professional associations.
- What made you form relationships with these businesses and organisations? How critical are these relationships?
- What are the benefits of these relationships to your business and how do you measure these benefits?
- What advantages do these relationships give you over your competitors? How do you ascertain these advantages?
- Why do you form these relationships for services/products that you can provide/produce in your business? What are/will be some of the advantages and disadvantages for if you do things yourself?
- How easy or otherwise is it to replace relationship/partner with in-house production? What will be the costs and benefits?

- What are the implications if businesses in a similar line decide to do almost everything themselves, instead of forming networks with others to obtain services/products that you currently obtain from others? What will be your reaction/response?

#### **7. Deciding on strategic network formation**

- May I know who are involved and who are not in taking such decisions.
- How and where are such decision taken? For example through a process, negotiations, consensus, vetoing, done at the work place, at a residence, other places.
- What events or meetings (formal or informal) do you organise/attend to specifically decide and negotiate these business relationships and what typically are the activities and materials used?
- What are the considerations that go into such decisions? How do you go about weighing these considerations? What kinds of information do you sort, how do you get such information and how do you use the information to arrive at a decision?
- What particular documents, materials, objects or technologies do you use as part of the process of negotiating and taking such decisions?

#### **8. Networking relationship**

- What is the nature of your relationship with partners? For example subcontractor, customer, distributor, service provider, client etc.
- Who is more powerful? Your partners, you, no one? How do power manoeuvres manifest and what accounts for power manoeuvrings? Could you tell me about specific cases?
- How do you know whether you are getting a fair share of value created from the networks compared to partners?
- Could you tell me about the nature of the contracts, agreements and regulations/rules? Which kinds of documentation do you use?
- What are the standard operating procedures in the relationship?
- What is the role of trust before the relationship and how do you build trust subsequently? Any specific cases?
- Usually, how long are these relationships and what makes them last? What expectations do partners have of you and how do you practically meet them?
- What risks are associated with these relationships and what practical steps do you employ dealing with them? In what ways do your partners share these risks with you or help deal with them? Could you tell me about specific cases?
- Which particular objects, materials, software, and technology do you use in the on-going relationship just to make it work, succeed or beneficial in the long-term?
- What meetings or events (formal or informal) do you hold as part of the on-going relationship even after the relationship has been decided, agreed and formed? What typically are the activities and materials used?
- How do you replace, exit, or reject a proposal for a relationship? What kinds of information do you rely on, how do you get information and how do you process it in order to arrive at a decision? Any specific cases?
- How has the market/industry/field changed over the past few years? How has these relationships and networks enabled the business to adapt to the changes
- What are some of the resultant changes in the terms, procedures and practice in the relationships? How has the business practically adapted to these changes in the relationships?

#### **9. Network partners**

- Where are your partners physically located? How do you deal with any practical issues that arise as a result of their location?

- What dedicated ‘relationship-governing arrangements’ do you put in place? Which agents in your business and partners’ are involved or responsible for the relationship? How do you manage these arrangements and what are the activities?
- What about your business and practices make you an attractive partner? What do you have that your partner might not get from a competitor or in-house? How do partners get to know about your business and what it can offer?

#### 10. **Networking opportunities**

- How do you identify, contact, and recruit network partners?
- What are your criteria for selecting partners? How do you come by these criteria and could you please rank criteria? How do you do the ranking?
- What influence does the manager/owner’s personal, business and other associations have on opportunities for these relationships? How are these influences used in tapping the opportunities?
- What influence does individual agents’ (e.g. employees) personal, business and other associations have on opportunities for these relationships? How are these influences used in tapping the opportunities?
- What opportunities does the business itself avail for these relationships? How are these influences used in tapping the opportunities?

#### 11. **Interviewee’s role**

Could you please tell me about your own role and what you do specifically as far as these relationships are concerned?

- What influence do you have if at all on decisions regarding these business relationships? How do you do the influencing?
- Do you wish for some changes in the networking practices? How can you influence such changes?

#### 12. **Recap of each specific relationship across the field**

- Recap/identify all long-term relationships with businesses and organisations
- What is the nature of each type of these relationships, and what are the differences?
- What goods or services are exchanged and how is that done in practice?
- What are the power structures and manoeuvrings, and stakes in each relationship?
- How does each type contribute to the competitiveness and success of the business?

#### 13. **Closing**

- Are there any other issues you want to mention, discuss or elaborate regarding these relationships?
- Thank you for your time. I’m grateful

## **APPENDIX D: Interview protocol/questions for network partners and state regulatory agents**

### **Network partners**

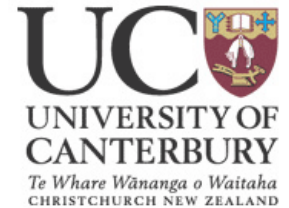
- Experience with informal businesses
- What goods and services are exchanged
- Benefits and challenges
- Why business deals with them despite challenges
- Why will business deal with them in future
- Why will business not deal with them in future
- What are the practices in the relationship with them
- How long are these relationships
- How are risks and challenges managed
- What challenges do they face working with you
- Under what circumstances are these relationships most critical
- What is the nature/size/amount of transactions/investments in these relationships
- Any other related matters to be discussed

### **State regulatory agencies**

- What are the requirements and processes for compliance
- How are they enforced
- What are some experiences
- To what extent are businesses complying
- Suggest or speculate reasons behind the extent or level of compliance
- How easy is it to continue operating when not fully compliant
- Has there been/what are the changes in the requirements and procedures over time
- What necessitated those changes and what has been the effects on compliance
- How are businesses made aware of these changes and are they aware
- Have they/how have they responded to these changes
- What changes do you foresee/plan in the future
- Mention some possible changes
- Do you expect these changes to improve compliance levels
- Explain how these changes may deliver expected results
- Any other related matters to be discussed



## APPENDIX E: Information sheet for owner/managers



### College of Business and Law

Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship  
Tel: +64 3 364 2606 [www.mang.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.mang.canterbury.ac.nz)

### The Informal Economy and Strategic Networking: A Practice Perspective

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR BUSINESS OWNER/MANAGER

Your enterprise is invited to participate in this research project “The Informal Economy and Strategic Networking: A Practice Perspective” that aims to investigate the ‘doing’ of strategic networking in the informal economy.

The rationale is to understand how the nature and developments in the informal economy explain the way informal enterprises ‘do’ strategic networking given the peculiar characteristics of the participants and context, and also how those networking practices in turn explain the nature and development of the informal economy. The researcher as a matter of fact is not interested in issues that border on non-compliance with any laws or regulations.

Your involvement in this project will be to provide information on how your enterprise goes about doing/practicing business that involves long-term relationships with other businesses, by way of researcher observations, interviews and related documents during a one-month period. The first two weeks will involve interviews lasting one hour per interviewee, observations and documental data collection, followed by another two weeks for the clarification and corroboration of data collected from the first round. The observations will entail researcher spending half to full days observing your networking and other business practices that can explain your informal practices best, also any data on networking agreements and contracts and related strategy documents will be collected. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any penalty, including withdrawal of any information provided up until the time that such data is analysed. Further, please grant permission for the conduct of interviews with selected employees who are likely to be knowledgeable about your strategic networking practices.

As a follow-up to this project you will be contacted to check the transcripts of the interview for accuracy and also throw more light on some developing issues such as researcher assumptions and interpretations during data analysis. You may also request a copy of the final report at the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, by your participation, other businesses including formal firms may learn more about informal enterprise business practices availing networking and business opportunities for your enterprise. The research may be published but you are assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. The identity of all participants will not be made public whatsoever and access to data will strictly be restricted to people who are directly involved in this research. To reduce possible risk of divulging information and the identities of participants to third parties, pseudonyms (fictitious names) would be used so that anonymity is preserved. Further, your contact information will neither be published nor divulged to any third party and will not be used for purposes other than contacting you about this research.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for a PhD degree by the bearer, William Kofi Darbi (email: [william.darbi@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:william.darbi@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)) under the supervision of Dr Paul Knott (email: [paul.knott@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:paul.knott@canterbury.ac.nz); phone +64 3 364 2987 ext 6941) and Professor Michael Hall (email: [michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz); phone +64 3 364 2987 ext 8612). They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed *and approved* by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

## APPENDIX F: Information sheet for employees

### College of Business and Law

Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship

Tel: +64 3 364 2606 [www.mang.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.mang.canterbury.ac.nz)



### The Informal Economy and Strategic Networking: A Practice Perspective

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR EMPLOYEE

You are invited to participate in this research project “The Informal Economy and Strategic Networking: A Practice Perspective” that aims to investigate the ‘doing’ of strategic networking in the informal economy because of your knowledge on the networking practices of your enterprise.

The rationale is to understand how the nature and developments in the informal economy explain the way informal enterprises ‘do’ strategic networking given the peculiar characteristics of the participants and context, and also how those networking practices in turn explain the nature and development of the informal economy. The researcher as a matter of fact is not interested in issues that border on non-compliance with any laws or regulations.

Your involvement in this project will be to provide information on how your enterprise goes about doing/practicing business that involves long-term relationships with other businesses, by way of researcher observations and interviews. The first two weeks will involve interviews and observations followed by another two weeks for the clarification and corroboration of data collected from the first round. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any penalty, including withdrawal of any information provided up until the time that such data is analysed.

As a follow-up to this project you may be contacted to check the transcripts of the interview and/or throw more light on some developing issues such as researcher assumptions and interpretations during data analysis.

The research may be published but you are assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation. Your identity will not be made public whatsoever and access to data will strictly be restricted to people who are directly involved in this research. To reduce possible risk of divulging information and your identity to your employer and third parties, pseudonyms (fictitious names) would be used so that anonymity is preserved.

Further, your contact information will neither be published nor divulged to any third party and will not be used for purposes other than contacting you about this research.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for a PhD degree by the bearer, William Kofi Darbi (email: [william.darbi@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:william.darbi@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)) under the supervision of Dr Paul Knott (email: [paul.knott@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:paul.knott@canterbury.ac.nz); phone +64 3 364 2987 ext 6941) and Professor Michael Hall (email: [michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz); phone +64 3 364 2987 ext 8612). They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed *and approved* by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

**APPENDIX G: Consent form for owner/managers**



**College of Business and Law**

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William Kofi Darbi  
Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship  
University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800  
Christchurch 8140  
New Zealand

**The Informal Economy and Strategic Networking: A Practice Perspective**

**CONSENT FORM FOR OWNER/MANAGER**

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I give consent to the publication of results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

I also understand that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors and that any published or reported results will neither identify me nor my enterprise. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after ten years. I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

I note that the project has been reviewed *and approved* by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## APPENDIX H: Consent form for employees



### College of Business and Law

Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship  
Tel: +64 3 364 2606 [www.mang.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.mang.canterbury.ac.nz)

William Kofi Darbi  
Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship  
University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800  
Christchurch 8140  
New Zealand

### The Informal Economy and Strategic Networking: A Practice Perspective

#### CONSENT FORM FOR EMPLOYEE

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I give consent to the publication of results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

I also understand that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and his supervisors and that any published or reported results will neither identify me nor my enterprise. I understand that in order to enhance confidentiality the interview will be done in the absence of my employer and other employees, and that pseudonym will be employed to disguise my identity and responses from my employer, other employees and third parties. I also understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after ten years. I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

I note that the project has been reviewed *and approved* by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## **APPENDIX I: Participant objectivation**

Within a social constructivist paradigm that was adopted in this thesis, reflexivity and ‘relationality’ that accounts for the relationship between the research, researcher and participants must be treated in the study (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, & Locke, 2008; Hall & Callery, 2001). Reflexivity critically examines the effect of the self on the research process; it reports how the social construction of the research process may have influenced the research findings. ‘Relationality’ on the other hand concerns the social relationship between the researcher and the researched in terms of power balance, equity, and reciprocity (Darbi & Hall, 2014; Easterby-Smith, et al. 2008; Hall & Callery, 2001). This ‘reflexivity, and to some extent ‘relationality’ practices seem to be a popular approach in the extant SAP scholarship, however, Bourdieu describes these practices as simple self-referencing in which the researcher merely reflects on the research process, whilst directing attention on the researcher as a private ‘isolated’ person (Splitter & Seidl, 2011).

Instead, Bourdieu (1998; 2003) proposes a different concept of reflexivity ‘participant objectivation’ that accounts for the subjective relation of the researcher to the object of research. This may be achieved by analysing the objective structures of the academic field in interrelation with the researcher’s social position and individual dispositions (Bourdieu, 2000; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 2006). In effect the researcher needs to subject his or her research practice to the same logic of practice as the social (strategy) practice they study (Chapter 3). In this pursuit, researchers must consider their social conditions and dispositions subsumed in biographies: gender, experience in the field, education, nationality, ethnicity, as well as the objective structures of the academic field: hegemonies, shared belief systems and thoughts, research traditions and problem framing (Everett, 2002; Kerr & Robinson, 2009; Splitter & Seidl, 2011).

In seeking to study the informal economy setting, the research interest signified the author’s social past and origins, and to a large extent his social present. The researcher comes from a developing country where the informal economy phenomenon is pervasive, in fact from a country where the informal economy is larger than the formal economy in terms of employment. More so he participated in the informal economy virtually every day as a consumer, and to some extent, as a business when he sold wares whilst growing up as a dependent child in Ghana. Invariably the researcher failed to see the phenomenon as illegitimate; rather it is a very significant part of the society in which he was born, live and

work. In choosing to study the informal economy setting therefore, the author brought their organisation and management practices into sharper focus, relative to the non-compliance or illegitimate conceptualisations that dominate the literature. Hence, despite an awareness of the preference for formal settings and the corporate strategy hegemony in strategic management scholarship, my experience with the informal economy phenomenon was fundamental to my research interest.

Furthermore unlike before, the increasing institutionalisation of the ‘practice turn’ in the field of strategy accorded newly-framed research problems, questions, and units of analysis that are amenable to this type of setting. This further boosted my confidence in the pursuance of this informal economy setting research project despite some of the earlier ‘fears’ expressed above. Hence the choice to investigate the informal economy setting in my doctoral research was a social construction traceable to my interests, stakes, and dispositions shaped by my historical and current social trajectories on one hand, and affordances from the field of strategy on the other. Granted this, a scholar from a more advanced country characterised by a small informal economy and maybe different set of features may have taken a different focus or approach, thus bringing different insights and perspectives to bear. Probably because this scholar may socially constructs his or her knowledge creation practices different from the case in the current study.

The researcher’s position as a university lecturer, a symbolic capital in the Ghanaian society facilitated access to participants through the instrumentality of his former students, who were themselves participants in the informal economy. Informal business participants in Ghana are generally not enthused about research; obviously they struggle to identify with its value, hence aside from the fact that they are a ‘hidden’ population, this perception presents barriers to access. As mentioned above, my position as lecturer and an academic who taught some of their colleagues opened doors that eased data collection, this was reinforced by the fact that their colleagues were able to vouch for my identity and the purpose of the research project. This symbolic capital was also instrumental in gaining access and creating rapport with a formal sector network partner, who ended up providing quality information because he wanted to demonstrate knowledgeable ability. He also facilitated access to a colleague of his. This manager was a bit reluctant to participate by erecting barriers initially until he got wind of the fact that I am an academic, and more so teach at a particular university that he was considering for an MBA. My identity and ‘positionality’ relative to this participant may have

influenced his perspective and therefore responses, which contributed to the knowledge production in this thesis (Darbi & Hall, 2014).

As an inexperienced SAP scholar, the author recalls reading literatures that used different social practice theories to explore strategy practice, particularly those focused on varied aspects of agency, structure, and to some extent domination at the beginning of my doctoral studies. Despite the acknowledgement of the difficulty in its articulation, Bourdieu's theory of practice was the most compelling and fascinating to read. In fact, the researcher found Bourdieu's theory most interesting and amenable to context, and thus salient to my research to the point that he almost immediately discontinued the search for alternative and maybe equally suitable practice theories. This inexperience and therefore inclination towards going for 'what works', intertwined with full-time PhD timelines and scholarly expectations, unconsciously oriented my choices and knowledge production practices in this research. A similar personal concern for time and resource constraints, which were problems he was confronted with precluded longitudinal data collection approach, hence the preference for cross-sectional may yet be another critical variable he introduced into the knowledge production equation.

On more general note, my scholastic view or intellectual bias (Bourdieu, 1975; 2001) conditioned my specific way of observing and making meaning of the research object, especially in the use of language despite genuine efforts to understand SNP in their 'field business language'. Particularly by attempting to understand informal setting practices using more or less formal setting language, having studied strategy theories, concepts and analysis framed in formal corporate settings (Splitter & Seidl, 2011). These cognitive structures somewhat historically imbibed, and which may have presupposed the author's analytic interests in relation to the research object, were possible sources of knowledge reproduction and 'misrepresentation' in the name of scientific knowledge creation (Bourdieu, 2000). However, even though the researcher cannot claim evidence of a radical doubt and break with the idea of 'representations shared by all' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992 p. 235) in the construction of the research object in this study, as in Oakes et al. (1998) and Everett and Jamal (2001), the strategic networking and informal economy phenomenon were constructed as value and power-laden and subjects of domination. To conclude the researcher has illustrated how his social, strategy field, and intellectual positions may have acted as sources of capital and key filters of my habitus and dispositions that shaped the nature and limits of the knowledge created in this thesis as Bourdieusian analysis prescribes (Everett, 2002).