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**Exploring the role of Short Food Supply Chains in enhancing the livelihoods of small-scale food producers
Evidence from The United Kingdom and The Gambia**

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Exploring the role of Short Food Supply Chains in enhancing the livelihoods of small-scale food producers: Evidence from The United Kingdom and The Gambia

By

Luke Owen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2014



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Abstract

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) can be understood as ‘alternatives’ to conventional, complex food chains that tend to dominate contemporary agri-food systems. They redefine producer-consumer relations through socially and physically ‘closer’, more transparent supply chains founded upon quality cues associated with provenance, whereby products become embedded with information about the spaces of production. It has been argued that SFSC can have significant socio-economic benefits for rural development, providing livelihoods for small-scale, independent food producers who would otherwise be marginalised from food markets.

SFSC have received plenty of attention amongst ‘alternative’ agri-food scholars in recent years. However, empirical research has typically addressed SFSC in relation to a specific set of values, politics and traditions, examining a locale or region in relation to cultural structures ingrained in a particular context. This has resulted in vast amounts of agri-food literature with specific reference to the contexts of Europe, North America and other global North regions. Attention to countries from the global South has increased recently, but there are limited cross-cultural, comparative analyses between regions from the global North *and* South. This is surprising given that small-scale food producers the world over face similar obstacles associated with access to markets, adaptation to climate change, contradictory policies and development programmes and increased competition from imports.

This research investigates how SFSC operate *in context*, drawing on evidence from case studies in rural regions of The Gambia, West Africa and East England; illustrative cases of the global North and South. This thesis adopts an inductive methodology, incorporating grounded theory and a range of qualitative methods and data analysis techniques. The regional food group Tastes of Anglia and social enterprise named ‘Gambia is Good’ served as gatekeepers and provided access to small-scale food producers in each case. The Sustainable (Rural) Livelihoods Framework as originally conceived by the Department for International Development (DFID) was used as a conceptual toolkit to guide data collection and analyses. This involved an amalgamation of the largely disparate ‘alternative’ agri-

food literature with that of sustainable livelihoods, revealing the important role that horizontal embeddedness *and* vertical embeddedness have in the context of SFSC.

This research has found that in The Gambia, limited access to capital assets, infrastructural constraints and a lack of social embeddedness between rural producers and customers in the high value tourist industry undermines SFSC as viable livelihood strategies. This is in contrast to the UK, where food producers have access to a wider set of resources and can also draw on established 'quality' cues associated with Product-Process-Place linkages to market their products. Results suggest this is due to the historical (agri)cultural trajectories of East Anglia and spatial-temporal synergies that enable products embedded with information to be differentiated in competitive marketplaces.

The processes enabling this differentiation can be considered as a form of *cultural capital*. This cannot be as readily drawn upon in The Gambia given its different agricultural and political-economic histories, and comparatively weaker forms of vertical embeddedness. This raises questions about the relevance and transferability of SFSC models to contexts such as The Gambia and other 'similar' regions in sub-Saharan Africa and the global South. The broader implications of these findings are discussed and five future research agendas that explore the key processes of horizontal and vertical embeddedness in both the global North and South are presented.

Key words: Short Food Supply Chains, Sustainable Livelihoods, The Gambia, East Anglia, Embeddedness, Cultural Capital

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my truly wonderful family. I would not be the person I am today without them. They have given me the confidence, encouragement, guidance, hope and support over many years to allow me to push my boundaries and achieve my goals. This achievement is for you.

This research is also dedicated to the people who took part. To the people in The Gambia and in the UK who participated, thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research. Without you it could not have happened.

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Contents

Abstract	i
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	v
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
List of abbreviations and acronyms	xv
List of Appendices	xvii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Why study food?	1
1.2 Alternative and local food systems.....	2
1.3 Short Food Supply Chains.....	3
1.4 Introducing Sustainable Livelihoods.....	5
1.5 Exploring the SFSC-livelihoods interface.....	6
1.6 Aims and objectives.....	7
1.7 Discussing the aims and objectives and outlining the structure of the thesis.	8
1.8 Summary.....	10
Chapter 2: Contextualising agri-food systems, Alternative Food Networks and Short Food Supply Chains: current debates	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Context of agri-food systems.....	13
2.3 The problem with 'conventional' agri-food systems.....	15
2.4 Embeddedness of agri-food systems.....	18

2.5 The emergence of Alternative Food Networks.....	22
2.6 The context of 'local food' and AFNs.....	28
2.7 Socio-economic impacts.....	29
2.8 Environmental impacts?	31
2.9 Applying AFN beyond Western Europe and North America.....	33
2.10 From AFN to Short Food Supply Chains.....	36
2.11 Defining SFSC.....	37
2.12 Quality mechanisms: constructing 'difference' through SFSC.....	44
2.13 Applying SFSC in the global South.....	49
2.14 SFSC and domestic markets in the global South.....	52
2.15 Summary.....	55
Chapter 3: Conceptualising Short Food Supply Chains and Sustainable Livelihoods: towards a conceptual framework.....	57
3.1 Introduction.....	57
3.2 Contextualising Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches.....	58
3.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.....	64
3.4 The utility of the SLF.....	70
3.5 Implementing the SLF: capital assets.....	72
3.6 Social capital and SFSC.....	78
3.7 The layered nature of social capital.....	79
3.8 Human capital and social capital.....	82
3.9 'Other' capital assets.....	84
3.10 Connecting SFSC with Sustainable Livelihoods: a conceptual framework.	86
3.11 (In)formal structures and processes.....	90
3.12 SFSC as livelihood strategies.....	92
3.13 Summary.....	93

Chapter 4: Methodology	95
4.1 Introduction.....	95
4.2 Philosophy: epistemological and ontological foundations.....	95
4.3 Ontology.....	99
4.4 Inductive and deductive approaches to research.....	100
4.5 Grounded theory: rigorous flexibility.....	101
4.6 Research Design: A cross-cultural, comparative case study approach.....	102
4.7 Comparative case study design.....	103
4.8 Background of case study contexts: The Gambia and UK.....	104
4.9 Global North-South context.....	105
4.10 Agricultural context.....	107
4.11 Justifying the Gambian and UK case studies.....	108
4.12 Case study criterion.....	111
4.13 Researching the case studies: a qualitative approach.....	119
4.14 Justifying the use of qualitative methods.....	120
4.15 Participant observation and time in the field.....	121
4.16 Semi-structured interviewing and focus groups.....	122
4.17 Researching GiG: a two phased approach.....	125
4.18 Sampling.....	126
4.19 Researching TOA.....	129
4.20 TOA as a gatekeeper.....	130
4.21 Data analysis.....	132
4.22 Generating grounded theory.....	137
4.23 Social science research ethics and positionality.....	140
4.24 Informed consent.....	141
4.25 Summary.....	143

Chapter 5: Understanding Short Food Supply Chains and livelihoods in the UK: evidence from the East of England.....	145
5.1 Introduction.....	145
5.2 Tastes of Anglia.....	146
5.3 TOA structure.....	146
5.4 Producer members.....	151
5.5 TOA and food (re)-localisation.....	153
5.6 Types of producers and SFSC involved in semi-structured interviewing.....	158
5.7 Local and regional: spatially proximate SFSC.....	163
5.8 Extended SFSC.....	167
5.9 Proximate and Extended SFSC and cultural capital.....	170
5.10 Direct SFSC.....	174
5.11 Direct SFSC and fresh produce.....	175
5.12 Collaboration within the local and regional food sector.....	177
5.13 Supporting local producers: priority or pragmatic?	179
5.14 ‘Profit sufficers’ and ‘profit maximisers’.....	181
5.15 Summary.....	184
Chapter 6: ‘Doing’ Short Food Supply Chains in the global South: evidence from The Gambia.....	186
6.1 Introduction.....	186
6.2 Introduction to The Gambia.....	186
6.3 Geographical context.....	187
6.4 Political and economic context.....	190
6.5 Agricultural context of The Gambia.....	188
6.6 Small-scale fruit and vegetable production.....	192
6.7 Gambia and tourism.....	194
6.8 Gambia is Good: context and background.....	196
6.9 GiG structure and organisation.....	197

6.10 GiG and an overview of SFSC.....	201
6.11 Profiling small-scale food produces in The Gambia.....	207
6.12 Production aspects of SFSC.....	209
6.13 Production plans and contracts.....	210
6.14 Further issues in on-farm production.....	219
6.15 Distribution issues.....	222
6.16 Infrastructure.....	224
6.17 Issues with retail and consumption.....	225
6.18 GiG and imported produce.....	225
6.19 Perspectives from the tourist industry.....	229
6.20 Summary.....	232

Chapter 7: Discussion and Comparisons: revisiting conceptualisations of Short Food Supply Chains and Sustainable Livelihoods in the UK and Gambia.....	235
7.1 Introduction.....	235
7.2 Vulnerability context in the UK: Regulation and regulatory frameworks.....	239
7.3 Vulnerability context in The Gambia: seasonality.....	243
7.4 Vulnerability and (in)secure land tenure.....	244
7.5 Capital assets: physical and financial capital.....	245
7.6 Absence of natural capital.....	246
7.7 The intangibles: social capital and human capital.....	248
7.8 Human capital in the UK.....	252
7.9 Applying Bridging social capital to proximate SFSC in the UK.....	253
7.10 Bonding social capital and direct SFSC in the UK.....	255
7.11 Horizontal and vertical embeddedness.....	257
7.12 A sixth asset in the UK: Cultural capital.....	258
7.13 Livelihood outcomes.....	260
7.14 Summary.....	262

Chapter 8: Conclusions	264
8.1 Introduction.....	264
8.2 Recapping the thesis.....	264
8.3 Key findings and implications.....	265
i) <i>Formal</i> and <i>informal</i> transforming structures and process in the SLF..	265
ii) Horizontal and vertical embeddedness and intangible capital assets..	266
iii) Cultural capital, spatial-temporality of food relocalisation and quality construction.....	267
iv) Transferability of SFSC models from the global North to the South....	269
8.4 Revisiting the aims and objectives.....	270
8.5 Limitations of the research.....	273
8.6 Future research agendas.....	275
8.7 Final remarks.....	278
References	280
Appendices	311

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Categories, explanations and examples of ‘alternative’ food systems.....	24
Table 2.2: Distinctions between ‘conventional’ and ‘alternative’ food supply systems.....	26
Table 3.1: Summary of three key aspects to social capital.....	80
Table 4.1: Indicators of Development between the UK and The Gambia, 2011.....	107
Table 4.2: Basic geographical and agricultural data of the UK and The Gambia.....	107
Table 4.3: Initial comparative aspects of two selected case study sites for research.....	113
Table 4.4: How the selected methods meet the research aims and objectives.....	124
Table 4.5: The profile and extent of research participants in The Gambia.....	128
Table 4.6: The profile and extent of research participants in UK.....	132
Table 5.1: Distribution capabilities of TOA producer members and types of SFSC used.....	158
Table 5.2: The types of SFSC food producers in East Anglia use to market food products.....	160
Table 6.1: Profile of food producers who supply GiG.....	206
Table 7.1: Summary of the key aspects to social capital and application to SFSC.....	258
Table 8.1: Evaluation of the achievement of the aims and objectives.....	271

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Different mechanisms for extending SFSC in time and space.....	37
Figure 2.2: Typology of SFSC based on proximity relations.....	42
Figure 2.3: Different quality conventions employed within SFSC.....	44
Figure 2.4: Constructing difference through product, process and place.....	47
Figure 3.1: Components and flows in a livelihood.....	62
Figure 3.2: Sustainable livelihoods framework.....	65
Figure 3.3: Capital assets pentagon.....	72
Figure 3.4: An example of a re-drawn capital assets framework (for New EU Member States)	74
Figure 3.5: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework in the context of SFSC.....	88
Figure 4.1: A diagram of the research process.....	91
Figure 4.2: Deductive and inductive approaches to the relationship between theory and research.....	95
Figure 4.3: The comparative global-local scales involved in the two case studies.....	100
Figure 4.4: An overview of the methodological criteria and the reasons for discounting other potential agri-food case study possibilities.....	118
Figure 4.5: Comparison of the coding practices of Strauss and Glaser using grounded theory.....	134
Figure 4.6: An example of the coding process using grounded theory.....	137
Figure 4.7: The iterative processes of qualitative data analysis through grounded theory data analysis techniques.....	139
Figure 4.7:	
Figure 5.1: Structure of TOA.....	148

Figure 5.2: TOA member directory freely available to view online.....	148
Figure 5.3: Graph to show i) the number of TOA producer members, ii) members involved with TOA Trading and iii) members with a local/regional distribution remit by county/city.....	152
Figure 5.4: Map to show the extent of food relocalisation in England and Wales.....	155
Figure 5.5: Map to show the locations of producers who took part in semi-structured interviewing in East Anglia.....	161
Figure 5.6: Types of food and supply chains used in East Anglia.....	163
Figure 5.7: Supply chains of food production businesses who distribute locally and regionally in East Anglia.....	164
Figure 5.8: Conceptual diagram to show the relationships between food relocalisation, cultural capital and constructing difference in proximate and extended SFSC.....	173
Figure 6.1: Map of the Gambia.....	188
Figure 6.2: Map to show the location of the main tourist industry along the Atlantic Coastal strip.....	195
Figure 6.3: GiG organisational structure.....	199
Figure 6.4: An overview of proximate and direct SFSC in the Gambia amongst producers involved with GiG.....	203
Figure 6.5: The GiG storage container at Fajara.....	205
Figure 6.6: Type of produce grown in NBR and WCR (derived from interviewees)	208
Figure 6.7: Imported onion seed.....	210
Figure 6.8: A typical production plan administered to producers by Production Managers.....	212
Figure 6.9: Typical contract agreement between GiG and producers.....	213
Figure 6.10: Producer Q signing a production plan in rural WCR.....	213

Figure 6.11: Guidance on grading for producers to ensure optimum grade 1 yields.....	213
Figure 6.12: Producer D, NBR.....	215
Figure 6.13: Supply chain dynamics and livelihood strategies when contracts are unfulfilled by GiG.....	218
Figure 6.14: The main issues affecting the production of fresh produce as identified by producers in WCR and NBR.....	219
Figure 6.15: Dried leaves as mulch on courgette plots, Sifoe Kafo Farm.....	221
Figure 6.16: Producer Y using ground nut shells on his farm in WCR.....	221
Figure 6.17: GiG vehicle.....	223
Figure 6.18: Gambian 'gelly-gelly'.....	224
Figure 6.19: Quantities of fresh produce sourced by GiG, 2010.....	226
Figure 6.20: Quantities of fresh produce sourced by GiG, 2012.....	227
Figure 6.21: A daily updated board of the available produce to customers, by source.....	228
Figure 6.22: Tag cloud of coded interviews with key informants in the hotel industry.....	230
Figure 7.1: Sustainable Livelihoods and SFSC in the context of East Anglia.....	237
Figure 7.2: Sustainable Livelihoods and SFSC in The Gambia.....	238
Figure 7.3: An overview of proximate and direct SFSC in the Gambia amongst producers involved with GiG, and the role of social and human capital.....	250
Figure 7.4: An overview of proximate and direct SFSC in the East of England, UK amongst producers involved with TOA, and the role of social capital.....	255

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AFN: Alternative Food Network

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

CRR: Central River Region

CSA: Community Supported Agriculture

CU: Concern Universal

D: Dalasi

DEFRA: Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs

DFID: Department for International Development

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

GiG: Gambia is Good

GTA: Gambia Tourism Authority

IMF: International Monetary Fund

LRR: Lower River Region

NBR: North Bank Region

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

PGI: Protected Geographic Indication

PM: Production Manager

PPP: Product-Process-Place

SFSC: Short Food Supply Chain

SLA: Sustainable Livelihood Approach

SLF: Sustainable Livelihood Framework

TOA: Tastes of Anglia

TSG: Traditional Speciality Guaranteed

UK: United Kingdom

URR: Upper River Region

UN: United Nations

WCR: West Coast Region

WHO: World Health Organisation

List of Appendices

Appendix 1a: Informed Consent Form – Gambia Key Informants.....	311
Appendix 1b: Informed Consent Form – GiG Producer.....	313
Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet – Gambia.....	315
Appendix 3a: Interview Schedule – Gambia Producers.....	317
Appendix 3b: Interview Schedule – Gambia Informants (GiG).....	318
Appendix 4: Informed Consent Forms – UK.....	320
Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet – UK.....	322
Appendix 6a: Interview Schedules – UK organisational stakeholders (TOA).....	324
Appendix 6b: Interview Schedule – UK Producers.....	326

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Why study food?

Food is an essential part of human existence. It will always need to be produced and consumed in order for humans to survive and flourish. This is an incredibly simple yet hugely powerful point, as food is not produced in a vacuum and does not arrive on the table by accident. Rather, agri-food chains are intrinsically linked to a range of environmental, economic, political, social and cultural systems and structures. Food is an integral part of the social fabric throughout the world, central to the health and well-being of people, and an important part of individual and collective identity. Food is a source of livelihoods the world over, providing a means of living for people who produce, package, procure, distribute, store and retail the huge amounts of different products to be found across the globe. In exploring agri-food chains, and thinking about them systemically, it becomes apparent that the ways in which food travels from 'farm to fork' have much wider socio-economic, political and ecological implications than one may first realise or anticipate. Understanding these many implications and ensuring they are not to the detriment of people and planet is fundamental, because food is something that will always be needed, it *has* to be 'done' sustainably.

Given the profound, cross-sectoral and precious nature of food, and more broadly agri-food systems, it is imperative that critical engagement with the various processes that occur from production to consumption continuously take place. Indeed, it is essential to advance knowledge and understanding about how to achieve sustainable, resilient and functional food systems at a range of scales and within the variety of different contexts that they operate. In the broadest sense, this thesis aims to contribute to knowledge about how agri-food systems function, and to deepen understanding about how more secure, sustainable food futures can be realised. Clearly investigating notions of sustainability within the context of agri-food systems is far too broad a topic to engage with as a manageable research agenda. What is needed is a more focused 'point of entry', which is where a brief discussion about the types of agri-food systems and food chains that

form the basis of this research need introducing. Following this, the concept of sustainable livelihoods is outlined as a means to incorporate sustainability discourse to the research. This chapter culminates with the presentation of the aims and objectives and an outline of how the thesis is structured.

1.2 Alternative and local food systems

It is somewhat paradoxical that at present, the viability of food systems is undermined by highly globalised, 'conventional' agri-food systems that are controlled by a few, large, powerful agri-businesses and corporations that monopolise much of the processes from production to consumption (Ilbery and Maye 2005, van der Ploeg 2010, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011, Sage 2013). Moreover, recent food price volatility in 2007-08 demonstrates that these 'conventional' systems are highly sensitive to short-term episodic shocks: they lack resilience and the capacity to cope effectively with such events (Sage 2013: 72). Indeed, world prices of staple crops such as wheat and maize were three times higher in late 2008 compared to 2003, and the price of rice was five times higher (von Braun 2010: 450). This has had profound effects on food and nutrition security across the globe, most notably for poorer households. In these circumstances, less expenditure has been available for other essential goods and services such as health care and sanitation (von Braun 2010). The long-term trend is for food prices to remain at a higher plateau than in the past, exacerbating issues of hunger and malnutrition and highlighting the need for urgent solutions (Sonnino and Marsden 2010). Furthermore, these concerns around sustainability and food insecurity are experienced in both developing *and* developed nations. For example, in the United States, an estimated 49.1 million people are deemed food insecure, as they are unable to access enough nutritious food for an active and healthy life (Corrigan 2011: 1232).

It is therefore unsurprising that reactions to this unfavourable, insecure and vulnerable situation have been and are taking place. Questions around the sustainability of food systems have led to increasing attention and awareness about 'alternative' and 'local' foods. They have been a particular focus for

opposition and amelioration, and so interest in them has surged within a range of academic, campaigning and policy-making circles in the last decade or so.

Indeed, these food systems have been referred to as 'alternative food networks' (AFN) (Whatmore *et al.* 2003, Watts *et al.* 2005) and 'Local Food Systems' (Feagan 2007) and examples include farmers' markets, farm shops and farm gate sales, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), box delivery schemes, producer and consumer co-operatives, and community gardening initiatives (Jarosz 2008, O'Neill 2014). Unlike 'conventional' systems, these types of initiatives are founded upon trust, reciprocity and social embeddedness, and have been regarded as a potential catalyst for rural development, as well as income generating activities for otherwise marginalised, independent small-scale food producers (Marsden *et al.* 2000, Ilbery *et al.* 2004). The growth of these types of food systems throughout much of Western Europe and North America especially is testament to the growing dissatisfaction with industrial, globalised 'conventional' food systems. Moreover, on a social and ecological level, these 'conventional' systems 'disconnect' producers from consumers and leave society disengaged about the origins of food and the wider impacts that agri-food systems have (Kneafsey *et al.* 2008).

1.3 Short Food Supply Chains

The concept of 'Short Food Supply Chains' (SFSC) is particularly useful in considering the value that 'non-conventional' food systems and chains have for redressing 'conventional' shortfalls. Moreover, owing to the lack of 'alternative' and 'local' connotations in this term, SFSC has greater spatial and contextual transferability. This is an important point as currently there is a dearth of evidence and material about localised food initiatives and SFSC beyond Europe and North America for agri-food scholars to draw on, most notably in the global South (Freidberg and Goldstein 2011). This is a further reason why SFSC is adopted as a lens for critical enquiry in this research because it is less geographically limited and allows a greater focus on the agri-food system or food chain itself, rather than tangentially debating the boundaries that define them.

The 'short' in SFSC can refer to both geographical proximity, but also social proximity, referring to 'closer' socially embedded relations between producers and consumers (Renting *et al.* 2003, Aubry and Kebir 2013). The conceptual foundations adopted in this research stem from the seminal work of Marsden *et al.* (2000) and later Renting *et al.* (2003). They argue that there are three types of SFSC: firstly, 'face-to-face', a direct connection between producer-consumer; secondly, 'spatially proximate', which refers to producer-consumer 'relations in proximity' and often involves one or more intermediaries, but with a local or regional distribution remit; and thirdly, 'spatially extended', where the end consumer is located beyond the region of production, but fosters some form of connection to the producer by way of quality cues associated with the food.

However, as previously mentioned, there is a need to apply these terms and concepts beyond the 'familiar' terrain of Europe and North America and begin to explore the utility of these types of food systems in redressing what are pan-global 'conventional' agricultural shortfalls. The evidence base for SFSC is disproportionately located in the global North and more evidence about the processes underpinning SFSC such as social embeddedness is needed from the global South. This is because 'developing countries' have had markedly 'different' social, agricultural and politico-economic histories and trajectories when compared with much of the 'developed world'. As such, the role that place and context has on processes such as social embeddedness and quality construction underpinning SFSC require critical focus, enabling comparisons about how and why SFSC function *in place* and the extent to which they are applicable developmental pathways for regions in the global South.

The evidence about SFSC in the global South is currently insufficient to answer this question, and so this research directly addresses this need. The comparative approach suggested here is not necessarily new, as Maxey (2006) has explored small-scale food systems in Canada and the UK simultaneously. However, this is confined to two global North contexts. A global North-global South comparative approach beyond this is limited to the cross-cultural work of Freidberg (2004), who examined fresh produce supply chains that connect Burkina Faso with France and Zambia with Britain. Similarly, Lamine *et al.* (2012) have recently explored 'alternativeness' and citizenship in Brazil and France. However, a greater

understanding about how these types of agri-food systems can function in the interests of the people that are reliant on them is needed. In particular, there is a need to better understand how these systems relate to and impact sustainable livelihoods at the producer level.

1.4 Introducing Sustainable Livelihoods

Sustainable livelihoods has traditionally been the preserve of the 'developing world', an approach to understanding and alleviating poverty. However, there is nothing to prevent livelihoods *approaches* from becoming a more prominent feature in the global North, or as a way to investigate agri-food dynamics (Hinrichs 2010). Indeed, sustainable livelihoods research recognises the various assets and resources that individuals, households and communities have access to in order to gain a living. These resources refer to both tangible forms, such as physical, financial and natural capital, but also intangible forms, such as human and social capital. This involves the knowledge, skills and networks that enable livelihood strategies to be implemented.

Yet despite this useful approach and framework, which has been established for nearly two decades, 'alternative' agri-food literature has largely overlooked the intricacies of livelihoods, with only a few studies drawing on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) originally conceived by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the mid-late 1990s. While this framework is beginning to percolate into the agri-food arena (see Saltmarsh *et al.* 2011 and Kneafsey *et al.* 2013), agri-food scholars have not fully explored the concept of livelihoods in a holistic, comprehensive way. Indeed, the term livelihoods is often applied as a substitute for income generation (Jarosz 2008, Bowen and DeMaster 2011). Yet in a broader sense, a more critical focus and engagement with livelihoods discourse enables a greater understanding about how small-scale food producers use SFSC as livelihood strategies. Indeed, SFSC are an important basis for sustainable livelihoods in the global North and South, captured in the following comment by Freidberg and Goldstein (2011):

“For producers, SFSC appeal insofar as they offer higher and more reliable returns, and outlets for goods or services unmarketable through conventional channels, e.g. those controlled by supermarkets, processors and other intermediary firms. SFSC that circumvent these intermediaries can help to sustain producer livelihoods that would not otherwise be viable - livelihoods that may in turn help to preserve valued cultivars, culinary traditions, landscapes and ecosystems.”

(Freidberg and Goldstein 2011: 25)

This appears to be a reasonable statement as it resonates with the arguments and findings of established producer-centric SFSC research (see Marsden *et al.* 2000, Renting *et al.* 2003). However, the evidence base to make these types of relatively narrow, perhaps linear assertions reflected in the preceding quotation could be stronger or more robust in both the global North and South, and this is implied given the somewhat tentative tone Freidberg and Goldstein (2011) use to make their point. Thinking about livelihoods in this rather narrow way fails to engage with the complexity about how livelihoods are sustained, the impacts they have and how food producers traverse the places and contexts in which they are situated. In addition, a greater focus about how small-scale food producers are connected to other structures, governance mechanisms and prevailing institutions is made possible by investigating and engaging with sustainable livelihoods (Carney 1998, Scoones 2009). This is a key point as the connections to different structures made visible through livelihoods-centric enquiry strongly resonate with the concept of ‘vertical embeddedness’ (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). This refers to connecting micro-scale food production activities with the broader macro-scale institutions and structures that prevail to ensure agri-food systems function effectively.

1.5 Exploring the SFSC-livelihoods interface

There is no research to date that has comprehensively amalgamated the largely disparate concepts and literatures surrounding SFSC and sustainable livelihoods, the latter of which offers a conceptual toolkit to enable an understanding about the

ways people make a living and the effects this has on their resource base. Moreover, livelihoods-centric research enables a more comprehensive understanding, as opposed to a narrow or sectoral one, to be gained (Carney 1998, Scoones 1998, Bebbington 1999, Ellis *et al.* 2003, Scoones 2009). Given that approaches seeking “sustainable responses to conventional food networks need to be holistic and take into account the social, economic and ecological dynamics of food chains rather than partial elements of them” (Jones *et al.* 2008: 97), it is surprising that the SFSC-livelihood interface has not been more thoroughly explored.

It is even more perplexing given that SFSC are often framed as mechanisms for rural development, agricultural revival and growth, processes that are dependent upon enhancing the livelihoods of those engaged in agri-food systems. Indeed, if SFSC are to ‘work’ and be a long-term feature of agri-foodscapes throughout the world, then so too must the livelihoods of the people and communities located within or connected to them be able to flourish. Understanding the ways this can and cannot happen in certain contexts is therefore a crucial point of departure, and so exploring this in both the global North and South addresses this need.

The aims and objectives of this research are now presented as the preceding conceptual discussion has substantiated the need for the research. Firstly, research that directly engages with SFSC in the global North and South is needed to understand the role of context and place, and to contribute to a limited pool of evidence about SFSC in the global South. Secondly, a holistic understanding about the role these types of agri-food chains have in the livelihood strategies of small-scale food producers who depend upon them is needed.

1.6 Aims and objectives

This research is driven by a single aim and three incrementally structured objectives to ensure that the thesis continuously engages with the core concepts and key issues. They are as follows:

Aim:

Investigate the role of SFSC in enhancing the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in the global North and South

Objective 1:

Contextualise the need for the research by critically examining the relationships between sustainable livelihoods and SFSC in contrasting contexts of food production, and develop a practice based conceptual framework to inform methodological enquiry.

Objective 2:

Explore SFSC practices in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North) and how actors perceive and practice sustainability through SFSC.

Objective 3:

Critically evaluate the role of context and how SFSC contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North), and the wider implications of a cross-cultural, comparative approach to SFSC

1.7 Discussing the aims and objectives and outlining the structure of the thesis

Each of the three objectives enables the overall aim to be addressed. The first objective enables the research to begin by reviewing the current literature, evidence base and how and where the core concepts have been applied. This largely relates to 'conventional' and 'alternative' agri-food systems and SFSC. Moreover, a detailed review about the small evidence base of SFSC in the global South is given. These issues are covered in detail in Chapter 2. Moreover, the first objective allows space to explore the relationships between the key themes and

theories, in particular further analysing the linkages between SFSC and sustainable livelihoods discourses. This is the purpose of Chapter 3, which critically explores the existing conceptual research around sustainable livelihoods and how this applies in the context of SFSC. This chapter culminates with a conceptual framework (Figure 3.5) that serves to guide the data collection and analytical process. This is a timely and innovative addition to agri-food debates, providing a literature informed framework to guide not just this research, but future research of a similar nature.

The second objective refers to *applying* the theory that has emerged from the previous objective. As noted, the UK and The Gambia, West Africa have been selected as case studies through which the comparative research took place. The reasons for this are justified in Chapter 4, which provides a detailed methodological overview about how the research was designed and implemented, and outlines the techniques that were used to analyse and make sense of the data. This refers to the various steps involved in coding, as the data collected was qualitative. This chapter also discusses the reasons for adopting an inductive philosophical approach, grounded theory and why a range of qualitative methods were used. These include participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and focus groups.

As part of addressing this second objective, Chapters 5 and 6 comprise the two results chapters, presenting the empirical data and evidence that emerged from the UK (Chapter 5) and The Gambia (Chapter 6). As with Bebbington's (1999) seminal work into rural livelihoods and rural development in the Andes of South America, the research findings and discussion presented here (Chapters 5 and 6) also find that social capital has an integral role through which access to other resources and stakeholders is made possible. However, there are other aspects associated with processes of both horizontal and vertical embeddedness that are presented and critically discussed in Chapter 7, a comparative chapter drawing together the key results from each case study.

For the third and final objective, the role of place and context is critically discussed along with the broader implications of the key findings. Chapter 7 is largely conceptual and discussion based, developing the key results to emerge from

Chapters 5 and 6. Moreover, Chapter 7 links back to Chapter 3 to (re)consider the review based conceptual framework and (re)apply the core concepts to the empirically informed analyses. As part of the third objective, Chapter 7 presents two re-drawn conceptual frameworks (Figure 7.1 and 7.2) to highlight how in each context of the global North and South, there are similarities, but crucially there are also differences in terms of how small-scale food producers engage with and capitalise upon SFSC for their livelihoods.

The final conclusion, Chapter 8, also addresses the third objective and ensures the aim is met by drawing together the key findings and discussing in more depth the implications of comparative research of this nature. This chapter also evaluates the research process and limitations, with particular focus on methodology. Four key findings are presented, along with five future research agendas that each point towards important conceptual trajectories and develop different questions and aspects that have emerged from this thesis.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has introduced the background to the research and where it is situated within broader discussions about agri-food system sustainability, as well as about securing sustainable livelihoods. A few key points have emerged that require investigation. In particular, understanding the ways that SFSC facilitate both horizontal and vertical embeddedness in contrasting spaces and contexts of food production has yet to be addressed. This enables the role of place to be more fully understood in terms of enabling, or disabling SFSC as viable livelihood strategies for food producers who depend on them. Moreover, by simultaneously investigating case studies from both the global North and South as is presented here, comparisons between them can be made within the same methodological and temporal remit. This is something that cannot necessarily occur when investigating one case study exclusively or when operating within the boundaries of a particular geographical context, comparisons with previous (perhaps outdated) research from within the literature will invariably contain different subtle agendas and/or a different focus.

Finally, understanding the transferability of largely global North concepts such as SFSC to the different agricultural, political, social and cultural contexts of the global South is necessary. This not only adds data to a currently small evidence base within the literature, but also provides an insight into the ways different elements, and the connections between them, influence livelihood strategies and outcomes. These insights form an important addition in the journey to secure viable, resilient and sustainable food systems throughout the world. The narrative now turns to Chapter 2, reviewing and contextualising some of the key issues and theories surrounding agri-food systems, and understanding contemporary debates and perspectives.

Chapter 2

Contextualising agri-food systems, Alternative Food Networks and Short Food Supply Chains: current debates

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of agri-food literature and lays the conceptual foundations that the subsequent empirical research and analyses is based upon. The chapter is broadly comprised of four sections. The first of these contextualises the global situation of agri-food systems, and how this is having unfavourable socio-economic, cultural and environmental and health impacts. The second section introduces the responses to 'conventional' agriculture by discussing the importance of embeddedness within agri-food systems, drawing on AFN and local food literature. This is largely conceptual and based on extensive North American and Western European scholarship. The impacts of AFN and local food systems are also discussed in this section to illustrate why they can be considered as more viable, sustainable ways of organising agri-food systems.

However, the problematic terminology of 'alternative' and 'local' leads into the third section, a discussion about the more pragmatic term SFSC. This is largely focused around the notions of geographical and social proximity relations that characterise three distinctive types of SFSC; face-to-face, spatially proximate and spatially extended (Renting *et al.* 2003). The final section focuses on the ways in which SFSC discourses have been applied in the global South. This focuses on the few examples available in the 'alternative' agri-food literature to highlight how SFSC function considerably differently when compared to their global North counterparts, a further justification for this research given the empirical research from The Gambia. The chapter concludes by reinforcing the importance that social embeddedness and 'relations of regard' (Sage 2003) has for SFSC to function effectively and for food producer's livelihoods to be enhanced. The conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 3 is also briefly outlined as part of the closing summary.

2.2 Context of agri-food systems

Serious questions have been raised about the way modern agri-food systems, sometimes referred to as agro-food systems or complexes, function, and their ability to meet the needs of people and planet both now and in the future. Indeed, 925 million people worldwide are undernourished (FAO 2010: 4), yet at the same time, over 1 billion adults are overweight, of which at least 300 million are obese (WHO 2011), the manifestation of a 'nutrition transition'. Indeed, societies are increasingly converging on diets high in saturated fats, refined foods, sugar and low in fibre, fuelled by economic growth, technical change, cultural influences and urbanisation (Popkin 1998, 2002, 2003: 581). In terms of demand, global population has doubled since the 1960s, currently standing at over seven billion, and is expected to peak at just over 9 billion in the year 2050 (Godfray *et al.* 2010: 2770). Moreover, agriculture currently occupies 38% of global land area, and in order to maintain current food consumption levels per capita, current rates of population growth mean that agriculture would need an area equivalent of one half and two-thirds of the current terrestrial land area by 2030 and 2070, respectively (Schneider *et al.* 2011: 205). There is uncertainty about how this extra food is going to be produced to meet the health needs of societies should these trends be realised and consumption patterns remain unchanged.

This alarming situation exists despite transformations in how food is produced in recent decades, evolving from relatively localised systems into a highly globalised, industrialised and commoditised set of processes and relations. As noted by Ilbery (2005), this increasingly global integration "has led to a new political economy of agriculture, in which agri-food industries are epitomised by the mass production of manufactured food" (Ilbery 2005: 171). Indeed, today, intensively produced food commodities are able to travel vast distances and in huge quantities over a short time period, as they can be transported through complex supply chains that involve multiple intermediaries who store, preserve, package, manufacture and distribute food as it travels from 'farm to fork'. This intensive approach to food production has become known as 'conventional' agriculture owing to the capitalist logic through which these types of agri-food systems are underpinned and fuelled by. These 'productivist' systems are designed to maximise output, and are orchestrated by large private agri-businesses and neo-liberal state policies that

typically favour free-market economics. This results in a range of food commodities for consumers, although under 'conventional' agri-food systems, choice and availability is typically confined to the shelves of a few highly powerful supermarkets, spaces that continue to receive criticism due to the concentration of power at the retail end of the food chain (Ilbery and Maye 2006: 352).

The shift towards intensive, high input, high output agri-food systems accelerated throughout the latter part of the twentieth century in Western Europe and North America, driven by post-war initiatives such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that emerged in the early 1960s. During this era, food production was underpinned by an ethos of 'productivism', whereby the use of agri-chemicals, fertilisers and machinery was encouraged through subsidies to ensure high yields of staple food crops. This subsequently enrolled large corporate agri-businesses into handling and managing modern, rationalised food chains that became trans-continental. This rationalisation was deemed an entirely necessary approach to food production at the institutional and political level given the need to provide the nutrition and sustenance for a rapidly expanding global population.

Indeed, the post war 'population boom' and long recovery from rationing across much of Europe in the mid-twentieth Century legitimised such an intensive, 'productivist' approach. This rationalist, high input-high output rhetoric prevails today as few, large monopolistic agri-businesses continue to keep a firm, self-interested grip on the horizontal and vertical relationships that exist amongst food supply chains from 'farm to fork'. Moreover, the neo-liberal landscape throughout much of the developed world has favoured this modernisation agenda, with the figure of feeding 9 billion by the year 2050 being the most often quoted clarion call for addressing agri-food shortfalls amongst policy makers and research institutions alike. To meet the needs of the future, it has been argued that food production needs to increase by around 50% (Gardner 2013), and although there is debate about how best to achieve this, the issue tends to be framed around increasing productivity. This is placing huge strain on key resources and exacerbating current problems around control and justice with the global food system (Tomlinson 2011).

The productivist ethos that has readily embraced modern technocratic ideals and capabilities has not been confined to Europe or North America and other global

North regions, but rather became an integral part of agri-food policy in the global South. Here, the transformation of agricultural systems by intensification and modernisation was part of a wider developmental agenda, as the majority of people located in the global South are involved with and often reliant on food production for their livelihoods, health and well-being. Known as the 'Green Revolution' in the 1960s and 1970s, new varieties of staples such as wheat, rice and maize were developed and intensively grown, most notably in parts of Africa, Latin America and particularly in Asia. This globalised 'revolution' had a huge impact on productivity amongst some of the world's poorer regions, as world grain production increased 250% between 1950 and 1984 alone (Gardner 2013: 106). Moreover, technological breakthroughs adopted on a large scale have had high positive social impacts, as they have been a critical component in addressing hunger and preventing Malthusian predictions about population growth outpacing food production (von Braun 2010: 450). Indeed, the number of undernourished people fell by 201 million between 1980-2001 irrespective of the large increase in global population during this period (Ilbery 2005: 170) The 'Green Revolution' encapsulates the core ideals of a 'modernised' and intensified approach to agri-food systems, and is testament to the socio-economic and health benefits that 'productivist' agriculture can bring to populations in need throughout the world. In embracing 'modern' technology and mechanisms to improve the availability of staple foods, it is understandable why such perspectives remain established within the 'conventional' agri-food landscape and macro-level policy making circles in terms of solving food security, hunger and malnutrition. However, "Green Revolution' models of technology development have failed to deliver, particularly in Africa, and failed to keep up even where they previously had delivered" (Thompson and Scoones 2009: 393).

2.3 The problem with 'conventional' agri-food systems

However, while there are benefits of adopting intensive agriculture, especially in terms of improving the amount of food available (in theory at least), the adverse impacts that productivist, rationalised and 'conventional' agriculture has had throughout the globe are numerous. Indeed, the "corrosively unsustainable"

(Jones *et al.* 2008: 96) nature of intensive farming systems disrupt ecological relationships and have negative consequences for both the human and non-humans that constitute them (Morris and Kirwan 2011: 323). These detrimental consequences are many, and as such, the reality of 'conventional' agri-food systems is that "agricultural pollution, biodiversity, water and soil, fisheries stocks, levels of waste are all deteriorating, and the impacts of climate change and energy-use threaten society" (Lang *et al.* 2009: 188). Agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides which are an inherent part of 'conventional' agri-food systems often escape from their application site and flow onto other lands and waterways, upsetting fragile ecosystems and potentially undermining human health (McDonald 2010: 105). Moreover, and as noted by Lang (2009), the effects of climate change undermine the viability of 'conventional' agriculture, as these high input systems are heavily reliant on water, a vital resource that is becoming ever more scarce. Indeed, "irrigated agricultural land comprises less than one-fifth of all cropped area but produces between 40 and 45 per cent of the world's food" (Gornall *et al.* 2010: 2981). However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50% by 2020 in some African countries, exposing between 75 and 250 million people to increased water stress (IPCC 2007: 48). In Latin America, this number could be as high as 77 million and in Asia, over one billion people may be exposed to increased water stress by 2050 (*ibid.*).

The economic and social impacts of conventional agricultural systems are also highly problematic. At the global level, the well documented 2007-08 food price spike, and to a lesser extent the rises in 2010-11, have encouraged the view that high and volatile food prices are now a permanent feature of the world economy, and require urgent adaptive policy measures (Gilbert 2012: 134). Such volatility is also evidence that the industrialised global food system is rather worryingly becoming more, and not less, vulnerable to external socio-economic and ecological forces, including financial speculation, energy security and changing dietary compositions (Sage 2012). At the regional level, such as in Europe, for example, producer revenues have also been impacted, gradually declining because "the locus of added value has moved away from the farm and the more proximal transformation and processing industries, such as dairies and abattoirs,

to the larger food-processing and retail sector” (Ilbery *et al.* 2005: 117). In addition to these changes, the ‘conventional’ large food processing and retail sector has become ‘disembedded’ from the places in which they are situated (Morgan *et al.* 2006). Indeed, processes of value-adding have shifted away from the rural fabric in which food is produced to homogenous spaces of commoditisation that display little or no resemblance to the people and places of production. This is a highly undesirable situation as disembedded ‘conventional’ agri-food systems means that producers and consumers are ‘disconnected’ from one another, which can be detrimental to rural regions and economies (O’Neill 2014: 113). ‘Disconnection’ is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

This is an important point because it has been argued that agriculture and agri-food systems have a fundamental role in the rural development and sustainability of regions throughout Europe (Marsden *et al.* 2000), and particularly ‘lagging’ regions that have been ‘left behind’ by way of geographic remoteness or through the socio-economic implications associated with de-industrialisation (Ilbery *et al.* 2004). This is largely why the CAP has undergone several reforms since the early 1990s. The policy has gradually shifted towards a system that encourages more environmentally sensitive production as part of a broader sustainable rural development paradigm, reflected in the 1992 ‘MacSharry reforms’, the ‘Agenda 2000’ reforms which explicitly introduced the ‘second pillar’ of rural development to the CAP and the more recent ‘Single Farm Payment’ reforms. However, critics argue that the main thrust of this policy since its inception in the 1960s has been to modernise agriculture and achieve economies of scale, reducing production costs, notwithstanding environmental damages (Shah 2006: 238).

Moreover, greater awareness about the shortfalls of ‘conventional’ agriculture and attempts to redress this at the political level have not fully considered some of the social issues within these types of intensive, industrialised systems. For example, in Europe, changing consumer perceptions have been fed by a growing distrust in the quality of food stemming from conventional agriculture. This has been driven by an ongoing stream of ‘food scandals’ and outbreaks that has included salmonella, BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), Foot and Mouth and dioxine residues in milk (Renting *et al.* 2003: 395). Moreover, the 2013 ‘horsemeat scandal’ in the UK is the latest example of the vulnerabilities and ‘disconnects’

inherent within complex, disembedded food supply chains that characterise 'conventional' agriculture systems. In this instance, products labelled and sold as beef by British supermarkets, including Tesco and Iceland, were substituted for cheaper horsemeat by sub-contractors in complicated, long supply chains that traversed multiple European countries including Romania, Cyprus and The Netherlands (HM Government 2014).

The lack of transparency of these chains and traceability of food products and ingredients meant that regulators and the supermarket chains were unable to quickly identify where the 'food fraud' had occurred. Although this 'food scare' was not a safety or human health issue in quite the same way as some of the other preceding scandals, these series of events in 2013 seriously undermined consumer and industry confidence and once again heightened anxiety about food quality and integrity. Indeed, sales of frozen burgers in the UK were down 41% in March and April 2013 compared to the same period in 2012, evidence of the damaging impact the scandal had (BBC News 2014). This example clearly highlights the unviable relationships and supply chains that exist throughout 'conventional' agri-food systems, and it is arguably only a matter of time before a similar 'food fraud' or health issue emerges under these disembedded, industrialised food systems.

2.4 Embeddedness of agri-food systems

Incidents such as the horsemeat scandal emphasise the inherent problems with disembedded forms of agri-food organising, and highlight the importance of 're-embedding' economic relations. Indeed, maintaining and developing meaningful social relationships is applicable to all food supply chains irrespective of the geographic scale of operation (Morris and Kirwan 2011: 324). The importance of meaningful social relationships throughout the entire supply chain is captured neatly by Schmidt *et al.* (2011) who, with reference to earlier work by Jarosz (2000), write:

“[T]he strength and vitality of a food system are critically related to the extent that relationships within regional food networks are based upon trust and cooperation among food suppliers, producers, workers, brokers, and consumers”

(Schmidt *et al.* 2011: 158)

Similarly, embeddedness within the context of agri-food systems is entangled with notions of place as well as between actors or stakeholders, as embeddedness has been described as “sociocultural processes associated with relationships between producer and consumer such that food transactions are re-embedded in community and place” (Feagan 2007: 28). Within much of the agri-food literature concerned with social relationships, the term ‘social embeddedness’ is useful in crystallising the point about ‘re-embedding’ and re-socialising agri-food supply chains. This is because all economic relations are socially embedded in some way (Winter 2003: 25). This notion was initially posited by Granovetter (1985), who upon revisiting the earlier work of economist Karl Polanyi, argued that economic activity is inherently embedded within a complex web of social relationships, rather than occurring in an abstract independent market (Grannovetter 1985, Kirwan 2006, Milestad *et al.* 2010). In essence, the term embeddedness implies that social structure is key to understanding how existing institutions function and arrive at their present state (Granovetter 1985: 505).

Moreover, social embeddedness works to mediate self-interest in place of a concern for the wider common good (Sage 2003: 47). The concept has therefore been adopted amongst many contemporary agri-food sociologists, cultural geographers and political scientists engaged in AFN-oriented research around the turn of the twenty-first century. This is because the concept of social embeddedness captures the connectivity, trust and reciprocity that are essential to all economic relations, and fundamentally underpin grassroots and “alternative” initiatives such as direct agricultural markets (Sage 2003: 47). Indeed, re-embedding economic relationships within agri-food systems is about the ‘thickening of connections’ between the producers and consumers of food (Eden *et al.* 2008: 1045).

Without social embeddedness, and what Sage (2003) refers to as ‘relations of regard’ for the actors and spaces of food production and consumption, supply

chains remain largely 'disconnected', prone to dysfunction and vulnerable to mismanagement. This understanding of embeddedness is what Sonnino and Marsden (2006) refer to as horizontal, the localised conditions and strategies that allow for 'alternative' agri-food systems based on trust to arise. However, embeddedness is more than just a 'horizontal' aspect that involves the interpenetration of societal/cultural domains, it also has a 'vertical' facet that relates to hierarchical linkages of individual and corporate actors at the local level to the larger society, economy, and polity of which they are part (Sonnino and Marsden 2006: 189). As such, the trust, 'relations of regard' and social interaction that create this more relational food transaction environment are multi-dimensional as opposed to linear (Feagan 2007: 29, Higgins *et al.* 2008, Roep *et al.* 2010). A lack of social embeddedness and 'regard' is therefore a precarious scenario when food and ultimately health and well-being are at stake. The mechanisms that allow social embeddedness to arise are addressed later in the chapter as part of an in depth discussion about SFSC.

Events such as the horsemeat scandal can therefore be regarded as symptomatic of the 'disconnects' within conventional agri-food chains. They highlight the adverse consequences when social embeddedness within agri-food systems is absent or at best, weak. Indeed, it has been argued that despite the global interconnectedness of industrialised food systems that allow vast quantities of food to be quickly transported across all corners of the globe, they paradoxically cause a 'disconnect' between producers and consumers (Kneafsey *et al.* 2008), as they are founded upon relations lacking in 'social embeddedness'. Instead, they are based on commoditised logic that overlooks the value of communication and trust that is central if agri-food systems are to be more sustainable and viable. This 'disconnect' means that knowledge and understanding about food geographies and biographies are absent amongst downstream supply chain actors and consumers. They are likely to be unaware about the precise locations where their food comes from, how it is produced, procured and manufactured. Moreover, this 'disconnect' means that there is a lack of understanding about the effects industrialised agri-food organising has on environmental integrity and the socio-economic welfare of people who depend on agri-food systems for their livelihoods.

Yet the somewhat gloomy situation outlined with 'conventional', intensive agri-food systems is not being passively accepted. Rather, there is growing interest and debate about how to redress environmental, social, economic and political imbalances within agri-food systems for them to become more resilient, democratic and sustainable, 're-embedding' social relations with place, 're-connecting' stakeholders and preserving environmental integrity and justice. This has been conceptualised as a 'post-productivist transition' from the 1990s, characterised less by 'productivist' discourse and more by environmental sustainability, rural development and a focus on quality food outputs as opposed to an emphasis on quantity and commodities. This is driven in part by changing consumer demands (Barrett *et al.* 1999). Moreover, this recent gradual shift recognises that agriculture is about more than just producing food. Rather, it is 'multifunctional' and is a defining feature of rural space, playing a vital role in sustaining the socio-economic and ecological fabric therein (Bowen and De Master 2011: 74).

The shift towards 'post-productivism' has not signalled the end for 'productivist', intensive agriculture (Ilbery 2005: 179). Rather, "there remains a hugely powerful status quo that regards the current crisis as requiring the rejuvenation of the existing agri-industrial model" (Sage 2012: 73), which largely accounts for why disembodied intensive modes of production are still the dominant means of organising agri-food systems throughout much of the developed and developing world. Yet this comparatively recent transition and acknowledgement that agri-food systems are failing on social and ecological grounds especially has enabled a greater plurality of systems to materialise, and for smaller-scale, independent food producers and providers specifically to explore the possibility of 'niche', 'speciality' and 'alternative' food products and supply chains (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000, Renting *et al.* 2003). Such food systems, which have often emerged in spite of political assistance and free market logic rather than because of it, have begun to challenge and further undermine the 'conventional' logic that continues to fall short in meeting the needs of people and planet, hindering the realisation of the now widely accepted, if still hotly debated, global sustainable development agenda (Connelly 2007).

Therefore, amidst the backdrop of food scares, volatile commodity prices, concerns about monopolistic agri-businesses and environmental (and climate), change there is now a greater diversity in the types of food systems and supply chains that populate the local and global agri-food landscape. As Kneafsey *et al.* (2008: 2) attest, “in a variety of locations, producers and consumers alike are working to construct new and ethically significant food relationships and practices, which they see as helping to address concerns about health, social justice, animal welfare and the environment.” These ‘ethically significant food relationships’ occur when producer and consumer relationships within agri-food systems become more ‘connected’ and socially (re)embedded. It is arguably this process of social embeddedness that facilitates practices that point towards a more viable, sustainable food future, allowing the economic relationships within agri-food systems to become ‘socialised’ and founded more upon trust as opposed to exclusively upon free market logic. It is to this end where the narrative now turns by critically discussing ‘alternative’ and local foods as possible ‘solutions’, before exploring SFSCs more specifically as mechanisms that enable the (re)embedding of agri-food systems.

2.5 The emergence of Alternative Food Networks

Concern for the long-term sustainability of ‘conventional’ agri-food systems have led to an increasing interest in ‘alternative’ methods (Tansey and Worsley 2000: 98), ‘different’ ways of organising agri-food systems. As such, there has been a recent proliferation of activity and research surrounding ‘alternative’ foods, why they have emerged in the spaces that they have, and the implications that they have in terms of sustainability. Despite this burgeoning interest around agri-food systems, which to date has been heavily concentrated in the global North, a universal definition has remained elusive given that ‘alternative’ is a ‘slippery’ notion and only fully understood in relation to the contexts and spaces in which it is applied (Holloway *et al.* 2007). The terminology to capture and engage with these spaces ranges from ‘alternative food networks’ (Whatmore *et al.* 2003, Watts *et al.* 2005), ‘alternative agri-food networks’ (Higgins *et al.* 2008), and

'alternative food initiatives' (Allen *et al.* 2003)¹. A further reason for the lack of definitional clarity is because there are a range of examples that can and have been labelled as AFNs within the literature. Examples include farmers' markets, farm shops and farm gate sales, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), box delivery schemes, producer and consumer co-operatives, and community gardening initiatives (Jarosz 2008, O'Neill 2014). Given this diversity and scope, Renting *et al.* (2003) tentatively define AFNs as:

"A broad embracing term to cover newly emerging networks of producers, consumers, and other actors that embody alternatives to the more standardised industrial mode of food supply"

(Renting *et al.* 2003: 394)

Furthermore, Sonnino and Marsden (2006) argue that there are three key features to AFNs, in that that they can be loosely defined in terms of 'quality', 'transparency' and 'locality', and, in the same vein as the preceding quotation, they can be conceptualised as a move away from the standardised and industrial systems of food provisioning consumers have become accustomed to (Higgins *et al.* 2008: 15). The suggestion being made here is that unlike the highly commoditised, disembedded agri-food networks and homogenous retail spaces that characterise 'conventional' agriculture, 'alternative' emphasises the importance of (re)localising supply chains, (re)embedding and (re)territorialising them within places, allowing food to circulate in supply chains where they can more readily be traced back to the point(s) of production. Venn *et al.* (2006) have also unravelled and categorised AFNs by way of the types of people and stakeholders involved in them, and how 'alternative' food is marketed and retailed. They outline four 'categories' which is captured in Table 2.1.

¹ In the interest of consistency, this thesis uses the term 'Alternative Food Networks' (AFN).

Table 2.1: Categories, explanations and examples of 'alternative' food systems

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(Source: Venn *et al.* 2006: 256)

There is clearly a wide variety in what may be considered to be 'alternative', which explains the problem with a consensual definition, but commonalities are clear in terms of reconfiguring producer-consumer supply chains, either by the direct involvement in some part of the production-consumption process, as with CSA, or by valuing the 'qualities' and geographies of 'alternative' food products. Furthermore, there is a distinct social element to these initiatives and so they point towards community level capacity building that would otherwise be sidestepped by more 'conventional' systems.

Table 2.2 further deconstructs the meanings of AFNs by polarising 'alternative'- 'conventional' characteristics. It must be noted, however, that in reality, the binary model presented in Table 2.2 is conceptual as in practice, food producers and supply chains often operate within both 'conventional' and 'alternative' spaces. Indeed, some smaller scale companies engaged in 'alternative' more localised

food systems and supply chains in the UK to some degree rely on 'conventional' agricultural processes. Producers often 'dip in and out' of 'conventional' nodes in the interest of business viability and as such, are rarely involved in 'alternative' without being enmeshed in the 'conventional' (Ilbery and Maye 2005, O'Neill 2014: 121). This evidence strongly implies that the distinction between 'conventional' and 'alternative' is blurred rather than definitive (Ilbery and Maye 2005b: 840). Indeed, "there is no straight-forward division between production for local and non-local markets, nor between 'quality' and conventional food" (Watts *et al.* 2005: 36). These conclusions are echoed by Milestad *et al.* (2010) in their research about the social relations within local organic cereal and bread networks in Eastern Austria. They found that despite the willingness of local actors to operate exclusively local, there is a latent dependence on more 'conventional' agri-systems.

As such, there are a range of food geographies and biographies behind products circulating within AFNs and more localised systems, some of which arguably send mixed messages to end consumers in terms of 'where' the food has originated from and by what means. Yet consumers are not confronted simply with a choice between 'local-good' (alternative) and 'global-bad' (conventional) (Coley *et al.* 2009: 154). Rather, there is a 'hybridity' of food networks producers engage with that embody varying degrees of 'alterity' and social and ecological embeddedness, networks that consumers engage with for multiple rather than homogenous reasons (Holloway *et al.* 2008).

Table 2.2: Distinctions between 'conventional' and 'alternative' food supply systems

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(Source: Ilbery and Maye 2005b: 824)

Despite the surge in interest in AFNs at the turn of the millennium, AFN discourses have been heavily investigated and critiqued in more recent years. Indeed, they have been deconstructed to the point where AFN offers little more than a conceptual point of entry to understand a range of localised food production and consumption dynamics that are in some way 'different' to more mainstream, conventional systems (Tregear 2011). 'Alternative' terminology risks placing actors involved in 'alternative' food practices into categories that they themselves may not prescribe to or regard as such (Kneafsey *et al.* 2008).

In addition to this, current agri-food scholarship is increasingly interested in 'going beyond' 'alternative' debates toward more reflexive perspectives that address issues of food system governance, community participation, social entrepreneurship and grassroots innovations (Grasseni 2013, Kirwan *et al.* 2013). As such, the role of civil society and communities has become an important focus in understanding and developing *transformative* food systems that are situated less in regional development discourse such as developing niche markets for

'alternative' and territorially embedded products (Moragues-Faus and Sonnino 2012), and more in notions of justice, control and food sovereignty² that have strengthened since the 2008 food crisis (Lamine *et al.* 2012, Renting 2012, Shawki 2012, Sage 2014). This notion challenges the dominant, institutionalised and inherently productivist narrative of food security (Tomlinson 2011, Jarosz 2014), which unlike food sovereignty avoids discussing the social control and power relations of food systems (Patel 2009). However, given food sovereignty's roots in Latin America, it remains unclear "how well it applies to places in the European Community or North America" (Lutz and Schachinger 2013: 4780).

This suggests that in order to fully apply these recent paradigmatic developments, there is a need for agri-food system terminology and ideas that can in some way 'go beyond' the 'familiar' vocabularies of 'alternative' and 'local' and better reflect the transgressive, boundary-crossing nature of contemporary food politics (Goodman and Sage 2014). Indeed, larger-scale retailers such as Wal-Mart have gradually been able to capture the ethical and aesthetic 'qualities' of AFN (often under their own branding). It has therefore been argued that this assimilation and transgression of 'alternative' foods towards 'conventional' supply chains threatens the very social projects and critical, transformative ambition of 'alternative' food movements (Goodman *et al.* 2012: 5, Lutz and Schachinger 2013, Goodman and Sage 2014).

The concept of Civic Food Networks (CFN) has been proposed as a way to move beyond the circular debates associated with 'alternative' and to bring to the fore the role that *citizens* play in (re)shaping and reclaiming food systems (Renting 2012). These are processes at the heart of food sovereignty and food justice. In introducing the CFN concept, pressing issues around governance, sustainability transitions, and how citizens (re)connect to one another within agri-food systems can arguably be more readily addressed (Bos and Owen, forthcoming). However, applying these comparatively recent theoretical advances within this research is beyond the scope of the thesis. As captured by in the aims and objectives in

² Food Sovereignty is defined as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations" (Shawki 2012: 428). For an in-depth critical account and historiography of food sovereignty and food justice, see Patel (2009), Shawki (2012), Jarosz (2014) and Alonso-Fradejas *et al.* (2015).

Chapter 1, this research is concerned with the interface between SFSC and livelihoods. However, given these critiques and recent shifts in theoretical debates, AFNs as described in Table 2.2 can still be regarded as an important conceptual reference and ‘starting point’ for contemporary agri-food research.

2.6 The context of ‘local food’ and AFNs

AFNs have served a purpose in grounding research about the value and importance of more localised approaches to agri-food systems. Indeed, the literature contains a trove of evidence about how AFNs contribute to rural development, local economies and producer livelihoods, as well as the social and ecological fabric of the landscapes in which they are situated. As implied by reference to SFSC, local markets and embeddedness under the ‘alternative’ column of Table 2.2, place is an important feature of these types of systems. ‘Local food systems’ have been a popular label within the literature and policy making circles. Indeed, interest in local food has been growing over the last three decades, with people gravitating towards it due to concerns about the environmental impacts of ‘conventional’ agriculture, food scares and because it can be regarded as challenging the globalisation of agri-food systems (Kirwan and Maye 2013: 95). Similarly, ‘regional’ food systems or networks have also been used to describe ‘alternative’, more ‘localised’ agri-food systems. However, the burgeoning work on local foods “reflects the tendency for place-based food movements to be physically constructed within spaces that are popularly understood, experienced and represented as local, such as cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods” (Kneafsey 2010: 178).

‘Local food systems’ and ‘alternative food networks’ have therefore often been used interchangeably within the literature, and in some instances have been grouped together. For example Seyfang (2006, 2008) uses ‘local organic food networks’ and O’Neill (2014) uses the term ‘Alternative Local Food Systems’ to describe localised agri-food networks in Yorkshire, UK. Indeed the notion of ‘local food’ has become something of a mantra for those intent on developing alternatives to the mainstream food supply chain” (Kirwan and Maye 2013: 91), it is a conceptually attractive and emotive term in much the same way that

'alternative' is. However, the synonymous use of local and alternative is not always ideal given that 'local' is understood in relation to other scales and that there is a lack of consensus over what 'local' means in practice. For example, from a producer's viewpoint, the 'local' can be defined pending the availability of products locally (which may be limited through seasonal variation, quality or price, for example) and on where a viable consumer base can be found (Milestad *et al.* 2010: 238). Moreover, the in/exclusion criteria associated with proximity and scale is often arbitrary and difficult to apply consistently, be it at the international, national or even regional scale³ (Kneafsey *et al.* 2013).

2.7 Socio-economic impacts

This does not mean that alternative and more localised forms of food production do not have value or meaning. Indeed, there is a wealth of research that has utilised this label and investigated the impact of 'local food', the vast majority of which has provided clear evidence about the benefits this has for communities and for realising sustainable development (FLAIR 2003). For instance, Boyde (2001) conducted research commissioned by the New Economics Foundation and Countryside Agency into the financial flows of Cusgarne Organic Farm in Cornwall, UK. The main conclusion was that for every £1 spent on the Cusgarne organic box scheme, £2.59 was generated for the local economy. Here, local was somewhat arbitrarily defined as a 15 mile radius from the farm, but this research crucially states that for every £1 spent in the supermarket, only £1.40 was generated for the local economy; a much lower return when compared to the 'local', 'alternative' and organic option.

Similarly, the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) recently investigated the value of English local food 'webs'⁴. This research found that an

³ For example, The National Farmers and Retail Association (FARMA) specify that for food producers to be eligible for a farmers market, they should be located within a 30 mile radius. However, this is often relaxed up to a distance of 50 miles to ensure there is variety and choice for consumers, reflecting how 'local' is a flexible construct and difficult for stakeholders in the food industry to have any definite agreement over.

⁴ A local food web is the network of links between people who buy, sell, produce and supply food in an area. For all locations studied, local food outlets were in a 2.5-mile radius circle centred on an English town or city. Producers based within a 30-mile supply zone beyond this radius were also counted as local (CPRE 2012: 2).

estimated 61,000 jobs are supported through local food outlet sales, with local food sales through independent outlets supporting a total turnover of £132 million a year, over half of which (£68 million) can be attributed directly to local food sales (CPRE 2012: 3). While the report focuses on quantifying the benefits, some of the 'softer' impacts are alluded to. For example, "local food webs are vital seed beds for innovation and new enterprises trialling products" (CPRE: 2012: 3), and so this report confidently outlines various policy recommendations to encourage and support a more sustainable food system through an approach underpinned by local food production and distribution methods.

Saltmarsh *et al.* (2011) also provide evidence about the growth and impact of local food through their scoping work about CSA in England. CSA are inherently alternative and a form of a local food system as CSA "resists the dominant socio-technical regime and embeds agriculture in the local" (Flora and Bregendahl 2012: 330) through their co-operative and community oriented structure (where the producers are often the consumers), short distribution channels and supply chains. This research conducted for the Soil Association and part of the broader but now defunct Making Local Food Work Programme, found that English CSAs work over 3,200 acres of land, count at least 5,000 trading members, feed at least 12,500 people, and have a combined annual turnover of over £7,000,000 (Saltmarsh *et al.* 2011: 4). Moreover, the report highlights how CSA has huge potential as of the 80 identified active CSA initiatives in England, over 50 were incepted between 2008-2011. This is evidence that it is a rapidly growing phenomenon that producers and consumers are increasingly finding desirable. There are many reasons for this recent growth, including farmers seeking income diversification and shared risk (Flora and Bregendahl 2012: 335), to environmentally concerned consumers who wish to support local farmers and access quality foods that are traceable as well as spatially and socially embedded (Cox *et al.* 2008: 210).

Leading on from this final point, there is plenty of research, predominantly qualitative, that has captured the social benefits of local food production and consumption as seen with CSA and other localised outlets such as farm shops and farmers' markets (See Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Jarosz 2000, Cox *et al.* 2008, Milestad *et al.* 2010, Zagata 2012). The social benefits of local food systems

can be understood as a series of outcomes that arise through a process Kneafsey *et al.* (2008) term 'reconnection'. This terminology captures how producers, consumers and other local food actors are increasingly forming dialogue with one another, creating more localised food systems and in doing so, creating strong social bonds and ties that underpin the sustainability of such exchanges (Sage 2003). The extensive research by Kneafsey *et al.* (2008) in the UK and Italy suggests that in local, alternative food systems, producers and consumers alike are aware of the needs of close and distant others (including people and the environment) and demonstrate care for one another. The social outcomes are materialised through acts of growing, retailing and purchasing that serves to create and sustain shared knowledge about the importance of food (Dowler *et al.* 2010: 216). The importance of thinking and acting locally around food production and consumption therefore extends beyond the quantifiable financial and economic benefits that tend to be a popular policy making evidence base, into a more visceral space where individuals and communities become more aware, empowered and engaged about the broader implications of their food practices (Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010).

2.8 Environmental impacts?

The environmental impacts of local and alternative food, however, are less clear. This is because food that is less intensively produced and circulated in shorter supply chains, in theory at least, results in less 'food miles' as the carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming are much lower than the emissions from food products produced and transported more intensively and travel vast distances (as is the case with imported foods, for example). Yet the assumption that a locally available product is entirely of the local area is not always accurate, especially with processed foods or goods with special packaging requirements. As Kneafsey *et al.* (2013) note:

"Products may be grown or reared in one location, moved to another for processing and packaging, and then returned to the original location for sale. So they may be considered 'local' foods in the sense that they have been produced

and consumed locally, but might have generated several hundred food miles during the stages in between.”

(Kneafsey *et al.* 2013: 28)

Similarly, Coley *et al.* (2009) are critical of local food terminology as their research compared the carbon emissions of a national organic box delivery scheme with that of a farm shop where the consumer drives by car to source their fresh produce. They found that if a consumer drives more than 7.4km to purchase vegetables from a local farm shop, then the resulting carbon emissions are “likely to be greater than the emissions from the system of cold storage, packing, transport to a regional hub and final transport to customer’s doorstep used by large-scale vegetable box suppliers” (Coley *et al.* 2009: 154). This highlights how acting locally and ‘alternatively’, which is often driven by the desire to be more sustainable, caring or ethical, cannot be assumed to be a default, ‘better’ way of organising agri-food systems, especially from an environmental perspective (Mariola 2008).

The preceding examples highlight some evidence about the various positive impacts that thinking and operating at the local level has, and this is where AFNs are often situated. However, as with alternative, local is a problematic term when critically explored. Indeed, when describing food initiatives that might be considered as local and/or ‘alternative’, they are instantly marginalised and this risks normalising adverse ‘conventional’ practices (Seyfang 2006). Furthermore, understanding local food in terms of a product’s life cycle or through the notion of ‘farm to fork’ (and even beyond that when inputs at the site of production are considered) means that the terminology of ‘local food’ is arguably not as clear or as useful as it first appears (Edwards-Jones 2008). Indeed, Born and Purcell (2006) argue that such is the evocative nature of the term, there is a danger of falling into the ‘local trap’, as the assumption that ‘local’ is inherently good is risky when defining sustainable food systems. They suggest that “local-scale food systems are equally likely to be just or unjust, sustainable or unsustainable, secure or insecure” as larger scale food systems (Born and Purcell 2006: 195). Thus, while the notion of ‘local’ carries positive connotations of ‘quality’, ‘tradition’ and ‘speciality’ in terms of particular places or regions (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000:

217), 'localness' is best seen as a strategy that can be applied by any group of actors to advance and safeguard particular agendas (Winter 2003, Connelly *et al.* 2011: 313).

2.9 Applying AFN beyond Western Europe and North America

As is implicit in the preceding discussion and examples, 'alternative' and the notion of AFN or local food has been typically confined to the United States (Hinrichs 2000, Jarosz 2008, Selfa *et al.* 2008), Canada (Eaton 2008), Australia (Higgins *et al.* 2008) and Western Europe (Venn *et al.* 2006, Kneafsey *et al.* 2008), with the UK (Ilbery and Maye *et al.* 2005, Watts *et al.* 2005), France (Chiffolleau 2009, Dubuisson-Quellier *et al.* 2011) and Italy (Grasseni 2013) being the most prominent contexts within the agri-food literature. However, Canadian and American conceptions of AFN have been traditionally situated more in social justice discourses in comparison to the European literature where they have been entangled with broader debates about agricultural and rural development policies (Goodman 2003, 2004). Yet while there are inevitably contextual differences between each of these nations, they are some of the most economically developed countries and sit firmly within the global North. Thus, from a macro-development perspective, these countries share many contextual similarities, and this accounts for why research agendas under the umbrella of AFN have been common therein. Indeed, North America, Western Europe and to some extent Australasia over the course of recent decades have shared similar geographic and demographic transitions, neo-liberal political trajectories and agricultural modernisation pathways, which, as showcased by the growth in AFNs, are being subject to increasing scrutiny at the local and regional level. As such, it is understandable that AFN and local food discourse has been somewhat easily transferable throughout these regions as they have all experienced a rapid and large scale rationalisation of their agri-food systems amidst a global backdrop of growing concern about sustainable development.

Unsurprisingly, then, the term AFN and 'local' becomes much more 'challenging' when applied beyond the borders of Western Europe and North America, where the vast majority of academic scholarship has been situated. Indeed, there is

even definitional ambiguity and appropriateness when AFN terminology is applied to other less intensive, agriculturally industrialised countries, such as within Eastern Europe. For example, in Hungary, a local food 'culture' has remained strong with 'alternative', more informal agri-food systems such as farmers' markets continuing to have the significant role that they have always had (Balázs 2012: 406). 'Alternative' in this context may in fact be 'conventional' in the eyes of the people and institutions that are situated in these types of networks. A further example from the dairy industry in Lithuania also points to the problem with 'alternative' discourse when applied outside the 'AFN hotbeds' of Western Europe and North America, as "unlike their western counterparts, local, consumer-producer networks in Lithuania are considered to be a threat – not a solution – to sustainability issues" amongst public officials keen to 'modernise' and integrate within the EU economy (Mincyte 2011: 102). Similarly, in Poland, farmers can find profitable markets for products that recall more tradition-based, agrarian production strategies (Bowen and De Master 2011: 74), methods that are associated with AFNs and localised, low-intensive production systems. However, using the label of 'alternative' to describe this can arguably be unhelpful and can risk marginalising such strategies while at the same time normalise 'conventional' agri-food systems that may be regarded as modern, efficient and productive in contexts such as Eastern Europe.

When applying the notion of 'local food' and AFN to the global South, the 'slipperiness' of these terms become even more apparent. This is partly because unlike the majority of the literature around AFN, with the alternative supply systems in a developing world context there is no romanticised return to the 'local' or quest of an idyllic countryside lifestyle, rather, they represent an alternative consumption space for the urban poor and culturally diverse communities (Abrahams 2007: 105). For scholarship situated in the global South, there are some notable examples though there is far less scope for detailed critique and analysis when compared to the research and evidence base in Europe, Australasia and North America. This is reflected in a recent study by Kneafsey *et al.* (2013), who reviewed 380 recent academic papers in the field of local food systems and SFSC, and found that of the 131 papers to feature empirical case studies, the vast majority were situated in Western Europe and North America,

with only 2 from South America and 2 from Africa. The dearth of material from outside of the global North is largely because the historical and macro-economic context of the global North and South are vastly different in terms of politics, culture and agri-food developments (including the bio-physical characteristics such as seasonality and climate that determine what can be grown and when). These contextual attributes are arguably a limiting factor in why AFN scholarship has typically been confined to the more familiar global North, where political economic histories and socio-cultural context can be more readily understood and related to. As such, the driving factors for AFNs in the global South are highly contextual and have emerged from fundamentally different politico-economic spaces (Abrahams 2007: 106), contexts that do not share the same agri-food biographies and development trajectories in Western Europe or North America.

A further reason for the lack of research into AFNs in the global South is what might be considered to be an 'alternative' food system in one place may be perceived as more 'conventional' in another less 'developed' context or less advanced economy (Abrahams 2007). The more recent work of Abrahams (2009) in Southern Africa illustrates this point, as she argues that supermarkets in the capital city of Zambia, Lusaka, are not the most dominant players in the food economy, and are usually regarded more as 'new' and 'alternative' by the local population who continue to engage with 'informal' and 'traditional' markets. The widely accepted understanding of supermarkets as 'conventional' in the global North is therefore not directly transferable to the very different contexts, agricultural history, and food cultures of regions throughout the global South. A similar example from the city of Johannesburg in Gauteng Province, South Africa reinforces this point.

Here, the concept of a farmers' market can be regarded as an example of an institutional response linking informal urban and peri-urban food production activities to the formal market, providing a recognised common trading ground for all retailers, consumers and informal producers (Bun and Thornton 2013: 41). As such, the 'alternativeness' of farmers' markets in the context of a South African city does not necessarily align with the same 'alternativeness' associated with their global North counterparts. Indeed, rather than being a distinctive 'alternative' space, this South African example highlights how farmers' markets are designed

to incorporate smaller-scale, informal producers into a more formal (arguably 'conventional') space. These examples highlight the difficulty of AFN as a globally relevant term as there are limitations both in defining and applying this terminology. A more detailed review of other examples from the global South is provided later in the chapter once SFSC terminology has been qualified and explained.

Given the preceding discussion, the question posed over a decade ago by Whatmore *et al.* (2003) 'what's alternative about AFN?' is seemingly rhetorical, and indeed contextual. Thus, despite the conceptual value of AFN and local food, and the burgeoning evidence base for them, examining contrasting socio-economic, cultural and political spaces that fall beyond European and North American terrain means that 'alternative' terminology is inherently problematic. Ultimately, it cannot easily handle the many inevitable contextual subtleties that exist between and even within regions (Renting *et al.* 2003). This is where the concept of 'SFSC' is arguably more useful.

2.10 From AFN to Short Food Supply Chains

It must first be noted that SFSC are not a 'new' phenomenon, but there has been a resurgence in interest about how they can add and retain economic and social value, particularly for small-scale enterprises and producers of 'speciality', 'quality' food products (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000, Renting *et al.* 2003, Watts *et al.* 2005, Ilbery and Maye 2005, Kneafsey *et al.* 2013). Moreover, SFSCs are more specific than 'alternative' food networks, and, rather, covers (the interrelations between) actors who are directly involved in the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food (Renting *et al.* 2003: 394). As such, SFSC provides greater clarity through which notions of quality and the embeddedness of social relationships can be explored, including investigating the implications this has for producers whose livelihoods depend upon capturing and retaining value. SFSC are therefore a more useful point of entry into agri-food debates because although they have been conceptualised as a characteristic of AFNs (see Table 2.2) it is argued that SFSCs do not carry the same baggage as 'alternative' or 'local' does. This is because rather than 'alternative' and 'local' being explicit and so the focus of arguments, within SFSC these terms and discourses are implicit. This is

because, firstly, a 'short' chain implies *some* degree of alternativeness given that 'conventional' agri-food systems are characterised by 'long(er)', more complex supply chains. Secondly, 'local' is implied within SFSC when 'short' is considered in terms of the close physical distances between the producer and consumer, as occurs at a farmers market, for example. SFSC therefore capture much of what the AFN and local food literature articulates, but is less prone to critiques and tangential debate about the boundaries and politics of localness and alternativeness. As such, SFSC are arguably more able to address the broader issues of sustainability goals, rural livelihoods and development, and it is for these reasons why SFSC are adopted as an umbrella term to handle the more localised agri-food chains that form the backbone in this research.

2.11 Defining SFSC

Two key papers by Marsden *et al.* (2000) and Renting *et al.* (2003) have formed the conceptual backbone for the majority of research about SFSC and indeed much of the alternative agri-food literature in the past decade. They identify three types of SFSC and the ways in which they can be extended in time and space (Figure 2.1). The three types or categories of SFSC are 'face-to-face', 'spatially proximate' and 'spatially extended'.

Figure 2.1: Different mechanisms for extending SFSC in time and space

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Source: Renting *et al.* 2003: 399

Face-to-face SFSC are arguably the quintessential form of a SFSC. Here, “consumers purchase products directly from the producer or processor and authenticity and trust are mediated through personal interaction” (Renting *et al.* 2003: 399). Examples include a farmers’ market or ‘pick your own’. The number of intermediaries between the producer and consumer here is, ideally, nil. Furthermore, producers may simultaneously be consumers, as with some CSA, gardening or allotment structures, for example (Venn *et al.* 2006, Veen *et al.* 2012). Renting *et al.* (2003) also suggest that internet mediated sales could fall into this ‘face-to-face’ category depending on the nature of the exchange, as consumers may feel internet purchases from the farm gate enables them to directly ‘reconnect’ to the producer in some capacity (Holloway 2002). However, from a supply chain perspective, this will invariably involve one or more distribution intermediaries (and potentially long distances), and so spatial and social relationships between producers and consumers that are mediated through online space are arguably more difficult to categorise in comparison to the face-to-face exchanges that take place in person. However, a key feature here is the direct, personal relationship between producer and consumer.

Spatially proximate SFSC incorporates more complex arrangements as rather than there being a *direct* relationship between producers and consumers, these SFSC are based on spatial and social relations of proximity (Marsden *et al.* 2000, Renting *et al.* 2003). Proximate SFSC are perhaps the first point of entry independent, small-scale food producers use when scaling up production, as it involves ‘going beyond’ direct, personal relationships with consumers and integrating intermediaries (such as distributors, wholesalers, retailers) in order to access other local and regional markets and consumers. With proximate SFSC, “products are sold in the region (or place) of production and consumers (such as tourists) are made aware of the ‘local’ nature of the product at the point of retail” (Renting *et al.* 2003: 400). Proximate SFSC are also applicable where collective models of distribution and consumption are concerned, as the pooling of local and regional food into a regional co-operative, for example, enables consumers to have more choice whilst at the same time providing another route to market(s) for producers to incorporate into their portfolio. Given the geographical proximity,

relatively 'close' producer-consumer relations and minimal intermediaries, proximate SFSC (as with some 'face-to-face SFSC) are the networks and agri-food arrangements that typically characterise 'local food systems' and/or 'regional food systems'. Unlike face-to-face SFSC, the mediation of trust and authenticity in proximate SFSC is dependent on the intermediaries and spaces of retail.

Spatially extended SFSC are more distinctive when compared to proximate and face-to-face SFSC. This is because of the geographical distance, as unlike the other two categories of SFSC, spatially extended SFSC involves the sale of food products to consumers who are located *outside* of the region of production and who may have no experience of the spaces of production (Renting *et al.* 2003: 400). Here, food products may travel large distances, such as across a nation, and rather than rely on interpersonal relationships that mediate trust, utilise external certification labels that serve to 'guarantee' and differentiate the product, assuring the consumer that it is reputable and of a distinctive quality. This is part of the rationale behind the EU 'Protected Designation of Origin' (PDO), 'Protected Geographic Indication' (PGI) and 'Traditional Speciality Guaranteed' (TSG) labelling schemes, which applies to speciality, territorially unique products such as Stilton Cheese and Cornish pasties in the UK. As such, consumers who are not from or familiar with the places of Stilton or Cornwall, for example, still receive some information about the quality of these products through the label (and packaging) and can afford some connection with the places of production.

It must also be noted that these three well-established categories of SFSC rarely exist in isolation at the producer level. Rather, producers often draw upon a combination of SFSC and in some cases, may also use 'conventional' food supply chains (Ilbery and Maye 2005, O'Neill 2014). The three types of SFSC discussed are relatively straightforward to understand on a conceptual level, although they are not without their own definitional complexity. For example, it is difficult to pinpoint where the 'place of production' begins/ends and where 'short' loses its value or appeal and becomes 'long' and similar to 'conventional' chains. Moreover, does a small geographical proximity and distance between the producer and consumer take precedence, or is genuine 'shortness' more about the nature of the 'relations of regard' between producers and consumers (and intermediaries)

irrespective of how far food travels? This ambiguity with what a SFSC is in practice accounts for the abundance of pragmatic definitions.

For example, in 2009, the French Ministry of Agriculture provided an official definition of a SFSC, which although implying face-to-face and proximate SFSC, could also incorporate extended forms. They stated that a SFSC is said to be short “when it has at the most one intermediary between the agricultural producer and the consumer” (Aubry and Kebir 2013: 86). This arrangement implies that distances are relatively short, and as such direct and proximate SFSC are regarded as the backbone for vibrant local and regional food systems. However, the French definition does not rule out food products travelling vast distances and being consumed outside the spaces of production, which is within the capabilities of some enterprising producers and qualifies as ‘short’ in a spatially extended sense. As such, defining SFSC in the practical manner of the French, which makes no explicit reference to geographical scale, suggests that distance takes less precedence than social relationships and the way the supply chains are organised.

Indeed, a key point is that with each of the three types of SFSC is about social embeddedness, as “producer-consumer relations are ‘shortened’ and redefined by giving clear signals on the provenance and quality attributes of food and by constructing transparent chains in which products reach the consumer with a significant degree of value-laden information.” (Renting *et al.* 2003: 398). Clearly the ways in which the ‘geography of food products’ - the ‘value-laden information’ - is communicated throughout SFSC differs depending on the distances involved and number of intermediaries throughout the supply chain. However, the end result is that SFSC become more socially embedded and (re)territorialised, and thus the food products marketed through them can be differentiated from other food commodities circulating in ‘conventional’, ‘longer’ chains. In a similar vein to the French definition, this spatial and social embeddedness is “less about proximity (i.e. reducing the geographical distance between producer and consumer) and more about embedding the product concerned with ‘value-laden’ information about the place of production, at the point of consumption” (Morris and Kirwan 2011: 324). Marsden *et al.* (2000) originally made this point about embeddedness, as they argue it is the strength of social relations that allows for

the 'value-laden information' to be successfully communicated and then valorised by consumers that is critical. They write:

“With a SFSC it is not the number of times a product is handled or the distance over which it is ultimately transported which is necessarily critical, but the fact that the product reaches the consumer embedded with information, for example printed on packaging or communicated personally at the point of retail. It is this, which enables the consumer to confidently make connections and associations with the place/space of production, and, potentially, the values of the people involved and the production methods employed.”

(Marsden *et al.* 2000: 425)

As such, the presence of 'relations of regard' (Sage 2003) and social embeddedness is a critical factor for food producers engaged in SFSC if they are to succeed in capturing and retaining value. Indeed, successfully communicating 'embedded information' is clearly of worth as it offers the potential to forge niche markets founded upon a more ethical set of values and standards that consumers are increasingly finding desirable. This is what Lang (2010) refers to as 'values-for-money' rather than a 'value-for-money' discourse; price is not the only determining factor as there are other social and ecological values, such as animal welfare or fair trade, for example, that come into the decision making process.

Aubry and Kebir (2013) provide another layer to these initial categories introduced by Marsden *et al.* (2000) by adding that central to all SFSC are proximity relations, be they geographical or social (Figure 2.2). The former refers to physical distance whereas the latter, social proximity, or what Friedberg and Goldstein (2011) refer to as 'cultural' proximity, the relationship between producer and consumer becomes stronger. Aubry and Kebir (2013) argue that the 'strongest' types of SFSC occurs where there are direct relations between producers and consumers (social or organised proximity), which by definition will also be physically close owing to the 'face-to-face' contact at the point of retail (geographical proximity). This echoes the work of Kirwan (2006), who found that UK farmers' markets gave rise to a 'convention of regard', arguing that producers and consumers are often motivated by, and feel the benefit from, the social relationships that occur during the direct exchange of quality foods. Kirwan's (2006) conclusions strongly

resonate with the work of Sage (2003) conducted in Ireland, who argues that 'relations of regard' is the process that mediates reciprocity and trust. The 'weakest' SFSC, then, are where there are larger distances, more intermediaries and loose, if any, relationship or contact between producers and consumers. This is a definition that could arguably describe some 'conventional' food chains.

Figure 2.2: Typology of SFSC based on proximity relations

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Source: Aubry and Kebir (2013: 87)

Retailing speciality, quality foods therefore presents a problem for small-scale producers when there is no face-to-face, direct contact with the end consumer as seen with online sales or where producers supply beyond their own premises to other local/regional farm shops. This is especially pertinent for food producers who may be keen to commercialise and expand their livelihood strategies and opportunities, as scaling up beyond the immediate locale will inevitably involve using more intermediaries to reach a wider consumer base. This description perhaps best applies to the entrepreneurially minded 'profit maximisers' who are

largely driven by economic factors. Such entrepreneurs are keen to expand their income streams through the production, marketing and sales of speciality, local food products (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999). Yet, Ilbery and Kneafsey (1999) also note that many smaller-scale, independent businesses within the local food production arena can be described as 'profit sufficers' as there is evidence to suggest that some producers are driven by wider social and ecological goals and value systems rather than solely by profit (Tregear 2005). As Sage (2003: 58) states, "there are small organic growers for whom the enjoyment of selling through the local farmers' market might compensate in part for their low monetary return." However, there clearly there has to be *some* return to be a viable business as even markets founded upon notions of social and ecological embeddedness are, ultimately, still markets (Hinrichs 2000). Therefore, all producers who engage with SFSC for their livelihoods will inevitably make decisions underpinned by economic reasoning at some level.

There is clearly a range of differences about how and why food producers 'use' or engage with SFSC, but in order for them to be viable livelihood strategies they need to be able to successfully differentiate products and access various markets in order to sell their products. This is especially applicable to proximate or spatially extended SFSC where there is no 'face-to-face' contact with consumers, as here, a 'convention of regard' as Kirwan (2006) puts it, will be lacking or tenuous when compared to direct producer-consumer exchanges. Therefore, the ability to access markets and differentiate upstream is important to ensure that 'value-laden' information is communicated further downstream. Indeed, communicating bespoke quality cues to consumers who may be situated beyond the immediate locale and region of production, or who may have little or no knowledge about the processes of production, is essential if independent food producers and enterprises are to benefit from SFSC in the long term. This notion of sustainable wealth generation has been described as a form of 'value-capture', dependent upon the innovations of producers and processors at the local level (Marsden and Smith 2005: 441). As such, the ways in which these quality cues and mechanisms for 'value-capture' are communicated needs attention, and this is now discussed.

2.12 Quality mechanisms: constructing 'difference' through SFSC

As with the earlier work on AFN and more recently on local foods, SFSC are widely accepted to embody notions of 'quality' to differentiate them from other commodities and supply chains. The fundamental reasons for this from the producer's point of view is to convince consumers of purchasing their product and ideally paying a premium due to the better quality of food retailed through SFSC in comparison to conventional chains (Renting *et al.* 2003: 401). Figure 2.3 shows how quality is constructed using different conventions that relate to the places of food production, the artisanal or traditional nature production process or the ecological credentials associated with production. However, as captured by Figure 2.3, these categories are far from definitive, rather quality is constructed by drawing on multiple conventions around food production processes and place (Ilbery *et al.* 2005).

Figure 2.3: Different quality conventions employed within SFSC

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(Source: Renting *et al.* 2003: 401)

Constructing quality through place or the artisanal nature of production is especially important for spatially extended SFSC, which as noted previously, utilise external certification labels such as PDO, PGI and TSG. These labels "directly relate quality to a particular geographical environment, or attribute a specific quality to a product from a given region" (Robinson 2009: 9). Provenance, tradition and skilled artisanal craftsmanship are emotive and powerful notions

when constructing quality in this way, including products that do not have PDO/PGI/TSG accreditation. Indeed, much of the quality construction around place or production process depends on savvy marketing and packaging strategies as much as official certification. Certification labels also apply to the other end of the spectrum, as shown in Figure 2.3. Here, quality construction occurs by way of the ecological integrity of the food products. For example, the Soil Association certification of organic food in the UK provides an assured form of quality to consumers who may have little or no contact or knowledge of the place of production. Certification can therefore be regarded as an important quality mechanism for SFSC that go beyond 'face-to-face' relationships between producers and consumers. It provides a means for agri-food stakeholders to align practices and demonstrate the attainment of specified standards more widely, including regulators, the public and the market (Higgins *et al.* 2008: 17). The implication here is that a focus on certification as a quality mechanism enables the relationship and tensions between vertical and horizontal embeddedness to be explored (*ibid.*).

As implied by Figure 2.3, it can be argued that SFSC are dependent upon quality constructs in order to differentiate them from other 'conventional' food systems. This is essential for food producers who use them for their livelihoods. The work of Ilbery *et al.* (2005) developed these initial conceptualisations of quality by arguing that constructing difference within the marketplace depends on the linkages between product, process and place (PPP) (Figure 2.4). This is a useful juncture for understanding SFSC because it implies that quality construction and differentiation is at its strongest or most effective when the three linkages between PPP are all captured and communicated to consumers through marketing or labelling schemes. Figure 2.4 is more useful than Figure 2.3, which frames quality construction as occurring on a spectrum, whereas thinking through PPP represents the holistic ways that quality construction takes place, but without overlooking the individual components that makes this possible. In explaining PPP, the linkages between products and place develop markets for foods with "distinct origins in order to protect livelihoods, build territorial identity and secure community cohesion" (Ilbery *et al.* 2005: 118).

The linkages between product and process are about highlighting the environmental, social and distributional processes associated with certain food products, and to distance them from the perceived negative consequences of standardisation and environmental degradation associated with 'conventional' agri-food systems (Ilbery *et al.* 2005: 120). Similarly, Marsden *et al.* (2008: 270) argue that entrepreneurial food producers in the South West of the UK construct these linkages through the invention of tradition, or retro-innovation, and the re-casting of bio-local/regional connections. This highlights not only the types of production processes at play, but also how constructing PPP linkages has an implicitly temporal element, captured by the integration of discourses around tradition and heritage. This is an important point in terms of constructing quality because cultural and historical specificities associated with certain places and regions present food producers located therein with unique marketing and branding opportunities that enable differentiation. Crucially too, this spatial-temporal form of difference cannot easily be transferred to other regions or be capitalised upon by producers that are situated within different, perhaps less distinctive, historical and (agri)cultural trajectories. In addition to these largely instrumental points about quality construction and difference, developing PPP linkages is an important discourse for 'reconnection'. This is because through these various associations consumers become more aware about the provenance of their food and the way it is produced (Kneafsey *et al.* 2008, Dowler *et al.* 2010), reinforcing the value that Figure 2.4 has in broader debates about why agri-food system changes are needed.

Figure 2.4: Constructing difference through product, process and place

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(Source: Ilbery *et al.* 2005: 119)

The PPP construct is founded upon empirical work with labelling schemes, whereby the linkages between product quality and place is more apparent in Europe, and linkages between process and place more prevalent in North America. To date, little research has explored this conceptualisation of quality construction and differentiation outside of these familiar global North contexts, although there are exceptions. The most notable examples are situated in literature around ethical trading schemes, such as FairTrade. This now well-known scheme amassed global retail sales of €4.9 billion in 2011, a 12% rise from the previous year (Smith 2013: 115), and was “established to alleviate poverty and economic injustice through a market-based form of solidarity exchange” (Dolan 2010: 41). While this has enabled access to otherwise unreachable international marketplaces and provided *some* global South producers with the means of a livelihood, recent scholarship is critical of the success and broader impact of FairTrade. This is captured in the following comment by Dolan (2010) who examined the supply chain dynamics and certification issues experienced amongst Kenyan tea producers:

“Although the trajectory of Fairtrade is clearly influenced by country and commodity specific factors, this study suggests that the mainstreaming of Fairtrade tea into the conventional distribution channels of commercial buyers has engendered practices that depart from the movement’s seminal values and impoverished its capacity to deliver empowerment, autonomy and economic justice to Kenyan tea producers.”

(Dolan 2010: 41)

Indeed, Barrientos and Dolan (2006) argue that the continued rapid growth of FairTrade and other ethical trading schemes is driven less by ethical objectives and more by commercial imperatives of supermarkets and corporations located in the global North seeking to differentiate amongst competitors. This is why Neilson and Pritchard (2010) claim that ethical trade is a somewhat ‘dull’ implement in the pursuit of economic justice. Moreover, the very concept of differentiation within international supply chains has become problematic, as for many concerned consumers “distinctions are unclear between products that meet FairTrade accreditation, and those that are otherwise certified as ‘ethical’ within the terms of various private sector or multistakeholder schemes” (Neilson and Pritchard 2010: 1837). This brief overview of FairTrade as a quality construction mechanism and means of differentiation highlights how in international agri-food systems at least, rural producers in the global South cannot rely solely on market instruments such as certification labels.

In addition to the preceding discussion, PPP arguably applies to the wider realm of product branding, whereby associating foods to processes and place, irrespective of whether there is an ethical label, is an important factor for food producers seeking marketplace differentiation and a premium for their food⁵. As such, Ilbery *et al.* (2005) have provided a useful, somewhat under-utilised framework in the subsequent literature, to investigate the marketing strategies and potential of SFSC in regions and contexts other than in the global North. Allied to this, it is important to explore how SFSC using quality constructs linked to notions of

⁵ The same practices apply within ‘conventional’ spaces such as supermarkets and fast food outlets, who to some extent apply qualities associated with ‘alternative’ and ‘local’ to their own products as a way to differentiate in a competitive industry. Since a discussion of this is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Jackson *et al.* (2007).

provenance, place and small-scale processes are interpreted by consumers in the global South, and whether this type of marketing model can help foster stronger 'relationships of regard'.

This is an important point, because quality construction is influenced by the social and cultural context of food production and consumption. For example, in France the word *terroir* (for which there is no direct English translation) is used to attach special qualities and characteristics to particular places and regions. Indeed, *terroir* is linked to the unique biophysical properties such as altitude, micro-climate, soil type and the cultural practices that have maintained these resources for several generations (Bowen and Zapata 2009: 109). Schemes such as PDO and PGI attempt to 'protect' this uniqueness, but there is no guarantee that consumers who cannot relate to this term will valorise the qualities implied by *terroir*, qualities that producers use as a means to market their products and differentiate from competitors. As such, *terroir* is an example that highlights how constructing and valorising quality associated with place and processes can be culturally and contextually specific. It is therefore important to consider how consumers interpret 'quality' and 'value-laden information' within supply chains that make reference to notions of place and the (artisanal) processes of production, and how this helps to foster stronger relationships of 'regard' throughout SFSC. The context of 'alternative' foods and the evidence base of SFSC in some areas of the global South, most notably Africa, are now discussed to substantiate this point.

2.13 Applying SFSC in the global South

As mentioned, there are a small number of examples that focus on AFN, local food systems and SFSC in the global South. These can be separated into two broad categories; firstly where SFSC situated in the global South extend into international markets, and secondly, where SFSC are geared more towards local, domestic markets. For the first category, Nel *et al.* (2007) and Binns *et al.* (2007) have conducted extensive research into the global supply chain dynamics and marketing of *rooibos* tea production in Wupperthal, located in the Cedarberg region of rural Western Cape, South Africa. *Rooibos* tea grown in the region is unique to the region and as such, has been granted organic and Fair Trade status.

Given the international export markets through which the tea is produced for and sold, the supply chains used can therefore be regarded as 'spatially extended' as they exhibit 'alternative' characteristics that attempt to differentiate from more 'conventional' chains. The reasons for this are neatly captured by the authors in the following quotation. They write:

"[D]istinct efforts have been made to connect with niche consumer markets through organic certification and various links with Fair Trade Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs). In some cases tea has been explicitly marketed as being sourced from Wupperthal, with the characteristics of the locale and its impacts upon taste and quality being prominent in the packaging"

(Binns *et al.* 2007: 341)

This is evidence that SFSC in a global South context are implicitly drawing on the linkages between PPP as a means to differentiate from more mainstream channels, enabling 'value-laden information' to be communicated to (geographically distant) consumers who may otherwise be inaccessible. Moreover, the *rooibos* project can be regarded as contributing to the transformation and development process in South Africa, which is a key selling point in itself since it broadens the ethical appeal of the product within European and North American markets (Binns *et al.* 2007: 344, Reynolds and Ngcwangu 2010). However, the extent to which *domestic* consumers, and retailers, make the same associations around quality cues associated with process (organic) and place (Wupperthal) is less clear, either the potential for supply into local and regional markets has not been fully explored, or there is little or no demand for *rooibos* in South Africa. Either way, reliance on the export led spatially extended SFSC model in this instance means the producers in the *rooibos* production Cedarberg region are vulnerable to changes beyond their control, such as fluctuations in global food markets and shifts in global North consumer demands for 'luxury' commodities such as *rooibos* tea.

Yet Nel *et al.* (2007) and Binns *et al.* (2007) have found that these spatially extended supply chains have "undoubtedly had a significant impact in addressing local development needs and in improving the overall socio-economic well-being of a marginalised region" (Nel *et al.* 2007: 122), increasing the number of

(traditionally marginalised non-white) farmers from 25 to 170 and thus providing a viable livelihood strategy for them in an otherwise harsh economic landscape. Moreover, owing to the co-operative nature of *rooibos* production, risk is minimised and their own tea processing unit has given greater control over downstream activities such as packaging. There are clearly a number of positives attributed to this project, although the high levels of pre-existing social capital amongst the community and willing institutional support (from an NGO and church) are at the heart of the project's success.

To some degree, this pre-existing (institutional and network) resource base reflects that the 'alternative', SFSC model in this context is perhaps a product, rather than a driver, of socio-economic development (Tregear 2011: 422). Indeed, it has been argued that this is also the case in the UK, where the counties with a strong presence of (re)localised food systems and 'alternative' food chains are those that already have a pre-existing diverse resource base to draw on (Ricketts-Hein *et al.* 2006). This highlights that determinants for SFSC to flourish and for small-scale producers to benefit from them depends on identifying contexts with strong resources and institutions, creating space for dialogue between them to emerge, and accessing markets who valorise the 'quality' characteristics and associations of products with processes and place. Barrett *et al.*'s. (2004: 35) work in the high-value global horticultural market highlights that it is more complex than this. Their work on the commodity chains and networks of fresh vegetables produced in the Sub-Saharan countries of Kenya and The Gambia for European markets found that access to knowledge, innovation, and new technology are essential for economic success in global fresh horticultural commodity networks. They found that these resources are more established in the large commercial farms and enterprises of Kenya. This places smaller-scale producers and countries who are relatively 'new' to global fresh produce supply chains (such as The Gambia) at a disadvantage when attempting to commercialise via international food chains be they 'short' or otherwise.

Freidberg's (2004) influential cultural analysis of transcontinental global value chains suggests that these types of systems largely serve the interests of a few agribusinesses, and thus perpetuate unequal global North-global South relationships. Freidberg (2004) explored horticultural value chains that link rural

producers in Burkina Faso with French retailers and consumers. Furthermore, this analysis examined agri-food dynamics between Zambia and Britain, which developed her earlier work about ethical trade and regulation standards between the two countries (Freidberg 2003). She found that while these global value chains provide some means of a livelihood, “consumer buying power in the global North, expressed through purchases of high-value fresh vegetables, offers modest economic gains, at best, for peasant producers and farm labourers in the global South” (Freidberg 2004: 218). This implies that the longer-term transformative potential of global value chains is tenuous at best, and so ‘different’ models are needed if rural livelihoods in the global South are to be truly sustainable. A further implication from this point relates to domestic markets. Indeed, these may play an important role for small-scale producers seeking to diversify their livelihood strategies and to commercialise. Moreover, they may also offer opportunities for producers to reclaim at least some control of the supply chain, and to redress the power imbalances as noted through Freidberg (2004).

2.14 SFSC and domestic markets in the global South

Food production for domestic markets is perhaps more relevant for the vast majority of food producers in the global South, as the capacities and resources needed to engage in international markets are beyond the reach of many small-scale (usually subsistent) producers. Moreover, smallholders producing for domestic markets means that there will inevitably be direct, ‘face-to-face’ SFSC and proximate SFSC, which are ‘short’ in both a geographical and social capacity when compared to spatially extended SFSC associated with global supply chains. The role of ‘alternative’ direct supply in some parts of the global South is considerable. For example, in 2010, farmers’ markets, box schemes and direct delivery systems channelled half of the certified organic production within the Brazilian domestic market, with ‘only’ around 45% sold through supermarkets (Lamine *et al.* 2012: 383). This clearly reflects the scale of demand, especially amongst urban consumers, for ‘local’ and/or regional food as well as a desire for both producers and consumers to engage with the types of SFSC typically associated with Europe and North America. Abrahams (2007) makes a similar

argument, stating “AFN in the global South exhibit short food chain, quality food, slow food, local/speciality food, cultural speciality food and direct farm sale characteristics” (Abrahams 2007: 106-7). Yet in the context of Johannesburg, South Africa, where Abrahams’ (2007) empirical work is based, these ‘alternative’ supply systems typically serve culturally diverse communities and the urban poor who are unable to access culturally specific foods through more ‘conventional’ retail channels such as supermarkets.

However, Freidberg and Goldstein’s (2011) research is an excellent, critical and honest account from the global South where ‘alternative’, SFSC has attempted to connect rural small-holders to a more affluent urban consumer base in Nairobi, Kenya. They enrich the literature by providing an informative discussion about the difficulties of ‘doing’ ‘alternative’, direct marketing initiatives within a global South context, reflecting on an ‘unsuccessful’ box scheme in Nairobi (that the authors were involved in creating and sustaining) and initiated by the Kenyan Institute for Organic Farming (KIOF) in 2007. They cite many reasons for the downfall of the box scheme which lasted only a matter of months, including poor infrastructure, reliable vehicles and (cold) storage, but also the wider discourses and historical experiences of ineffective sustainable development policies in Kenya. For the farmers involved in supplying fresh produce, they largely regarded the box scheme as “just another NGO aid project” that they had partial or no ownership of, and as such, were somewhat understandably wary of outsiders promising prosperity (Freidberg and Goldstein 2011: 30). For the more affluent consumers, who were typically expatriates or an ‘elite’ urban minority, they became frustrated with fresh produce that was of an inconsistent quality. Crucially, however, the inability to relate to ‘distant’ rural producers as part of a broader, shared ‘community’ with common goals meant their interest waned and “loyalties lay elsewhere” (Freidberg and Goldstein 2011: 30).

Ultimately, this rare case study is a ‘good’ example that highlights the importance of social embeddedness, as this is conspicuous by its absence (despite the best intentions of the box scheme). The breakdown of this model occurred despite the KIOF scheme being inspired by North American CSAs, which is an ‘alternative’ approach where members often become involved by way of a commitment to the people and environments involved (Hayden and Buck 2012: 333). Therefore,

ensuring 'relations of regard' (Sage 2003) and a mutual 'connectedness' between producers and consumers cannot be taken for granted, nor can direct marketing schemes be simply transplanted from one (global North) context to another (global South). Rather, they need to be carefully thought out and consider the ways in which the social and cultural proximity between producers, institutions and consumers can be shortened and relations strengthened and thickened (Eden *et al.* 2008). Re-embedding the social relations in this Sub-Saharan African context, as with a European or North American context, applies in a horizontal capacity (between producers and consumers) and a vertical capacity (between broader governance structures and stakeholders such as KIOF, NGOs), as it are these (re)connections that can define the longer term success of SFSC and alternative strategies to rural development (Sonnino and Marsden 2006).

The Kenyan box scheme case study, the type of which is lacking within the agri-food literature, highlights the importance of context when attempting to instigate direct marketing initiatives, and that 'models' of SFSC as known in Western Europe and North America are not easily transferable. However, the preceding case studies that have been reviewed by Binns *et al.* (2007) and Nel *et al.* (2007) refer specifically to spatially extended SFSC, whilst Freidberg and Goldstein (2011) focus more on 'face-to-face', direct SFSC through their box scheme aimed at individual urban consumers or households. What is lacking is a focus on proximate SFSC, where locally produced food is sold on to other local/regional institutions such as farm shops, restaurants and hospitality industries, rather than being solely geared towards individual, 'face-to-face' retail.

For proximate SFSC in particular, exploring social embeddedness and 'relations of regard' in this context would provide a timely addition to the 'alternative' agri-food literature, as there is a need to understand how reciprocity and trust are mediated in these contexts, and to identify the appropriate and suitable types of SFSC that allow for social embeddedness to be sustained. Indeed, this is a crucial element if small-scale producers (in both the global North and South) are to benefit from engaging with 'alternative', 'local' food systems and SFSC as viable livelihood strategies. It is therefore important for research to consider the ways in which these types of SFSC 'function' in the context in which they are situated, and to consider the extent to which 'short chains' actually facilitate increased wealth

production at the producer end (Nel *et al.* 2007: 126). It is at this juncture where this research is focused, taking a comparative approach to better understand the contextual aspects of SFSC in both the global North and South, the ways this affects producer-consumer relations, and ultimately how small-scale food producers improve their livelihood strategies and outcomes.

2.15 Summary

This chapter began by giving an overview of the current situation about 'conventional', global food systems that have come to dominate contemporary agri-food systems. However, changes in policy and the growth of AFN and local foods highlight how the unsustainable nature of 'conventional' agri-food systems is being redressed, and how food systems founded upon notions of social embeddedness have become an important feature within the broader agri-food landscape. Indeed, the review about AFN, local foods, and their impacts, demonstrates that there are other ways of 'doing food', even if there is often difficulty in defining terms such as 'local' and applying them beyond the familiar territories of North America and Western Europe. SFSC have been identified as a particularly useful lens through which 'alternative' agri-food dynamics can be explored, as they can arguably be more readily applied to the different politico-economic and developmental contexts of the global North and South. They provide a means to investigate how typically small-scale producers sustain access to markets and maintain 'relations of regard' with consumers, as SFSC can range from direct contact (face-to-face) to spatially extended versions where the direct producer-consumer relationship is lacking. As such, the ways producers market their products through various 'quality' mechanisms have also been explored linking food with (artisanal) processes and places of origin.

The review has concluded by applying SFSC discourses to the global South, most notably in Africa. This has revealed the need to further explore how notions of trust and social embeddedness are mediated in the contexts of the global South, and how models of SFSC from the global North might be best applied for the benefit of small-scale producers. The narrative now turns to the conceptual framework, which introduces the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, and in particular the

Capital Assets Pentagon to more fully theorise the interconnections between SFSC and producer livelihoods. The reasons for this approach are now introduced in the following conceptual framework chapter, and the relationships between SFSC and the SLF are discussed. The justification for the approach taken in this research is then critically developed in the methodological chapter (Chapter 4).

Chapter 3

Conceptualising Short Food Supply Chains and Sustainable Livelihoods: towards a conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter builds upon the key themes to have emerged from the literature review and introduces a theoretically informed conceptual framework. This framework is the result of an amalgamation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), and the theoretical material associated with SFSC as introduced by Marsden *et al.* (2000) and Renting *et al.* (2003) and developed by others such as Aubry and Kebir (2013). This framework is presented visually at the end of the chapter (Figure 3.5) following an in depth discussion about how the theoretical material around SFSC (Chapter 2) is related to the SLF and livelihood discourse more widely. Although livelihoods approaches within the ‘alternative’ agri-food literature have begun to incorporate (parts of) the SLF as a methodological toolkit (see Saltmarsh *et al.* 2011), the inter-connections and relationships between social embeddedness, SFSC and livelihoods have yet to be fully addressed. However, there is evidence that these inter-connections are starting to be more comprehensively explored and problematised in both the global North and South (Bowen and De Master 2011, Freidberg and Goldstein 2011). It is at this juncture where this chapter makes a novel contribution by drawing together largely disparate livelihoods and ‘alternative’ agri-food literatures together.

The discussion begins by focusing on Sustainable Livelihood Approaches (SLA). A key feature of SLA and of the SLF is the recognition that access to resources at the micro-level is a crucial part for empowerment, development and income generation for individuals, households and communities (Scoones 1998, Bebbington 1999). The narrative then turns to the SLF, and focuses on a specific part of the SLF, the five capital assets or ‘capital assets pentagon’. The phrase *capital asset* is a holistic way of understanding the type, scale and availability of various resources that are needed for a sustainable livelihood to be realised and sustained. Capital assets are comprised of both tangible and intangible resources (Chambers and Conway 1992), with the latter form being of special interest for this

research given that social embeddedness is an important, underlying focus. Capital assets are discussed in depth by exploring social capital and human capital as key resources in the success of SFSC, with the three remaining capital assets (physical, financial and natural) also discussed. The notion of assets forms an integral part of the conceptual framework underpinning this research. This is because the focus of resources in the form of capital assets is at the micro, individual scale. In this instance, the micro-scale refers to the food producer as well as their capabilities and relationships with others, as it is this level that is of particular interest, exploring the livelihood strategies of food producers who are engaged in SFSCs in both the global North and South. SLA are now discussed to contextualise livelihoods discourses and how they have emerged.

3.2 Contextualising Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches

In the last two decades, Sustainable Livelihood Approaches have been at the forefront of poverty reduction, empowerment and sustainable development throughout much of the global South, particularly in rural rather than urban areas (Scoones 2009). This rural focus is less by design and more because academic scholarship and research in development fields has traditionally been associated with subsistence and small-scale agriculture and horticulture. Indeed, this is the occupation (or at least *an* occupation) for the vast majority of the world's poor irrespective of the mass net rural-urban migration from the mid twentieth century that the global South has and is experiencing. For this reason, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods is often referred to, although "rural and urban livelihoods are clearly intertwined and the rural distinction is somewhat artificial (Scoones 1998: 17)." Urban and peri-urban sites are equally as important as rural spaces for building livelihoods and accessing more concentrated, often affluent markets and consumers. Moreover, they are also the sites where wholesalers, the public and private sector and hospitality industries can usually be found. These form important market outlets from independent, small-scale food producers. This is especially relevant in terms of food supply as urban centres and the hinterland are often home to culturally diverse communities and poorer people seeking culturally

specific products that more formal retail spaces do not always provide (Abrahams 2007: 106).

The SLF was conceived by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in the 1990s, with the core theoretical literature written at this time (Chambers 1995, Carney 1998, Scoones 1998) remaining a strong base from which many subsequent empirical livelihood orientated studies have developed. Moreover, the SLF now has very little to do with DFID, but "all the more with progress in development oriented research and development practice" (De Haan 2012: 355). The most seminal work in the area of SLA and where the SLF has been applied has been almost exclusively confined to the global South, particularly in South America (Bebbington 1999), Africa and Asia (Korf 2004, Daskon and McGregor 2012). In the global North, SLA has been applied at the policy-community interface by Oxfam in the UK (Hocking 2003), by the Foundation for Local Food Initiatives (FLAIR 2003) and by The Ecological Land Co-Operative (Maxey *et al.* 2011). However the latter only makes passing references to livelihoods and does not fully engage with what this term means in practice.

This is not uncommon in the AFN literature, which tends to sidestep the complexities associated with livelihoods and instead frames this as a synonym for income generation (Jarosz 2008, Bowen and DeMaster 2011). Income generation is undoubtedly an important part of livelihoods, and so this aspect has generally remained at the core of SLF discussions in the past decade (Scoones 2009). However, it is not the only aspect that matters and the term livelihood does not always have anything to do with working or earning per se (De Haan 2000: 343). Indeed, the assets and resources that people draw upon for their livelihoods can be regarded as "vehicles for instrumental action (making a living), but also as hermeneutic action (making living meaningful) and emancipatory action (challenging the structures under which one makes a living) (Bebbington 1999: 2022).

Ilbery and Kneafsey's (1999) 'profit sufficer' concept resonates with Bebbington (1999) and is applicable here, reflecting that small-scale food producers often engage in 'alternative' retail activities and spaces for lifestyle or ethical reasons.

For example, artisan producers in the UK are driven by both commercial and non-commercial, lifestyle-oriented goals that cannot always be reduced or understood in monetary, instrumental terms (Tregear 2005). Similarly, and with reference to organic farming in Ireland, this approach aspires to produce food that is not only 'good to eat' but also 'good to think' (Tovey 1997: 23). This reflects how some food-oriented livelihood strategies embrace instrumental actions in tandem with broader hermeneutic and emancipatory actions that cannot necessarily be explained in monetary terms. These points highlight the need to 'revisit' or re-centre livelihoods based research within discussions about often small-scale food production and SFSC. More recently, however, livelihoods-centric and livelihoods-critical scholarship has emerged recognising this need, and the SLF in 'alternative' agri-food system and local food research has started to become recognised as a viable methodological and analytical approach (Saltmarsh *et al.* 2011, Kneafsey *et al.* 2013). Before the framework is discussed in detail, a brief historiography and context of SLA more broadly first needs attention.

SLA is an approach where the roots lie in a broader global developmental agenda, and have evolved as a result of changing perspectives on poverty, participation and sustainable development (Brocklesby and Fisher 2003: 185). The rights-based approach to development by Amartya Sen from the 1980s has been a particularly strong influence. Indeed, Sen has framed the notion of development more as 'freedom' (Sen 1999) and posited that development is a process ultimately concerned with improving and expanding the entitlements and 'capabilities' of people (Sen 1981, 1987, 1997). Akire (2002) eloquently captures the meaning of this by stating:

"In [capabilities approaches], development is not defined as an increase in GNP per capita, or in consumption, health, and education measures alone, but as an expansion of capability. Capability refers to a person's or group's freedom to promote or achieve valuable functionings."

(Akire 2002: 184)

This work has been an important addition to global debates about sustainability in the late twentieth century, which until then had favoured macro-economic, neo-liberal and narrow proxies (such as GDP) to define and understand development. Moreover, this macro-economic approach functioned under the assumption that economic growth and modernisation is an inevitable, sequential outcome that arises given enough time (Rostow 1990). However, it took until the 1990s for SLA to become established as a viable, mainstream conceptual approach to addressing rural development. As such SLA have been important in addressing poverty alleviation in rural regions, expanding the assets and access to resources for individuals, households and communities to achieve viable livelihoods. Indeed, sustainable livelihoods has widened sustainable development discussion from national development strategies that are far removed from people's everyday lived experiences, to incorporate the strategies they employ to attain and protect their means of living (Sneddon 2000: 535).

Many definitions of what constitutes a sustainable livelihood exist, since the term is multi-disciplinary and conducive to other disciplines outside of 'development', including anthropology, geography and ecology to name but a few. Livelihoods terminology captures a combination of capabilities, equity and sustainability discourse (Chambers and Conway 1992: 5). However, in reducing the term down to the core meaning, livelihoods are fundamentally about "the means of gaining a living" (Chambers 1995: 174), drawing on intangible and tangible resources and capabilities as a means to achieve this at the household level (Figure 3.1). Livelihoods have been defined at various scales or levels, but the most prominent form of SLA has been traditionally defined at the household or community level. This is largely for pragmatic reasons as although defining and applying livelihoods discourse at the regional or even national level is possible, gathering empirical data involves starting with households and much smaller locales. However, even here, hierarchical power structures invariably exist, that make it difficult to fully understand the connections households have with their wider communities, social contexts and beyond (Chambers and Conway 1992).

Figure 3.1: Components and flows in a livelihood

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(Source Chambers and Conway 1992: 7)

However, the notion of livelihoods as ‘gaining a living’ is arguably too simplistic and overlooks the complexities of other structures, processes and agents. As such, the definition has been elaborated on, with Tang *et al.* (2013) neatly capturing the complexity courtesy of over a decade of hindsight:

“The term livelihood refers to a means of earning a living by an individual or household that is a combination of the individual or household’s assets, including activities and resources and access to these, mediated by institutions and social relations.

Tang *et al.* (2013: 15)

There is also an important reference to social relationships here as mediating the various resources and assets, which implies that for livelihoods to be improved or expanded, the individual/household requires ongoing, constructive dialogue with other stakeholders and institutions. As noted in the previous chapter, this is largely what constitutes notions of social embeddedness and ‘relations of regard’, and this underpins the successful mediation of SFSC and ultimately the translation of quality imbued ‘value-laden information’ (Renting *et al.* 2003) by downstream consumers. Indeed, agri-food chains as with livelihoods are arguably about

forming ‘meaningful’ relationships of trust and reciprocity, which in the context of SFSC, occurs between producers, consumers and other intermediaries (such as local retailers in the case of spatially proximate SFSC) throughout supply chains. As such, when the preceding generic quotation is applied in the context of agricultural or horticultural food production and SFSC, the importance of social relationships for ‘earning a living’ becomes apparent. This is not to downplay the significance of other factors or access to other tangible assets, but it highlights how social relationships percolate through the broader web of sustainable livelihoods discourse and play a major role in holding together assets and resources as well as access to them.

The *sustainable* aspect to livelihoods, however, adds yet another layer of complexity in understanding livelihoods. Sustainability in the context of livelihoods has typically focused on notions of resilience and adaptability, and has retained a strong element that recognises the importance and value of safeguarding ecological integrity. This is captured by Carney (1998), who writes:

“A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.”

(Carney 1998: 4)

This is not necessarily in contrast to other established conceptions of sustainability. For example, the prominent 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) definition from ‘Our Common Future’, known more widely as the ‘Brundtland definition’⁶ defines sustainable development as “meeting the needs of today without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 8). This definition firmly put “‘development’, a traditional economic and social goal, and ‘sustainability’, an ecological goal, together to devise a new model of societal change” (Baker 2006: 20), and although heavily critiqued, continues to be widely used (Marshall and Toffel 2005: 673). It can therefore be argued that sustainable livelihoods discourse

⁶ The Brundtland Report is so called because the former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland was the chairperson of the WCED when ‘Our Common Future’ was published.

follows closely in this vein. A discussion about one of the SLF capital assets, natural capital, later in the chapter (Section 3.5) develops this point about the importance of ecological integrity for wider sustainable development goals, improved resilience and reduced vulnerability. The narrative now turns to the SLF, as this enables a greater exploration of the broader processes affecting sustainable livelihoods, and to explore how a conceptual approach to livelihoods can be applied in practice.

3.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

In conceptualising SFSCs as a mechanism that food producers use for their livelihoods in both the global North and South, a universal framework is required to carry out research and to analyse the findings. As such, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) (Figure 3.2) provides a way to approach cross-cultural research and explore the relationships between SFSC, context and producer livelihoods. The SLF was developed as a means to engage with and understand the relationships between micro and macro processes and policy impacts that affect people's ability to gain and earn a sustainable livelihood (Ellis 2000).

Figure 3.2: Sustainable livelihoods framework

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Source: DFID 1999

According to Brocklesby and Fisher (2003: 187), the SLF has four main components:

- I) The capital assets people have access to and can draw on
- II) The broader vulnerability context in which people live
- III) The livelihood strategies people implement
- IV) Policies institutions and processes shape these strategies and access to assets

A fifth component, livelihood outcomes, is what is achieved as a result when the four preceding elements of the SLF combine. The framework will be critiqued first by expanding on the five components and then in terms of its utility. The five capital assets are then discussed in detail as this is a critical point of the research. As indicated by Figure 3.2, the flows within and between these different components of the SLF appear somewhat rigid and linear. However, this is deceptive as rather than being isolated, fixed components as suggested by the visual depiction of the SLF, the structures and processes therein are interlinked and more fluid in practice. Moreover, the framework attempts to reflect how the various processes and flows are cyclical, self-perpetuating and ideally self-reinforcing. The following discussion contextualises the SLF in the context of agri-food systems and SFSC to illustrate its usefulness for research in this area.

The **vulnerability context** encompasses trends, shocks, and seasonality as people's decisions and livelihood strategies can be influenced by both perceived and actual vulnerability (Tang *et al.* 2013: 18). This is an important point because people's capabilities, motivations, livelihood strategies and outcomes are contextually shaped (van Dijk 2011: 103). As part of determining vulnerability context, Carney (1998) argued that trends refer to population dynamics, availability of resource stocks and gradual political-economic changes, with shocks comprising both natural (such as climatic changes or disasters) and anthropogenic (such as conflict or economic governance) elements.

This has profound implications for agri-food system sustainability and resilience to various short and longer-term shocks, both in the global North and global South.

Indeed, Godfray *et al.* (2010) argue that the increased frequency of extreme natural events associated with climate change will likely increase volatility and uncertainty, with the globalised nature of food systems propagating anthropogenic shocks like the 2008 price spike more systemically (Godfray *et al.* 2010: 2775). Similarly, 'land-grabbing' and the emergence of food sovereignty as a coherent, organised movement shows the limits of current agri-food systems in ensuring stability, sustainability and resilience throughout all regions of the globe (Allouche 2011: 6). In light of these arguments, and the likelihood for both natural and anthropogenic shocks to increase the vulnerability of food producers, it is important to consider how agri-food systems can enhance their adaptive capacity and become more resilient to adverse contextual changes.

Sustainable livelihoods discourse may therefore shift towards *resilient* livelihoods, as this vocabulary places greater emphasis on the ability of systems to mitigate, embrace or absorb changes, and to reduce vulnerability. At the international scale, this discursive migration towards resilience has already begun. For example, the 2011 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) report on Environment and Natural Resource Policy discusses livelihoods with specific reference to resilience as opposed to sustainability as has 'traditionally' been the case. The fundamental goal of this policy is "to enable poor rural people to escape from and remain out of poverty through more productive and resilient livelihoods and ecosystems" (IFAD 2011: iv). The relationships between resilience and vulnerabilities in the context of agri-food systems is thus an important theoretical point of departure, which is only just beginning to take shape.

A final point in relation to the vulnerability context surrounds culture. This was originally conceived as part of the broader vulnerability context by Carney (1998), although as noted in Figure 3.2, has since been categorised as a 'transforming process'. Either way, notions of culture are difficult to 'pin down' or definitively categorise, and may explain why it has been somewhat overlooked in SLF research in favour of the macro-economic in recent years (Cochrane 2006).

Livelihood strategies are implemented by people to earn a living, security and purpose, and this is affected by wider **Transforming Structures and Processes**

as well as the capital assets that individuals, households or communities have access to. In terms of small-scale food production, incorporating SFSC as a means to earn a living can be regarded as a livelihood strategy. Yet the types of food chains producers engage with will be dependent on the assets base available to them, and also influenced by broader formal governance structures, laws and institutions. For example, FARMA is a 'transforming structure' and institution that has created livelihood opportunities for small-scale, independent food producers in the UK by organising farmers' markets. Before 1997, the farmers' market 'movement' was largely abstract, but has now become an important feature for alternativeness and 'reconnection' between producers and consumers. Indeed, farmers' markets have flourished in the global North as by 2006 more than 25 had been established in New Zealand, more than 100 in Australia (Lawson *et al.* 2008) and 450 in the UK by 2004 (Kirwan 2006).

However, there is an eligibility criterion and 'legal' framework through which organisations such as FARMA and food producers operate within, and this can be both enabling (prevents non-local, 'conventional' traders from capitalising on exclusive farmers market space), but also restrictive (the arbitrary distance criterion as noted in Chapter 2 may act as a barrier for some local producers in the hinterland to take part, for example). Similarly, some local authorities or micro-level governance structures may create more favourable, conducive environments for SFSC, and therefore livelihoods, to emerge. This can occur through 'Transition Town' movements, for example. These are localised governance structures that are largely citizen led, and are ultimately about securing more sustainable and resilient economic and environmental futures at the local level (Hopkins 2008). The case of Transition Bristol in the South West of the UK showcases this point as this network is working with other local institutions such as the Bristol Permaculture Network, "instigating food activity and city-wide discussion related to community resilience in a wider sense (finance, energy, food, transport, housing)" (Carey 2011: 119). As such, the preceding examples about farmers' markets space (livelihood strategies) and local, civic governance systems and formalised regulatory organisations like FARMA (transformative structures) reflect the conceptual utility of the SLF, and no mention has been made to development, the global South or poverty reduction per se. The SLF is thus an example of how to

engage with spatial research, highlighting how the micro-scale (food producers) is inter-connected to the macro-scale (transforming structures and processes) and the spaces 'in between.' The following hypothetical scenario by van Dijk (2011) captures this perfectly, highlighting how agri-food systems depend upon a multitude of micro-macro interconnections to meet consumer needs:

"I may have money to buy food in the city, but others need to grow it, someone else needs to transport it and yet another group needs to offer it up for sale. Also, I rely on the state to ensure that the food I buy is safe."

(van Dijk 2011: 102)

In addition to the more formal structures and processes that have been mentioned and that are alluded to in the preceding quote, there are also more 'informal', social and cultural processes that occur within agri-food systems and thus affect a producer's livelihood strategy. This is pertinent when considering SFSC because as has been discussed, these types of food chains are mediated by intangible 'relations of regard' (Sage 2003), 'conventions of regard' (Kirwan 2006) and *social embeddedness* between producers and consumers. Each of the aforementioned three concepts largely describes the same *process* whereby trust and reciprocity underpin the producer-consumer relations, although the strength of these relationships is variable and dependent on the types of SFSC used. There is arguably a need for the transforming structures and processes section of the SLF to more explicitly recognise the importance of these (horizontal) social relationships that take place outside of broader, formal institutions and structures. This is particularly important with reference to SFSC and other commodity networks that use place or (artisanal) process based quality mechanisms as a means to differentiate them from competitors (Renting *et al.* 2003, Ilbery *et al.* 2005).

The final component, **Livelihood outcomes**, or what van Dijk (2011) refer to as 'trajectories', encompass more income, increased well-being and security, and they can have a feedback effect on the vulnerability context and capital assets (Tang *et al.* 2013: 18). This is because in enhancing outcomes, vulnerability is

reduced and access to more forms of capital is made possible, through re-investment, an improved skills or knowledge base, or wider networks that may have been achieved as part of a livelihood strategy or intervening process or structure. For example, retailing at a farmers' market may lead to greater co-operation with other small-scale 'alternative' food producers, and as noted by Chiffolleau (2009) through her work in Southern France, can lead to greater innovation. This innovation can be regarded as an intangible form of human and social capital that is then drawn on as part of subsequent livelihood strategies, and so the cycle, in theory, continues with both outcomes and intangible capital expanded. However, as noted previously, those seeking a livelihood for hermeneutic or emancipatory action (Bebbington 1999) may not seek the expansion of *some* or even any of their capital assets, but rather 'reproduce' their livelihood to sustain a lifestyle that aligns with their wider values and dispositions (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999). The discussion now turns to the utility of the SLF as a conceptual framework for SFSC-oriented research in both the global North and South.

3.4 The utility of the SLF

As has been noted, sustainable livelihood approaches have been almost exclusively implemented in lower income countries, amongst poor rural communities and driven by the intention of alleviating poverty. This is clearly relevant within development discourses and fields of study, but it does not mean that the SLF cannot be applied elsewhere and by different means. Indeed, the SLF has been applied in a wide range of disciplines, such as tourism (Mbaiwa and Stronza 2010), land reform (Bradstock 2006) and marine socio-ecological systems (Ferrol-Schulte *et al.* 2013), yet almost exclusively geographically confined to the continents of Africa, Asia and South America. There is thus value in using and applying the SLF where the focus of enquiry is to understand the ways in which people or communities are engaged in the livelihood strategies that they are, and how this is enabled or inhibited by prevailing structures and institutions in all parts of the world.

Ultimately, understanding how access to key forms of capital and resources is made possible to make a living should be regarded as a global rather than developmental imperative. That the SLF has been typically confined to development studies within the global South, and even more specifically to rural development is perplexing given this broad potential. There is nothing geographically or politically restricting implied by the SLF, rather it has arguably suffered from being regarded as the preserve of 'development'. However, there is huge scope for research to draw on the SLF, particularly in the global North and with reference to agri-food systems, which in the contemporary age of globalisation are entangled with political, social and environmental processes at local and planetary scales. Indeed, such is the material and cultural salience of food it is a compelling locus for research and practice (Hinrichs 2010: 19). Hinrichs (2010) continues in her discussion about how multi-disciplinary approaches can help foster more sustainable food systems, with the SLF a potential toolkit that can contribute. She states:

“Despite the utility of a sustainable livelihoods framework for describing how production and consumption activities intersect to create particular sustainability outcomes, the framework has been almost exclusively applied to poor people and communities in the global south, despite the potential for parallel analysis of livelihoods (and lifestyles) in the richer global North”

(Hinrichs 2010: 23)

Similarly, Saltmarsh *et al.* (2011) argue that although sustainable livelihood approaches have been designed for use amongst poor people in the majority world (amongst poor people in lower income countries), the SLF is founded upon a set of principles that make it transferable to the UK and useful in the context of small land-based enterprises (Saltmarsh *et al.* 2011: 8). This is clearly of relevance when discussing agri-food dynamics and food production in particular. However, one of the possible reasons why more research using the SLF has not occurred in more countries in the global North is because “international development practices and concepts are unfamiliar to many UK practitioners and policymakers” (Hocking 2003: 237). There is therefore seemingly a discursive barrier that has slowed the transferability of the SLF to more developed nations,

and so this thesis is one of a small number of academic works that can help 'familiarise' institutions in the global North with the potential and applicability that of the SLF. The next component of four of the SLF, the capital assets, is now discussed.

3.5 Implementing the SLF: capital assets

The SLF can be used as a means to investigate the effect of a SFSC on rural livelihoods by researching producers' livelihood assets, which are also referred to as capital assets within the literature. The starting point within the SLF is the assets that are owned, controlled, claimed or in some other means accessed by individuals or households (Ellis 2000). To better make sense of and understand livelihoods, the capital assets can be broken down into five distinctive, tangible and intangible forms. These are human, social, financial, natural and physical capital assets (Figure 3.3). The main purpose of the asset pentagon is that it forces users to "think holistically rather than sectorally about the basis of livelihoods" (Carney 1998: 7). Therefore, when these five areas of capital are investigated in tandem, a greater understanding of the livelihood strategies and opportunities of food producers can be gained.

Figure 3.3: Capital assets pentagon

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Source: DFID 1999

Moreover, the assets pentagon (Figure 3.3) is designed so that research findings about the resources people and communities draw on can have an immediate visual impact. Livelihoods-oriented research typically 'redraws' pentagons as a means to present the results of empirical studies. However, this is largely subjective and there is no need for a common denomination or metric. Rather, it is a starting point to understand how and in what combinations assets translate into sustainable livelihoods (Carney 1998: 7). For example, Figure 3.4 is an assets pentagon developed by Kneafsey *et al.* (2013), and owing to the non-symmetrical pentagon, has immediate visual impact and allows conclusions to be instantly drawn. This is a major factor for why livelihoods approaches have been used in 'Rapid Rural Appraisals' (Orr and Mwale 2001), gaining a relatively quick overview of micro-level processes that then inform subsequent comprehensive studies. Figure 3.4 is an assessment of the capital assets that some producers engaged in SFSC in New EU Member States draw upon for their livelihoods. This example has a quantitative element that allows each asset to be 'measured' in relation to one another, and as such, highlights how schemes in New EU Member States appear richer in social capital more so than other assets. This is further evidence for the utility of this aspect (capital assets) of the SLF.

Figure 3.4: An example of a re-drawn capital assets framework (for New EU Member States)

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Source: Kneafsey *et al.* (2013: 102)

However, quantifying assets is not always straightforward given that there is often overlap between them, and that some are 'intangible' as Chambers and Conway (1992) put it. This applies to human and social capital especially. Scoones (1998) outlines that human capital concerns the skills, health and knowledge needed to pursue livelihood strategies and social capital involves the networks, associations and affiliations people draw on in the pursuit of livelihood strategies. These intangibles are closely linked and in the context of SFSC, are key assets that are difficult to 'measure'. As such, redrawn pentagons can be conceptual and based on qualitative material, and rather than quantify assets, be used to draw attention to particular resources. As mentioned previously, the relationship between social capital, human capital and SFSC is discussed in more detail at the end of the chapter. Financial capital is now discussed, followed by physical and then natural capital.

Financial capital concerns the economic assets, including cash, credit and technologies required for a livelihood. While earning a living is perhaps the entire purpose of livelihood strategies, it is important to note that financial capital is more than just 'money' as an end product. Rather, this asset refers to the access that people have to micro finance and credit, for example, as means to invest in their business or enterprise. This asset is therefore a point of entry for individuals seeking to grow or expand. Moreover, this asset is a key feature of community based approaches such as producer co-operatives, which play an important role for women involved in local agri-food production in Africa (Sanyang *et al.* 2009), but also in Europe's rural regions (Anthopoulou 2010). In these instances, communities often pool financial resources as a means to access capital and to enhance production through the creation of in-house storage or processing units as seen in the *rooibos* tea Wupperthal initiative (Binns *et al.* 2007, Nel *et al.* 2007). 'Profit maximisers' (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999) and entrepreneurial individuals are perhaps most likely to be aware and pro-active in using their financial capital and assets as a means to (re)invest and gain access to greater finance to develop their enterprise.

Physical capital comprises the infrastructure needed for the successful pursuit of a livelihood strategy or strategies, and this applies on a wider spatial level (such as road networks) as well as at the household level (such as production tools and technologies, refrigeration, for example). Physical capital can therefore be understood as an asset in itself, but also as part of the wider (vulnerability) context in which people are situated. As has already been noted in the preceding chapter, physical capital can be a serious limiting factor for small scale food producers, especially where (fresh) food products are concerned. This is because they quickly deteriorate in the absence of efficient transportation networks, storage and refrigeration (Freidberg and Goldstein 2011). Moreover, expanding physical capital at the local level enables food producers to have greater ownership over traditionally downstream activities within food supply chains, as rather than processing, manufacturing and distribution activities be outsourced, some may be able to take place closer to the point of production. Enhancing physical capital at the individual or community scale may therefore play a key role in the

development of 'face-to-face' SFSC and local food systems in general, but also give food producers greater control in accessing markets and constructing quality.

Natural capital concerns natural resource stocks such as water and environmental resources, and is particularly interesting because it has been an important, defining feature about broader sustainable development debates. Costanza *et al.*'s. (1997) seminal paper first drew attention to the *value* of ecological services that they termed natural capital stocks. They claimed that the total value of earth's natural capital stocks could be as high as \$54 trillion, but the enduring message was to emphasise "the relative importance of ecosystem services and the potential impact on our welfare of continuing to squander them" (Costanza *et al.* 1997: 259). This has since led to debates about 'strong' and 'weak' sustainability, which have emerged from the field of ecological economics. The key difference is that 'strong' sustainability demands natural capital remain constant over time (Hediger 1999), with environmental conservation and ecological integrity a prerequisite for economic functioning and growth (Ekins *et al.* 2003). 'Weaker' versions, however, assume natural capital can be substituted for produced (anthropogenic) capital in the interests of human welfare (Dietz and Neumayer 2007: 624). One issue presented here is that short-term survival rather than longer-term sustainable management of natural capital is often the priority of people living in poverty (Carney 1998: 9). This scenario aligns with 'weaker' conceptions of sustainability. As such, natural capital can be understood as occurring on a gradient between low (weak) and high (strong) agroecological potential (Ellis 2000: 32).

The way natural capital is used will therefore depend on wider policies but also personal value systems and beliefs about the importance of ecosystem services. Natural capital is clearly relevant where food production is concerned as this activity constantly draws on natural resources and flows, although as seen with environmentally destructive 'conventional' agricultural practices, these are often regarded as substitutable. As such, understanding the ways producers engaged in SFSC utilise and perceive their natural assets is a timely point of departure for both livelihoods and 'alternative' agri-food research, as this can contribute to largely under-evidenced debates about the environmental impact of SFSC.

Social capital, as mentioned previously, is of particular interest to this research due to the focus on social embeddedness as a key part of SFSC. Moreover, social capital is central to the SLF as it concerns the relationships and transactions between individuals or households and other actors. These relationships are mediated by the logic of the state, the market and civil society (Bebbington 1999: 2023). Field (2003) argues that there are three key writers that have contributed to both the applied and theoretical development of social capital; Pierre Bourdieu, Robert Putnam and James Coleman. Each have a different perspective on what social capital 'is' and have different empirical foundations from which their arguments have been made. Bourdieu was perhaps the 'first' key theorist in this area. His work in the 1960s and 70s is most associated with the wider field of cultural studies, and regarded social capital as a preserve of the privileged in society. This was critiqued by Coleman in the 1980s who argued that social capital has a much broader appeal and application. Moreover, Coleman argued that social capital represents "a resource base because it involves the expectation of reciprocity, and goes beyond any given individual to involve wider networks whose relationships are governed by a high degree of trust and shared values" (Field 2003: 20).

As such, social capital has been defined in various ways throughout recent sociological discourse, due in part to the complexity of social relations and differences in cultural context from which empirical studies have been based. While no one universally accepted definition exists, Putnam's (1995, 2000) more recent work in comparison to Bourdieu and Coleman is perhaps the most relevant as it places emphasis on the value social relations have within communities and societies, resonating with notions of social embeddedness discussed in the previous chapter. As elaborated by Putnam (2000), social capital has particular significance over other forms of capital or assets because of its distinct intangible characteristics:

"whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue"'"

(Putnam 2000: 19)

While there is conceptual relevance for the peaceful, civic functioning of society, the concept of social capital resonates strongly with development discourse and the improvement of poorer, more vulnerable people's lives. Indeed, conceptualisations within development literature frame social capital as resources, networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations and associations upon which people draw when pursuing different livelihood strategies that require coordinated actions (Scoones 1998: 8). It is a term that "captures the idea that social bonds and social norms are an important part of the basis for sustainable livelihoods" (Pretty and Ward 2001: 210), recognising the importance of inclusiveness and connectedness.

3.6 Social capital and SFSC

Such concepts are closely tied to recent work within alternative agri-food literature, whereby social relationships have a significant role in the creation and facilitation of local food supply chains and systems (Chiffolleau 2009, Fisher 2012, Glowacki-Dudka *et al.* 2012, Kneafsey *et al.* 2013). As discussed in chapter 2, SFSC can be understood as being inherently about relations of regard, where food products become meaningful by way of distinctive sensual attributes, their locality of origin and socially embedded features established through production scale and localised distribution (Sage 2003: 50).

In addition, it has been argued that producers and consumers of food and drink products are becoming increasingly 'closer', often through alternative food provisioning spaces such as SFSC. Kneafsey *et al.* (2008) make this point through the concept of reconnection, whereby 'care' for food and the people involved in its production, distribution and consumption has a key role in the facilitation of such spaces and supply chains. This resonates strongly with the central features of social capital, which espouse ideas about trust, reciprocity and mutuality, shared norms of behaviour, shared commitment and belonging, formal and informal social networks, and effective information channels (Kay 2006: 163). Although Kay (2006) explores the relevance of this in terms of community development, it has

been argued that the webs of relationships therein are defined by a significant level of mutual care and commitment (New Economics Foundation 2000: 86). Just as communities are 'held together' and to some extent rely on social capital, it could be argued that social capital is a vital component in facilitating SFSC, with food systems usually founded upon notions of care, regard and commitment to a common cause or set of values. Such supply chains and spaces of production are often socially embedded in discourses of localism (Winter 2003, Bowen 2011). Exploring the role of social capital is arguably essential in advancing discussions about the impact SFSC can have in terms of both local and regional community development and enhancing livelihoods of those involved in the production of such food.

Furthermore, social capital has been argued to help people translate aspirations into realities (Glowacki-Dudka *et al.* 2012: 77), which resonates strongly with the plight of often marginalised small-scale food producers who may seek markets in which to supply their products, but lack the capability to access them or to sustain such access. It is this juncture where SFSCs can generate new relationships and provide niche markets for producers of food, with enabling institutions and networks, such as NGOs or membership organisations, assisting in this process. The concept of social capital itself, however, requires greater unpacking to fully address its usefulness within SFSC.

3.7 The layered nature of social capital

There is more to the concept of social capital than trust and shared social norms that exist between people or organisations (van Rijn *et al.* 2012: 113). Putnam (2000) argues that one of the most important features concerning social capital is the distinction between 'bridging' and 'bonding' capital. In addition to this, a third layer or dimension, 'linking' social capital has also been argued as a salient feature of social capital debates and application (Woolcock 2001). To clarify, bonding social capital refers to trust and norms *within* a defined, horizontal, social group, bringing those with similar values together (Glowacki-Dudka *et al.* 2012: 77). For example, in the case of recent work by van Rijn *et al.* (2012) in Sub-Saharan Africa, bonding social capital occurs between farmers typically of the

same village or possibly kin members living elsewhere. “Bridging social capital, in contrast, refers to linkages *across* groups, and for example captures whether individuals can hook up with wider networks” (van Rijn *et al.* 2012: 115). Linking social capital crucially recognises the often vertical, unequal relationships between people, organisations and communities. This aspect of social capital thus relates to the ties between individuals and groups in hierarchical relationships (Fisher 2012: 15), connecting those at different levels of power or social status (Glowacki-Dudka *et al.* 2012: 77). Table 3.1 summarises the key differences between each layer of social capital outlined.

Table 3.1: Summary of three key aspects to social capital

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(Source: Adapted from Kay 2006)

These three layers of social capital as originally conceptualised by Putnam (2000) strongly resonate with Sonnino and Marsden’s (2006) understanding of embeddedness within and between ‘alternative’ and ‘conventional’ agri-food chains. They argue that embeddedness occurs in both horizontal and vertical capacities, whereby horizontal embeddedness occurs in the social and cultural arena and at the local producer-consumer level, and vertical embeddedness occurs through linkages between different hierarchies, institutions and governance systems. This is a key point because “it is impossible to understand the social or

horizontal embeddedness of the supply chain without also considering the vertical ties that root it in place” (Bowen 2011: 342).

Similarly, as Table 3.1 shows, the horizontal direction of relationships that occur through bonding social capital functions in a similar way to that of horizontal embeddedness and the nature of relations between producers and consumers within some AFNs. The vertical relationships associated with linking social capital can be seen as an important component in the (re)embedding of agri-food systems within the broader politico-economic context in which they are situated, connecting different levels of power to one another. Indeed, linking social capital is what provides the external resources, financial capital for growth and markets that are necessary for small-scale, local food producers to thrive (Glowacki-Dudka *et al.* 2012: 84). Bridging social capital can involve both horizontal and vertical relationships and so this type of capital, the connections *across* different groups and networks, arguably has an important, dual role in fully re-embedding agri-food systems and SFSC to their local contexts. However, as yet the connection between these layers of social capital and embeddedness in agri-food chains has yet to be directly made or explored. However, chapter 7 of this thesis makes these connections based on empirical data.

Since this research investigated the nature of SFSC and how they can contribute to improved livelihoods, bridging and linking social capital are of particular focus and interest. This is because of the nature of SFSC, whereby producers, distributors, retailers and consumers who ‘come together’ often do so from differing perspectives and needs. Here, there is a clear producer-consumer distinction when ‘alternative’ food practices are conceptualised in terms of supply chains. The exception in such instances are where producers *are* consumers, as is often found with some CSA initiatives or ‘grow your own’ co-operative based schemes (Venn *et al.* 2006). Such spaces and the people involved in them are increasingly being conceptualised not as producers or consumers, but more as ‘citizens’, whereby common values towards a more sustainable community defines food provisioning practices (Bos and Owen, forthcoming), which Renting *et al.* (2012) term ‘Civic Food Networks’. There is thus potential to explore bonding social capital in such instances, but when exploring food production as a livelihood strategy, making a distinction between producer (dependent on the food industry

for their livelihood) and consumer (who may not be dependent on agri-food systems for their means of living or income) is necessary. A further reason why bridging and linking social capital are of notable interest to this research is because “social capital is linked to, and is affected by, the context in which it operates and the prevailing attitudes of local authorities and other powerful local influences” (Kay 2006: 166). These layers therefore enable formal institutions and structures to be analysed and how they contribute to the livelihoods and prospects of food producers in the global North and South.

3.8 Human capital and social capital

The one asset yet to be discussed is **human capital**. This refers to education, skills and the health to carry out labour. Public education and health services can be regarded as fundamentally about preserving and enhancing the human capital of a country or region (Ellis 2000: 34). Human capital is an important component in the context of agri-food systems and food production, as this industry requires a range of skills and knowledge. For example, the knowledge base ranges from specific bio-physical knowledge about growing cycles, quality grading and seasonality, to more technical knowledge and skills associated with marketing, labelling and consumer demands. The ways human capital is enhanced at the micro level for example, such as on a farm or in informal growing spaces such as allotments, can therefore be acquired over time through embodied encounters and learning, a tacit form of knowing (Carolan 2008, 2011).

In addition, knowledge and skills can be acquired through more formal education and training spaces, such as agricultural colleges or training centres. Similarly those involved in food provision such as packagers, processors and manufacturers require a deep knowledge of broader regulatory frameworks as well as the demands of their ‘day to day’ livelihood activities. This highlights the importance of on-going training and maintaining an up to date base of knowledge and skills to succeed in the agri-food sector. Indeed, “training is a central component of strategies to reinforce the managerial, financial, and negotiating capacities of farmers’ organizations” (Bingen 2003: 408). Moreover, human capital is inherently linked to social capital and a vital component in enhancing the

livelihoods of small-scale food producers. As with social capital, human capital has various meanings and definitions, but the following statement by Coleman (1988) captures the essence of its meaning:

“Just as physical capital is created by changes in materials to form tools that facilitate production, human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways”

(Coleman 1988: 100).

The key point here is that, as with ‘bridging’ social capital in particular, human capital enables producers in both global North and South contexts to overcome the factors affecting livelihoods. Human capital is inextricably linked to social capital as it is embodied in individuals in the form of acquired skills and knowledge, with social capital an asset latent within relations between individuals (Coleman 1988: 100).

This point by Coleman (1988) highlights how social and human capital is distinctive from similar notions such as social embeddedness. For example, in the context of agri-food systems, re-embedding supply chains and creating stronger relations of regard between producers and consumers first requires social and human capital to be created or enhanced. Indeed, only when the *utility* of social relations is realised can agri-food systems function more transparently and better meet the needs of producers and consumers. Moreover, social capital with horizontal and vertical dimensions is a key asset that enables supply chains to become socially (and ecologically) re-embedded (see Chapter 2). Without strong bonding and bridging social capital throughout agri-food chains, horizontal processes such as social embeddedness are more tenuous, and a lack of linking social capital affects the ability of food producers to become embedded within the broader political economic landscape and governance structures in which they are situated (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). The latent utility of intangible capital assets as noted by Coleman (1988) is therefore important in terms of re-embedding agri-food systems.

Sociologists have continuously emphasised the role that social capital has in the creation of human capital (Coleman 1990, Serageldin and Dasgupta 2001, Dakhli

and De Clercq 2004). Human and social capital can also be regarded as responsible for the majority of economic development in the late twentieth century as they are key assets for technical progress, competitiveness, sustained growth and stability (Cochrane 2006: 319). However, this clearly has to be tempered with the use of finite resources and other forms of natural capital, particularly for the proponents of 'stronger' sustainability (Daly 1996, Ekins *et al.* 2003). This discussion highlights that, as with all assets in most circumstances, there are overlaps and linkages between them. It must be noted, however, that this overlapping is arguably more prominent within the intangible assets where notions of human and social capital are not readily distinguishable. This is because identifying a physical asset, such as a building or production machinery, is distinguishable from credit or financial capital, for example. With human and social capital, the boundaries are more fluid, more open to interpretation and less easily identifiable.

3.9 'Other' capital assets

The five capital assets as originally created by DFID (1999) as part of the SLF have now been discussed, but some livelihoods based research over the past decade has found this assets pentagon to be too narrow. For example, Hocking (2003), who applied the SLF in a UK context, framed natural capital as 'public capital'. While this it is not made clear why, it may be due to the 'communal' nature of ownership of some natural resources and spaces. Another capital asset that has been incorporated into the SLF is 'political capital'. This is absent from the original SLF as it is argued that the vulnerability context and the Transforming Structures and Processes component allows the 'political' aspect of livelihoods to be handled. However, Korf (2004) incorporates political capital as a sixth asset into research about unstable conflict zones and livelihoods in rural Sri Lanka, arguing that alliances with powerful actors afforded people more stable livelihoods than those who were politically neutral or oppositional. Indeed, Carment *et al.* (2009: 79) argue that as a controlling mechanism, "elites bargain for the distribution of resources and control society through patron–client networks", an approach that normally arises as a result of a military coup d'état and where there

are porous military-civil boundaries. It is therefore understandable and necessary that political capital be regarded as a bespoke asset in politically unstable regions.

Another form of capital that has been recently applied as a sixth asset is that of 'cultural capital'. Daskon and McGregor (2012: 551), whose work is also based in Sri Lanka, draw on the earlier theoretical work of Bourdieu (1986). Their qualitative research "deals with the relationship between embodied forms of cultural capital (intangible culture including, inherited values, skills and ideals) and objectified material forms ('cultural artefacts' such as crafts, monuments and paintings)." Although there is some cross-over here with embodied culture and human capital, especially with reference to skills, as they argue that these cultural assets are a central, critical part of rural livelihood dynamics. Moreover, they reinforce earlier arguments made by Cochrane (2006), who claimed that cultural capital within sustainable development discourse has been somewhat overlooked and under-researched in its own right. As such, Daskon and McGregor (2012) call for broader development fields to pay greater attention to cultural nuances and traditions of places, framing both immaterial and objectified culture as a resource rather than as just a contextual trait.

Given these examples, it is important that the SLF be regarded not as a static, fixed entity, but as fluid and adaptable pending the nature of enquiry and context of application. However, De Haan (2012) is critical of this fluidity, as owing to the malleability of the SLF, multiple variations of the framework have been created that are not necessarily transferable or replicable. However, a counter argument is that this diversity is reflective of the intricacies of contemporary social science research and also highlights the geographical uniqueness of each social and spatial context in which the SLF has been applied. Moreover, capital assets and resources are comprised of both powers and liabilities and are shaped by livelihood arrangements embedded in local to macrostructures, fragile accomplishments that are not fixed units of production and reproduction (van Dijk 2011: 102).

As such, the dynamism of the SLF is an important factor when investigating the livelihoods of food producers in contrasting contexts and places of food production, as there are inevitable differences that may require parts of the

framework to be amended, capturing how SFSC 'fit' and are positioned within wider livelihoods discourses. This dynamism, however, does not mean that livelihoods approaches to research are immune from critique. As with any research field, there should be ongoing critical evaluation. In terms of livelihoods perspectives, Scoones (2009) argues that for SLA to have continued relevance, knowledge-making, macro-micro scale linkages, (long-term) dynamics and politics and power need to be more closely scrutinised and re-centred. To this end, the conceptual framework for this research is now presented (Figure 3.5) with the preceding four points from Scoones' (2009) critical reflection in mind. The framework incorporates the key conceptual material from the literature review and an explanation about how this is inter-related to the SLF is given.

3.10 Connecting SFSC with Sustainable Livelihoods: a conceptual framework

Figure 3.5 is the conceptual framework that this research is based upon. It is primarily based on the SLF but some areas have been altered to reflect how the framework applies in the context of SFSC. Moreover, some of the generic labels from the original SLF by DFID (1999) (Figure 3.2) have been amended or replaced. This is to capture the key conceptual material from the SFSC and AFN literature that emerged from Chapter 2. The conceptual framework is designed to be universally applicable for SFSC-oriented research across both the global North and South and can be applied at various scales, for different purposes and by a range of academic and practitioner organisations.

It must be noted that this framework is intended to serve as a broad conceptual reference to understand the various relationships between livelihoods, SFSC and the contexts in which food producers are situated. The nuances and dynamics that invariably exist at the community, micro-scale throughout different regions of the world are challenging to capture in a complex framework such as Figure 3.5. However, as with the original SLF, the adapted framework (Figure 3.5) is conceptually useful as it invites researchers to apply empirical data to better understand the inter-connections and relationships between the various aspects that comprise a livelihood in practice. Figure 3.5 is therefore an innovative, applied aspect of this research because livelihoods and SFSC literature has remained

largely disparate, and the framework presented here is based on the wealth of research within both disciplines.

Figure 3.5: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework in the context of SFSC

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Source:
Adapted from
DFID 1999

In addition, there is currently no established framework that ‘alternative’ agri-food scholars (or associated organisations) can draw upon to fully understand how small-scale food producer livelihoods – in their entirety - are affected by or impacted by SFSC processes and outcomes. Moreover, given the macro and micro layers encompassed within this framework, it can be applied as part of wider, topical discussions around rural development, local/regional governance mechanisms as well as policy. The framework is therefore an important part of this research, but also for the progression of conceptual enquiry and empirical data within ‘alternative’ agri-food debates throughout all regions of the globe.

Although there is no ‘beginning’ to the framework, the vulnerability context and capital assets pentagon remain unchanged as all places are vulnerable to external shocks, trends and natural changes such as seasonality. The extent to which certain contexts are more vulnerable than others will clearly vary, however. The assets pentagon remains populated with social, natural, human, financial and physical capital, and the context in which SFSC producers are situated influences both the availability and, access to these. For example, in times of drought or in post-conflict environments, the type and abundance of assets is directly impacted by the broader context. Other assets could be incorporated into the pentagon. For example, building on Korf (2004), political capital could be added if research around SFSC was to take place in post-conflict or unstable environments, but this research is based in the UK and The Gambia, which are currently stable, democratic environments⁷. Furthermore, cultural capital, as proposed by Daskon and McGregor (2012), may be applicable to livelihood strategies, especially as agri-food studies have received contributions that add a ‘cultural economy’ dimension to commodity system analysis in recent years (Selfa *et al.* 2008: 264). Indeed, Kneafsey *et al.*'s (2001) work in rural Wales argues that through consumers’ product and place associations with food, locally distinct cultural practices can be drawn upon as a means to differentiate from ‘conventional’ systems, and so for smaller, ‘speciality’ producers to earn a livelihood. A key point here, however, is that notions of culture and ‘culture economies’ within ‘alternative’ agri-food systems have been regarded more as relational *processes* than as

⁷ A discussion about the political background and history to The Gambia is provided in Chapter 6 to better substantiate this point about democracy.

capital (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Morris and Evans 2004). Therefore, while cultural capital may apply as an asset, Figure 3.5 frames culture as part of the next aspect of the framework: Transforming Structures and Processes.

3.11 (In)formal structures and processes

The section on transforming structures and processes is perhaps the most crucial part of the SLF in the context of SFSC. In traditional versions of the SLF, structure and processes are separated, whereby structure refers to governance, and processes refers to policies and laws. Culture is also considered a process but, as has been noted, the social and cultural relations and 'reconnections' that underpin SFSC are a fundamental reason as to why they exist and can operate at all. As such Figure 3.5 deliberately separates transforming structures and processes even further, placing them into distinctive *formal* and *informal* sections, although in practice they are inter-related. For the *formal*, this refers to macro-economic levels of governance, law, institutions and policy, but in the context of SFSC, regulation and certification also play a key part here. For example, the PDO/PGI/TSG EU regulatory system is an institutional certification scheme designed to protect small-scale producers' livelihood strategies whilst preserving cultural and traditional heritage. This is a *process* that largely occurs at the politico-economic level as opposed to the micro-scale and more informal level. Moreover, as noted in Chapter 2, such certification is a key mechanism for inter-regional and internationally extended SFSC, and so this *formal* regulatory *process* is a driver for some SFSC livelihood strategies in both the global North (Renting *et al.* 2003) and South (Binns *et al.* 2007, Nel *et al.* 2007); especially for spatially extended versions.

The second aspect to transforming structures and processes refers to the *informal processes*. As will be discussed, this is seemingly a critical space in terms of SFSC livelihoods discussion. Normative SLA approaches and versions of the SLF arguably overlook this, but in the context of SFSC, the role of socio-cultural processes is fundamental. These processes refer to social embeddedness and the trust and reciprocity that arise between producers and consumers. Similarly, the translation of 'value-laden information' (Renting *et al.* 2003), that is central for

SFSC to function, is also a largely informal process that is dependent upon 'closer' social proximity relations (Aubry and Kebir 2013) between producers and consumers within food chains. Moreover, differentiation and quality construction can also be regarded as largely reliant upon informal processes. This differentiation typically requires consumers to value the (artisanal) process or place based associations that food marketed through SFSC showcases, enabling products to occupy niche market spaces (Ilbery *et al.* 2005). The construction of quality and differentiation that takes place through SFSC can be regarded as a socially constructed process as opposed to a regulatory or formally constructed process. The *informal processes* section of the conceptual framework in Figure 3.5 can therefore be understood as the various ways that 'horizontal embeddedness' occurs within 'alternative' food practices and SFSC (Sonnino and Marsden 2006).

However, the preceding references to socio-cultural, horizontal processes are implicitly entangled with more formal structures, and it is for this reason that the *informal* and *formal* processes section of the conceptual framework are linked in Figure 3.5. For example, quality differentiation and construction through PDO/PGI/TSG schemes require structural, certification processes and socio-cultural quality construction processes to operate in tandem with one another. This certification scheme is dependent upon consumers valorising the spaces and people that PDO/PGI/TSG seeks to preserve, as well as associating food labelled in this way as having distinct qualities. The same conclusion could also be drawn where other regulations play an important, differentiating role, such as certified organic food products distributed through SFSC. This interface between (formal) institutions and the wider political economy and the (informal) horizontally embedded 'culture economy' or socio-cultural economy, is thus mediated by a further process of 'vertical embeddedness' (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). The manifestation of 'vertical embeddedness' will therefore be producer-consumer market linkages that may be in some way 'alternative' and characterised by various types of SFSC. For example, in South Africa, "food markets are part of a national scheme to encourage market participation of small scale producers through improving informal-formal market linkages" (Bun and Thornton 2013: 40). 'Vertical embeddedness' therefore has an important role to play in terms of

providing accessible routes to markets (which may not be strictly 'alternative') and in initiating viable livelihood strategies for small-scale food producers. It is for these reasons that the conceptual framework draws this link between the formal and informal spaces and processes that are integral for SFSC to occur.

3.12 SFSC as livelihood strategies

The production, distribution, manufacturing, processing and packaging of food through SFSC are ultimately livelihood strategies that many actors within the food industry implement. The reference to SFSC as livelihood strategies, as opposed to 'local' food or AFN, is important giving the loaded nature of these two terms (as discussed in the previous review chapter). As such, the use of 'short' enables the framework to have a broader utility, as using terminology such as 'local' food system or chain to describe a livelihood strategy would potentially render this part of the framework difficult to apply in practice. The framework presented in Figure 3.5 is therefore further justification for the use of 'short' as a conceptual label rather than the widely used and popular labels of 'alternative' and/or 'local', at least in terms of investigating livelihood strategies.

As discussed, both formal and informal processes affect and impact the types of SFSC that food producers engage with and by what means. For example, for 'face-to-face' SFSC, there may be less of a role of formal certification structures owing to the direct relationship between producers and consumers and 'strong' 'relations of regard' (Sage 2003). Here, livelihood strategies are based on processes associated with horizontal embeddedness. A similar scenario applies to the spatially proximate SFSC, but as noted with spatially extended types of SFSC, the role of formal structures and institutions is more important in these cases. This is because unlike face-to-face relationships, proximate SFSC typically lack direct producer-consumer contact and will likely include at least one intermediary that assists in the marketing and/or distribution. Figure 3.5 has also been adapted from the original version of the livelihood strategy part of SLF because in the context of SFSC, food producers often engage with 'conventional' food systems in tandem with 'alternative' chains (Ilbery and Maye 2005). The space between SFSC and 'conventional', as with other diagrams from the agri-food literature, is therefore

labelled as 'hybrid' to account for this. However, not all food producers operate in this way, especially when regions from the global South are considered. As such, this 'conventional' and 'hybrid' part of the conceptual framework has been included primarily to serve as a reminder of the complexity, plurality and diversity that characterises current agri-foodscapes.

The final section of Figure 3.5, livelihood outcomes, refers to the monetary *and* non-monetary outputs that arise as a result of SFSC. It is for this reason that the feedback loop to the producer's capital assets base makes reference to profit maximisers and profit sufficers (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999). Some producers will clearly re-invest in their assets base as a means to expand and grow (instrumental action), but others may seek to 're-produce' or sustain their asset base (hermeneutic or emancipatory action) (Bebbington 1999) and be content with a lifestyle that is fulfilling and not driven entirely by profit margins. In reality, however, food producers exhibit a combination of both profit maximisation and sufficiency tendencies (Tregear 2005). As such, it is more useful to understand profit maximisers and sufficers not as a dualism, and more as spectrum, whereby producers embrace a range of instrumentalist and hermeneutic values simultaneously. The conceptual framework presented here is therefore a timely addition to broader 'alternative' agri-food debates and provides another analytical layer through which more recent concepts such as CFN can be explored and evidenced.

3.13 Summary

This chapter has focused on sustainable livelihoods perspectives, exploring how SLA and the SLF have been used and how they can apply in the context of this research. The broader result of this chapter is therefore the amalgamation of, until now, largely disparate agri-food and livelihoods literature. For this to occur, the SLF was first contextualised and then discussed by explaining how the vulnerability context, capital assets, transforming structures and processes and livelihood strategies and outcomes are inter-related. Through this, the 'intangible' assets of social and human capital have emerged as particularly important resources for food producers who engage with SFSC. By drawing on examples

that were both grounded within agri-food debates and practices, as well as with examples specifically from development discourse, a comprehensive understanding of SLA and the SLF has been gained.

The latter part of this chapter has centred on the innovative conceptual framework (Figure 3.5) that underpins this research. Moreover, this framework is universally applicable (in both the global North and South) and serves as a conceptual point of reference to steer future agri-food debates that are concerned with SFSC and livelihoods. The SLF has been used as a 'template' through which a framework applicable to SFSC and livelihoods can be built upon. Indeed, the conceptual framework has been only slightly altered and edited to better reflect its utility within SFSC. The main adjustment refers to the deconstruction of the SLF's 'Transforming Structures and Processes' element, as for a SFSC-livelihoods framework to be relevant, this section needs to be conceptually separated into a 'formal' and socio-cultural 'informal' set of structures and processes. Formal refers to the regulatory, certification frameworks (that spatially extended versions using PDO/PGI rely on) and enabling institutions such as local government and NGOs that facilitate SFSC. For the informal, this refers to horizontal processes of social embeddedness between producers and consumers, and social constructions of quality that are key mechanisms through which 'face-to-face' and spatially proximate SFSC in particular are mediated.

Clearly, however, there is a link between the formal and informal structures and processes, and the concept of 'vertical embeddedness' enables this to be accounted for. This is a similar concept to that of 'linking' social capital and requires further exploration. Finally, the conceptual framework refers to livelihood strategies and outcomes, and discusses the types of SFSC producers according to the literature: profit maximisers and sufficers (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999). The narrative now turns to the methodology that this research is built upon and makes greater reference to the two case studies of the UK and The Gambia, which thus far have only been briefly alluded to.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological aspects to the research, detailing the ways that data were collected and justifying why the approach has been selected in favour over others. To this end, the chapter outlines the philosophical perspectives that underpin this research. This leads into a discussion about the reasons for selecting a cross-cultural, comparative approach. The narrative then turns to addressing the comparative case-study design in line with a discussion about the context of the UK and The Gambia as case study sites. Grounded theory and an explanation about the qualitative nature of the methods is then discussed, followed by an explanation about the first phase of the data collection process: The GiG case study. Background to GiG is discussed as well as how this links to SFSCs and the research aims and objectives followed by an in depth discussion about the UK case study; Tastes of Anglia. A discussion about how the qualitative data were analysed using coding processes associated with grounded theory is then given. Finally, a reflective, critical overview about the ethical issues within this research is provided. This is largely based on the fieldwork that took place in The Gambia, a culturally ‘unfamiliar’ space that required reflection to carry out effective research. A summary of the chapter is provided at the end before moving onto the results chapters (5 and 6) and then a discussion chapter (7).

4.2 Philosophy: epistemological and ontological foundations

All social science research is underpinned by an epistemological position, which is an understanding about how knowledge is obtained and whether such knowledge can be regarded as valid. Yeung (1997: 52) elaborates on this conceptualisation of the research process as follows:

“Philosophy deals with the ontological and epistemological aspects of the social sciences (i.e., what is the social world and why do we do need to research it?),

whereas substantive social sciences themselves address the theoretical and methodological issues (i.e., why do social phenomena occur the way they do and how do we research on them?).”

(Yeung 1997: 52)

Methodology is therefore inherently tied to issues associated with knowledge production and meaning, and this has a fundamental bearing on the types of approaches and methods a particular social science research project adopts.

Figure 4.1: A diagram of the research process

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Source: Saunders *et al.* (2007: 108)

As Figure 4.1 suggests, prior to the implementation of a meaningful and purposeful research design, it is important that attention is given to research philosophy and theory. This is because “philosophies underlie the design of any piece of research, which, in turn, must be appropriate to the questions or problems that prompt the research enterprise” (Graham 2005: 14). The key research questions, aims and objectives of any given piece of research are thus borne of a particular understanding about how the social world operates and what is considered worthy of investigation.

Bryman (2008) makes the distinction between two contrasting epistemological positions within the social sciences, that of positivism and interpretivism. However, this is not the only conceptualisation of epistemology or philosophy. For example, Graham (2005) writes that a key distinction in social science research is between a naturalist or anti-naturalist philosophy and whether the social and natural world can be understood in the same way. Crucially, particular approaches and methodological techniques are needed to understand the physical world, and a different set of strategies and methods are required to comprehend the social world. The fundamental difference irrespective of terminology is that positivism is concerned with the *explanation* of human behaviour, whereas an interpretivist approach is concerned with the *understanding* of human behaviour and action (Bryman 2008: 15). The epistemology of positivism is “based on empiricism and the ontological belief that the only things that (can be said to) exist are those that are immediately accessible to the senses” (Hoggart *et al.* 2002: 19). Moreover, positivists attest that research is an objective, scientific venture in the pursuit of laws, where observation of facts and the creation/falsification of theories are separate from the world in which they are formulated.

Conversely, interpretivism recognises the role of subjectivity and that researching the social world is inherently different to the natural sciences. Hoggart *et al.* (2002) regard interpretivism as part of a wider mid twentieth century ‘cultural turn’, whereby the researcher is concerned with the interpretation of the meaning of objects and subject and making sense of this in relation to the cultures and contexts in which they are situated. In addition, an interpretive stance enables researchers to embrace the inter-subjectivity of knowledge production and recognise that the issue(s) under investigation are ultimately a range of interpretations founded upon the many representations, actions, symbols and processes that arise through social relationships. Rather than seek *the* truth as is often the defining feature of a positivist stance, interpretivism allows researchers to account for a truth and to develop a reasoned argument as to why meaning and understanding has been interpreted in the way that it has.

As has been previously outlined, this research seeks to understand the role of SFSCs in sustaining livelihoods in the global North and South, contrasting social, politico-economic and cultural contexts of food production. Since positivism argues

that “the role of research is to test theories and to provide material for the development of laws” (Bryman 2008: 14), the fundamental goals of this research are not necessarily compatible with the ideals located within this epistemology. Indeed, the inescapable subtleties and uniqueness associated with each social, cultural and spatial context means that the testing of theories and search for universal laws is somewhat futile. Rather, a more nuanced and interpretive approach is more applicable. This is especially relevant for SFSC research, because as noted in the conceptual framework in the preceding chapter, horizontal, socio-cultural processes such as social embeddedness are a focus for this research, and rather than ‘testing’ these concepts, the framework is designed to *explore* and *examine* the inter-connections between various components of livelihoods. The outcome of this exploration will then require an *interpretation* in relation to the contexts in which food producers are situated, and to make sense of how livelihoods are constructed through various SFSC activities. Therefore, an interpretative perspective is arguably better suited to engage with the complexities of the socio-cultural world, as this stance recognises that humans can act (ir)rationaly, intend to do certain things, have reasons for doing them, and can reflect on their actions (Graham 2005: 18).

An interpretivist approach is also applicable when researching issues connected with sustainability. This is partly where much of the SFSC literature has been connected to, most notably *sustainable* rural development (Marsden *et al.* 2000, Renting *et al.* 2003, Ilbery *et al.* 2004) and more recently to notions of *sustainable* communities and community development (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014). Similarly, *sustainable* livelihoods has always been fundamentally about securing viable, long-term futures and so although this research does not engage in wider discussions about what sustainability ‘is’ per se, it is implicitly connected to the core ideals of this concept. This research therefore resonates with Evans’ (2011) point about the social, human aspect of forward-thinking enquiry that is implicit within sustainability discourses:

“One key factor that connects different sustainability research is that much of it focuses on human society. It is not something concocted in a laboratory or, at least when it is, the results of that laboratory study have to be released into society in order to determine the effect of the phenomenon on sustainability.”

(Evans 2011: 55)

The key point here is that irrespective of the type or nature of sustainability research, there is an unavoidable social element to the research process and/or outcomes. Indeed it is unfeasible to progress through the schematic depicted in Figure 4.1 without incorporating and recognising the social aspects of the research process, especially at the point of dissemination. This aspect of research concerned with human society as Evans (2011) puts it, further supports the incorporation of an interpretivist epistemology.

4.3 Ontology

The interpretivist epistemology also enables the ontological position of constructivism to be adopted. This attests that the social world is not an external entity that can be objectively researched; rather, social phenomena and their meanings are produced through interaction and are in a continuous state of revision (Bryman 2008: 19). This is a valuable point of entry for social science and pertinent for research that has a socio-cultural element to it. This is because knowledge is not pre-given or universal; rather, it is culturally and historically situated (Lopez and Potter 2005: 9). For example, this is applicable to the 'quality construction' process that takes place through PPP (Ilbery *et al.* 2005), because as noted in Chapter 2 and 3, this is largely a social process. Indeed, for quality construction to effectively occur knowledge about the cultural and sometimes 'traditional' characteristics of food products circulating in SFSC is needed. This knowledge is constructed through various PPP associations, and so without the knowledge to make these connections, differentiation becomes much more limited and SFSC less socially embedded. The informal transforming structures and processes and 'horizontal embeddedness' associated with SFSC is therefore conducive to an ontological approach founded upon social constructivism, As such, social constructivism is an important principle on which the research design has been formulated.

4.4 Inductive and deductive approaches to research

As with the positions of positivism and interpretivism, there too is divergence between inductive and deductive approaches to the research process. As Figure 4.2 depicts, the fundamental difference between inductive and deductive approaches lies with the framing of theory in relation to methodology and data collection. A deductive approach, which is most associated with the positivist tradition, requires research to establish a theory, question or hypotheses, and to then employ methods to test or measure the original theory, enabling falsification or some degree of confirmation of initial questions. Quantitative methods are commonly used in this line of enquiry, as they provide structure and often numerical sets of data throughout results. An inductive approach, however, is less fixed and allows for more flexibility in how research is approached and the data collected and analysed. For inductive approaches, initial ideas or questions are considered before and during data collection and then theory, or further unprecedented questions and lines of enquiry, are borne out of the data collection process itself. A more fixed, positivist approach would not necessarily allow for this type of fluid and reflective research process. In this sense, inductive research can be iterative and appear less scientifically structured, and as such it is commonly associated with interpretivist philosophical positions. Qualitative methods are typically associated with this stance, as they provide researchers with a degree of flexibility and enable the exploration of unprecedented data as and when it emerges throughout the research process.

Figure 4.2: Deductive and inductive approaches to the relationship between theory and research

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Source: Adapted from Bryman (2008: 11)

Inductive approaches to research can be and have been criticised due to their apparent lack of scientific rigour, in that there is always a possibility of generating theory that fits with previous findings. This is because while deductive approaches typically design research that could be replicated in the future and by different actors, inductive research depends on the specific relationships between researcher and data and the interpretations of meaning therein. Within a scientific, positivist tradition, replicability is an aspect that is used to justify and validate methodology and results, but this is arguably not always possible within inductive approaches, and nor is it always the intention. Yet this does not mean that inductive research is less valid or meaningful, as researchers have developed particular methodological tools and systems to ensure that inductive academic endeavour retains structure, rationale and credibility. It is this trajectory where the incorporation of grounded theory to the design of this research is necessary, as this is an aspect of the methodology that is inherently aligned with an inductive approach.

4.5 Grounded theory: rigorous flexibility

Similar to the meaning of an inductive approach, grounded theory can be understood as theory derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 12). While there are different conceptions of grounded theory, one constant is the necessity to view data collection and analysis as one and the same thing because as data is collected it should be simultaneously analysed (Samuel 2011: 125). It thus offers an iterative and implicitly inductive approach to data *analysis* whereby categories, codes, concepts and theory can be derived from the data (Hennink *et al.* 2011: 209). As such, researchers do not necessarily begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, researchers can begin with an area of study to alert or sensitise one to a wide range of possibilities, allowing the theory to emerge from the data and the lines of enquiry to shift accordingly (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 12, Heath and Cowley 2004: 143).

The overall aim in grounded theory is not to discover *the* theory, but *a* theory that aids understanding and action in the area under investigation (Heath and Cowley

2004: 149). Indeed, any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it (Charmaz 2006: 10), and so building theory in an iterative way, rather than ‘testing’ it from the outset becomes the main objective. Given the comparative, cross-cultural approach proposed in this research engages with a country from the global North and South simultaneously, taking a distinctive theory from the outset could devalue the phenomena that arise from each case study context. Indeed, this could alter the way comparisons are analysed and understood, potentially inhibiting the emergence of new theory and overlooking contextual subtleties.

The preceding section has addressed the two outer layers of Saunders’ *et al.* (2007) ‘research process’ diagram (Figure 4.1). The narrative now considers the more practical aspects of methodology, beginning with the research design and justification of the two case studies that were selected. Background to the case study contexts is introduced in the following section, although more detail is given about them as part of the results chapters (UK Chapter 5 and The Gambia Chapter 6)

4.6 Research Design: A cross-cultural, comparative case study approach

As has been outlined in earlier chapters, this research adopts a cross-cultural case study approach by researching SFSCs in the global North and South. The UK and The Gambia were selected as the two broad contrasting case study contexts. These two case studies provide a contrasting element to the research by way of their differing social, economic, environmental, political and cultural - context. Moreover, such a cross-cultural approach mobilises a methodology that has largely been overlooked within social science agro-food research. It is surprising that within a context of globalised food systems, where vulnerability to the adverse impacts of food production-consumption are experienced unequally, and the solutions to mitigate this are many, that agro-food studies within the social sciences have not explored a cross-cultural, comparative avenue in more detail (see Freidberg 2004 and Lamine *et al.* 2012 for exceptions). Indeed, “cross-cultural research helps to reduce the risk of failing to appreciate that social science findings are often, if not invariably, culturally specific” (Bryman 2008: 59). Such an

approach thus enables one to fully appreciate the role of *context* in shaping actors understanding about what needs are to be addressed and how they can best be met. This enables a better understanding of how *formal* structures, institutions and processes and the *informal* socio-cultural processes (see Figure 3.5, Chapter 3) affect SFSCs as livelihood strategies.

The cross-cultural element comes when research takes place between people of different cultural heritages, backgrounds and practices (Skelton 2001: 89). Moreover, such an approach can begin to challenge existing power relations and pre-conceived ideas about particular people, cultures or places, especially when the focus of research has a developmental or theoretically critical element to it (Skelton 2001). This particular research falls within this broad methodological remit, as while there is an emphasis on socio-cultural context and processes, there is an undercurrent concerned with understanding how sustainable livelihoods enmeshed within agri-food dynamics can be achieved. Critical, cross-cultural geographical research is thus an implicit aspect of this research strategy because the aim is to shed light on shared values and behaviours relating to the researcher's concerns of space, place and environment (Shurmer-Smith 2002: 97).

This approach enables systems such as SFSCs to be understood in differing contexts, which can then be contrasted with other cultures and places, highlighting the similarities and differences between them. This methodological approach thus provides comparable scope to fully understand the different ways SFSCs operate and function, and how they can contribute to sustaining livelihoods and the rural fabric in different contexts.

4.7 Comparative case study design

One of the reasons for using a comparative case study approach within the remit of cross-cultural research is due to practicality. Ultimately, not all cultures or places can be researched at any one time, nor can an in-depth understanding about *all* types of SFSCs be gained, at least as part of this research project. However, a comparative case study design “implies that we can understand social

phenomena better when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations” (Bryman 2008: 58). How meaningfully contrasting the cases at hand are clearly depends on the research topic and the criteria that will be used as the point of comparison (explained later in the chapter), but using case studies in a comparative way enables a detailed understanding of social phenomena to be realised in relation to place and context. As has been outlined, the overarching case study sites are the UK and The Gambia, principally justified by way of their North-South positions and contrasting social and cultural contexts.

4.8 Background of case study contexts: The Gambia and the UK

To this end, a European country, the UK, and a West-African country, The Gambia, were selected as the locales where primary research took place to form two contrasting overarching case study sites. This did not involve researching the extent of SFSCs in each country, as investigating the scope or representativeness of SFSCs is not part of the research aim or underlying philosophical approach. Rather, engaging with a particular type of SFSC from each country forms the two case studies and comparable unit of analysis, as this enables the researcher to focus on one case study from each country, gaining an in-depth understanding about the SFSC at hand. The justifications and reasons for this approach will be explained later in the chapter as part of a discussion about specific methods and techniques that were used.

The Gambia and the UK are suitable contrasting contexts in which to conduct this research. This is because although there are significant differences amongst many small-scale rural producers in both contexts, they also share important similarities in terms of the need to sustain a livelihood. Sustaining a livelihood in this respect is essentially about being able to produce food, distribute products within a competitive market, continually meet the needs of consumers, ensure prolonged relationships with customers and/or consumers, and to generate new trade relationships if and where possible. While these needs are arguably universal throughout all parts of the world for small-scale food producers, there are contextual factors associated with geography, socio-economic systems,

governance and market conditions where there are clear differences between West Africa and Europe. It is these areas in particular that provide a lens to understand the context in which small-scale food producers in The Gambia and the UK are situated. Furthermore, it is these areas where comparisons and contrasting analyses can take place to enable an in-depth understanding about the differing contexts of The Gambia and the UK, and to better understand the role such contextual factors have in promoting or inhibiting SFSCs and the rural livelihoods of those involved with them.

4.9 Global North-South context

In addition to the contextual factors outlined above, a further angle for comparison within this research relates to the developmental position of the two countries. The contextual factors of geography, socio-economic systems, governance and markets have a bearing on more than just food supply chains; they assist in understanding a country's developmental position. While it could be argued such terminology is unhelpful or inaccurate within contemporary global relations, there is value in understanding the UK and The Gambia from a developmental perspective, as it forces research to recognise the different level of need amongst those involved with the production-consumption of food, and to recognise the differences in infrastructure and institutional support that are required to facilitate the respective nations' food systems. It thus enables SFSC to be understood within a set of governing structures and socio-cultural contexts that offer considerably different constraints and opportunities to the success of SFSCs. This is an important part of the conceptual framework and so conducting research in countries with contrasting levels of development allows for the importance of various *formal* and *informal* processes and structures to be explored. For example, the role of governance, infrastructure, social embeddedness and quality construction can be understood from within the context from which it emerges, and in comparison to a country from the global North and global South. This comparative approach therefore enables both the universal and context specific aspects of SFSC to be understood, which as yet, has not been taken place.

Table 4.1 provides some basic macro-scale data about the two case studies, highlighting how and why each country can be categorised as global North and global South respectively. As shown in the data, the UK fares far more favourably than The Gambia in some of the key basic indicators of development. The Gambia ranks as far poorer than the UK, and there is a solid indication through these statistics that healthcare and education, or at least access to them, is markedly worse in The Gambia than the UK. To say that these data are representative or typical of a developed country of the global North and a developing one of the global South is debatable, but from a methodological case study perspective, there is undoubtedly disparity in terms of the contrasting contexts, geographies and socio-economic situation within the two countries. That they differ in a multitude of ways enables the role of context to be properly critiqued and to understand how the *informal* and *formal* structures and processes inhibit or enable livelihood strategies in each nation. Other contrasting regions or locales could have been selected to conduct research of this nature, especially from a developing world perspective where existing literature is sparsely concentrated. However, knowledge and involvement with existing, comparable SFSCs in both countries was the initial inspiration behind this thesis. Existing links have been capitalised upon, making the research practical and achievable within the methodological constraints and remit proposed.

Moreover, the proxies used in Table 4.1 are an indication that the demographics, geography, infrastructure and fundamental needs of the vast majority of populations in the UK and The Gambia differ significantly and are essentially polar opposites in terms of developmental position. As such, addressing need and implementing solutions varies but under the rubric of sustainable development, the *intended* outcomes are always geared towards an environment-economy-society symbiosis. This is a pertinent issue in terms of food production and consumption.

Table 4.1: Indicators of Development between the UK and The Gambia, 2011

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Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2011

4.10 Agricultural context

Table 4.2 reveals how markedly different the UK and Gambia are in terms of those involved in agriculture, and the nature of agricultural production in the two countries. Three quarters of the Gambian labour force work in agriculture in comparison to only 1.4% of the UK. Moreover, agriculture is a far more significant sector for the Gambian economy than it is for the UK, as it comprises 26.7% of GDP. For the UK, agriculture represents less than 1% of GDP. In The Gambia, peanuts are the primary export crop, with rice, millet, and sorghum traditionally planted for food (Moseley *et al.* 2010: 5775).

Table 4.2: Basic geographical and agricultural data of the UK and The Gambia

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Source: Adapted from FAO 2012 and CIA 2012

Furthermore, the production of other foods, such as fresh produce, also plays an important role in supplementing the diets and incomes of small-scale Gambian producers. As Sanyang *et al.* (2009) point out:

“The production of fruits and vegetables mainly concentrated in the peri-urban and rural communities, contributes 4.2% to GDP. Fruits and vegetables production hold the greatest potentials for the provision of additional sources of food, nutritional value and income particularly for the women farmers in the Gambia.”

(Sanyang *et al.* 2009: 169)

The reference to women farmers in particular is due to the prevalence of community gardens throughout the country and indeed much of Western Sub-Saharan Africa, and these community spaces are traditionally the preserve of women. These community gardens are primarily cultivated in the dry season (November-April) with rice production being the focus throughout the rainy summer months. Geographic, cultural and climatic conditions are clearly very different in West Africa compared to the UK, meaning that the type and quantity of production is also different, especially in terms of staple crops or export led commodities. This aspect in particular is where the SFSC concept is pertinent, understanding how such a mechanism can contribute to the livelihoods of small scale producers in the rural spaces both within the global North and global South.

4.11 Justifying The Gambian and UK case studies

Before the case studies are presented, it is first important to elaborate on how and why the specific case study sites were selected. As has been outlined, this research selected the UK and Gambia as sites for comparison, and so a more detailed task that followed on from this was selecting and justifying a case study from within each country to enable comparative analyses to take place. Therefore this research draws upon more than one case study, and Yin (2009) refers to the logic of using multiple-case studies (two or more) by way of replication, in that each case is selected so that it either predicts similar results (literal replication) or predicts contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (theoretical replication)

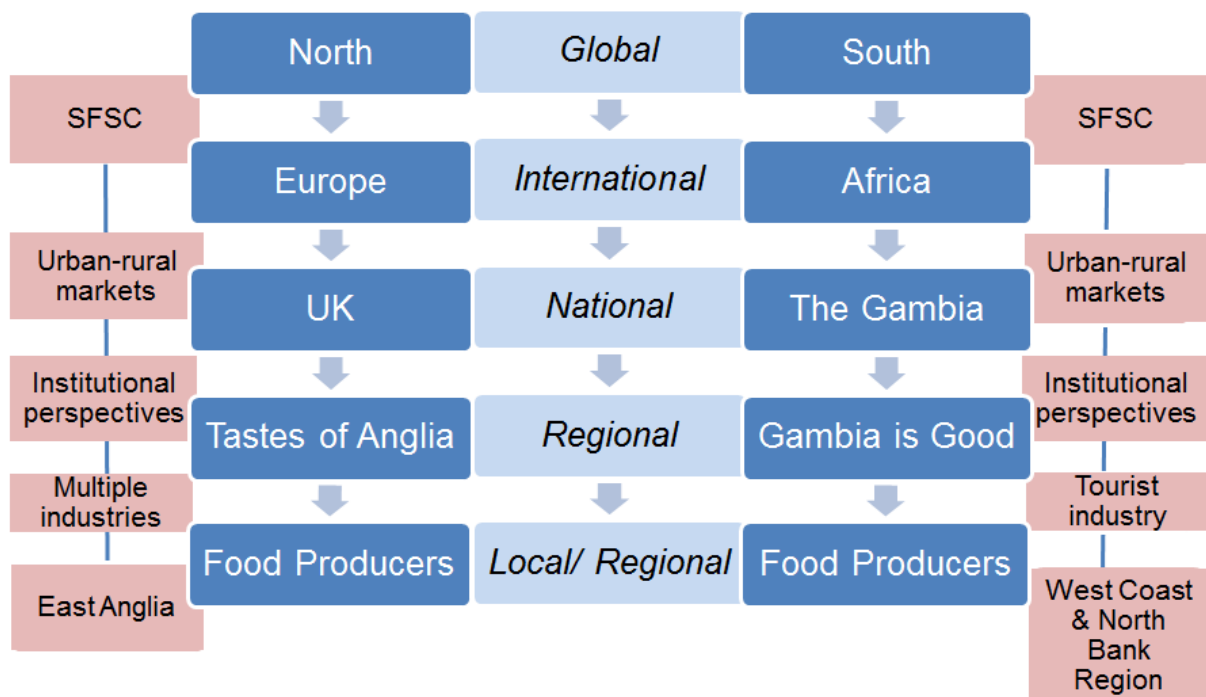
(Yin 2009: 54). This research does not neatly align with either of these replications, but it is permissible to have deliberately selected two case studies because they offer contrasting situations, and so a direct or literal replication is not sought (Yin 2009: 61).

There is thus value in adopting a comparative case study approach that explicitly uses case studies located with contrasting contexts. Moreover, Denscombe (2007) points out the advantages of using case studies, arguing that they are 'natural' and pre-existing as opposed to artificial creations, and that through the in-depth focus on cases, a greater understanding of complex relationships and processes facilitating social phenomena can be realised. This is in contrast to other methods that may seek to generalise about phenomena, or to investigate its representativeness at a particular scale. Indeed, a strength of the case study approach is that it "allows the researcher to use a variety of sources, a variety of types of data and a variety of research methods as part of the investigation" (Denscombe 2007: 37). A further advantage that is of relevance to the comparative nature of this project is that case study design allows the researcher the chance to determine context and sift through the detail of the empirical situation (Evans 2011: 58).

Yet despite these methodological opportunities, it is essential to properly define the scale of the case study. As mentioned previously, a SFSC in The Gambia and the UK form the comparable unit of analysis, but this does not necessarily mean that both case studies have equal characteristics or attributes, especially in terms of size, organisational structure and scope. Indeed, locating case studies that are comprehensively identical in two contrasting nations is futile given the entirely different contexts, though there clearly needs to be similarities to ensure that the outcomes of the research are methodologically meaningful and comparable. Moreover, the unit of analysis that is of particular interest to this research relates to the key principles and purpose of the SFSCs, not necessarily their structural make up. It must be noted, however, that the two cases themselves form a degree of analysis in their own right, as there are inevitable, contextually relevant lines of enquiry that emerge within one case study exclusively during data collection.

Figure 4.3 shows how the two case studies are comprised of multiple layers and scales, and that although clearly different in terms of their development and agri-food dynamics, are comparable. There are various levels within the case studies, ranging from the global North-South distinction, to the local and regional food producers in East Anglia and the West Coast and North Bank Regions of The Gambia. These layers show how the term ‘case study’ requires due attention and critique to fully locate where each part of the ‘case’ is situated and how the macro-micro scales within ‘cases’ are connected with one another. This is especially important for this research given that horizontal and vertical embeddedness have emerged in the conceptual framework as important linkages between structures and processes and also as key linkages between a producer’s capital asset base and subsequent livelihood strategy. The inter-connectedness of the two ‘case studies’ has therefore been recognised to showcase how they are comparable *between* one another, and how the multiple layers are linked *within* one another.

Figure 4.3: The comparative global-local scales involved in the two case studies



Source: Author

The outermost columns of Figure 4.3 show how at the global and international scale, both countries are home to a variety of SFSC. The reference to urban-rural markets at the national scale refers to the diverse food supply systems that traverse urban and rural geographies. This is not the focus of this research, but it is important to recognise that SFSC are only a part of a nation's agri-foodscape. At the regional level, two institutions form part of the case study: Tastes of Anglia (TOA) in the UK and Gambia is Good (GiG) in The Gambia. As will be discussed throughout the following section, these have comparable similarities and enable access to food producers to be gained. At the next scale, The Gambia has less urban market outlets and so relies on the tourism industry primarily for the SFSC, whereas in the UK there are multiple industries engaged in SFSC. The local/regional scale refers to food producers situated in the counties of East Anglia in the UK. Similarly, in The Gambia, the West Coast Region and North Bank Region are situated in the Western most part of The Gambia and closest to the Atlantic coastal tourism industry. These are administratively distinct geographic regions that are comparable to the county level in the UK.

The two institutional case studies that have been selected for in-depth research are Gambia is Good (GiG) located in The Gambia, and Tastes of Anglia (TOA), located in the UK. These two case studies give the research an institutional perspective (the *formal* structures) and also serve as gatekeepers when accessing food producers at the local/regional scale. These two case studies will now be introduced and explained in more detail alongside the specific criteria that was used to ensure a meaningful comparative design was fulfilled.

4.12 Case study criterion

The two institutional case studies selected can be understood in a variety of ways and from a range of disciplines. For example, they can be regarded as marketing strategies, development projects or, from a trading and distribution perspective, food hubs. However, the area of interest for this research is that they can be conceptualised as institutions that facilitate SFSCs due to their regional scope and focus on developing links between local/regional producers to local/regional markets.

Since this research began with in-depth engagement with GiG, much of the methodological criteria for a comparative UK case study developed from iterative reflection on the research aims and data collection with GiG. This resonates with Yin's (2009) comments about the importance of research flexibility during case study research, as the specific information that may become relevant is not readily predictable from the outset (Yin 2009: 69). For example, if a comparative case study had been selected from the beginning or at an early stage of the research process, then the 'wrong' kind of case study could have been selected. Table 4.3 highlights and summarises some of the differences and similarities between GiG and TOA that was known before any primary data collection took place.

Table 4.3: Initial comparative aspects of two selected case study sites for research

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(Source: Adapted from CU 2011 and TOA 2012)

As captured in Table 4.3 the two organisations have a similar remit and purpose in terms of instigating SFSC, although TOA is a membership organisation that producers pay to subscribe, whereas GiG is an NGO. However, both of these cases have a 'business' aspect to them through their own in-house distribution. Both organisations also make reference to place in their names (Anglia, Gambia) as a means to construct quality, which as noted in the literature review, is an integral part of AFN and SFSC differentiation. More detail about each of these case studies is given in the results.

The following five criteria elaborate as to why GiG and TOA as case studies at the institutional level were selected.

1. Type of SFSC: Spatial proximity criterion

The criterion in the selection of the two SFSCs for this project relates to their core aim(s) and the *type* of SFSC as originally conceptualised by Marsden *et al.* (2000) and later Renting *et al.* (2003). They attest that SFSCs can be characterised as being face-to-face, proximate or spatially extended. The important aspect in all cases is that the products are embedded with information at the point of purchase or consumption, but how this occurs may vary dependent on the scale, proximity relations and marketing. The two institutional cases selected for this research, GiG and TOA can be conceptualised as facilitating proximate SFSCs due to their regional focus and purpose around linking rural and peri-urban food producers to local and regional markets. For example, GiG operates in the two regions of North Bank Region and West Coast Region which are located to the West of the country. Similarly Tastes of Anglia operates throughout the counties of East Anglia. This aspect of scale, along with each organisations core aims, is the linking of producers to customers within a specific region is the first key replicable feature to the two case studies.

2. Small-scale producer livelihoods emphasis

A second aspect that is highly relevant is the emphasis on producer livelihoods. Since this research critically engages with sustainable rural livelihoods, an organisation whose focus is primarily about enhancing the well being of food producers within a particular region warrants investigation. Both TOA and GiG were largely conceived to provide some form of assistance to producers, either by providing a market outlet for their products (spatially proximate SFSC) or other collaborative assistance such as market exposure, training events or workshops. Without such intervention, many producers would arguably remain marginalised from their respective regions' agro-food economy.

The remit of focus on small-scale producers is because unlike larger commercial food producing industries, small-scale farmers, production businesses or enterprises have fewer assurances and options available as to where and how their products can be distributed and sold. Moreover, they may be unable to consistently provide sufficient quantities of food demanded by large-scale commercial retailers. The role of a SFSC as a means to differentiate is therefore particularly important for small-scale producers, as unlike larger commercial food producers, they require their products to be valorised as more than just commodities, using 'quality cues' associated with provenance, quality and transparency as ways to improve their desirability amongst consumers and wholesale customers in a competitive marketplace. This leads into the third criterion about quality.

3. *Market differentiation through 'quality'*

Both GiG and TOA make reference to the notion of quality in terms of the produce being circulated throughout the region. The notion of quality being inherently aligned with localism and/or regionalism was discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, quality is a central feature of SFSCs, as embedding food products with meaningful information enables certain types of quality cues to be communicated and interpreted by consumers. This is the 'value-laden information' that Renting *et al.* (2003) refer to. By incorporating the notion of quality into the methodological case study research criteria, the nature of supply chains can be brought into focus,

understanding how they are constructed throughout different points along the chain and how notions of quality are integrated and marketed. The attention to quality is essential as it is arguably the locus where food products can become more than just a commodity, communicating wider social, cultural or environmental 'cues' that are inherently associated with the production of food. Moreover, exploring quality provides a greater understanding of how concepts such as provenance and place are marketed, and how the linkages between PPP are both constructed and maintained.

4. Trading and distribution element

The previous criterion makes reference to how organisations such as GiG and TOA can provide assistance for producers in terms of generating a market outlet, which can be achieved by providing and fostering collaborative producer-customer networks, or by purchasing direct from producers and then selling onto customers. The latter form of market outlet assistance means organisations such as TOA and GiG within a SFSC become a form of 'hub' and a focal point for producers to sell their produce. This means that the responsibility of sourcing viable customers is transferred from the individual producer and internalised by the 'hub'. Since trading within food supply chains inherently involves distribution, some of the more practical issues associated with facilitating SFSC can be critically assessed and compared in relation to the different contexts in which they are situated. This is an important point to relate data back to the conceptual framework such as the vulnerability context. Indeed, understanding how some of the practical factors associated with getting products from 'farm to fork' exacerbate or alleviate the vulnerability context in which food producers are situated is an important part of this research.

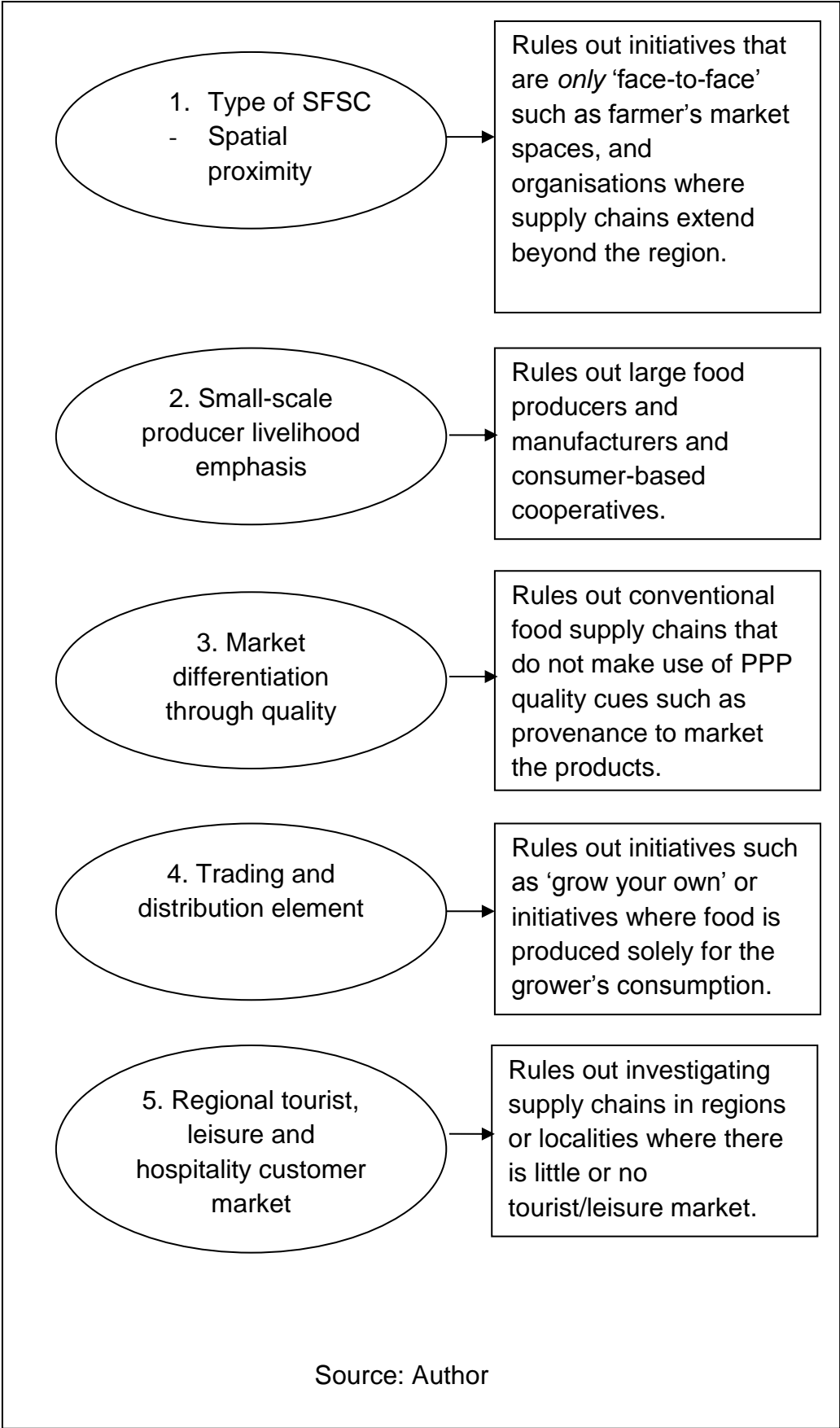
5. Regional tourist, leisure and hospitality customer market

The nature of the consumer market needs to be closely replicable in order for any analysis and conclusions drawn to be comparable. If case studies were selected where the customer base was situated within differing industries, then the very nature of the supply chains become unique to their context, limiting the validity of any overall findings. Both GiG and TOA supply to outlets and businesses that are located in the tourist, leisure and hospitality industries, although TOA also supply many retail outlets as food producers in the UK have a wider range of markets available to them compared to their Gambian counterparts⁸.

The aforementioned five methodological criteria provide the structure and rigour that is needed to ensure the two case studies situated in contrasting contexts retain a degree of similarity. Figure 4.4 condenses and clarifies the reasons for other potential case study options being discounted. As previously outlined, the research design began with GiG and so initial considerations for a UK comparison began with 'familiar' initiatives that have been commonly researched within recent agro-food literature. The initiatives that were considered for case study selection include CSA, a box scheme, producer co-operatives, and care farms. These were considered due to their 'alternative' conceptualisation in terms of reconfiguring how food is produced and consumed, and because the food circulating within and from them takes place through SFSC. A further two important reasons for the consideration of such alternative systems was due to their typically local and/or regional scale of operation or focus on forging closer relations between producers and consumers. However, and as Figure 4.4 shows, these potential case study sites were not deemed sufficient to capture the key tenets to the research aims and objectives, and so GiG and TOA were selected as they enabled access to a variety of research participants involved with SFSC.

⁸ The slogan on the TOA website (www.tastesofanglia.org.uk) in 2014 read "Linking food production and tourism, a marriage made in East Anglia". Although this was not known at the time of selecting case studies, it highlights how both GiG and TOA have a similar organisational purpose and remit, further validating them as comparable gatekeeper, organisational cases.

Figure 4.4: An overview of the methodological criteria and the reasons for discounting other potential agri-food case study possibilities



To summarise, this section of the methodology has outlined the case studies in greater detail, and introduced the criterion that have been used for selection (and omission). The next section discusses in more depth how primary research with the case studies took place, and also explains the specific methods and techniques that were implemented as a means to gather data. Following this, the data analysis process is given, followed by a closing discussion about research ethics and consent.

4.13 Researching the case studies: a qualitative approach

The research design has made clear the reasons for selecting particular locales, cases and methodological approaches, but what is less clear is the scale or angle at which the case studies can and should be researched during the data collection phase. Moreover, the way case studies are approached has a bearing on the types of methods and techniques needed to answer the research questions. This section of the methodology therefore addresses the inner most part of Saunders' *et al.* (2007) research process diagram (Figure 4.1).

As has been noted in the discussion about research philosophy and grounded theory, researchers must remain flexible and adaptive, and quickly review their evidence during data collection, continually asking why events or facts appear as they do (Yin 2009: 69). Yet grounded theory can be considered more of a research *strategy* that enables qualitative data to be analysed. More specific techniques are required to fully engage with the multiple layers and complexities of the case studies and the individual research participants. It is this trajectory where a discussion about the qualitative methods that were used in this research requires critical discussion, outlining the reasons for implementing the particular data collection techniques adopted. This takes place alongside a discussion about how the GiG case study was researched, and then how TOA was investigated using the methods prescribed.

4.14 Justifying the use of qualitative methods

In line with the interpretive philosophy, inductive nature of the research questions and the incorporation of grounded theory to the analysis, a range of qualitative methods were incorporated. This is because qualitative methodologies do not start with the assumption that there is a pre-existing world that can be known or measured, and so methods are characterised by an in-depth, intensive approach rather than an extensive numerical approach (Dwyer and Limb 2001: 6). Indeed, an exclusively quantitative methodological approach to this particular study would arguably be an injustice to the aims and objectives, as these require an *understanding* to be gained about a SFSC in both the UK and The Gambia, and to comprehend the complexity therein. The research is exploratory as opposed to fixed or definitive and so while some quantitative methods (such as questionnaires) could have been incorporated to form a mixed-methodology, qualitative methods were deemed sufficient to address the research questions and collect the necessary data⁹.

Quantitative techniques are highly structured and definitive, and so a questionnaire or structured interview or survey, for example, where participants are routinely asked the same questions, would be too simplistic a way of gathering the required data. Moreover, quantitative methods typically reduce results into a numerical format to enable researchers to make sense of findings. This clearly has advantages for certain types of research projects, for example quantifying social phenomena, or determining prevalence and geographical location, but the type of data made possible by quantitative methods is arguably less useful for other research questions and phenomena. For example, capturing experiences or understandings requires a different set of tools and methods, where respondents are afforded the opportunity to elaborate or to raise themes and topics that may not have initially been regarded as relevant from the outset by the researcher. These subtle junctures are where the possibility of gaining depth about social

⁹ Some numerical research was carried out during the research process, although this was mainly done to quantify basic secondary data that was collected before and during fieldwork. Similarly, some of the material gathered through qualitative techniques, such as the types of food being grown/ made is presented in the results chapters in numerical form. These primarily serve as a foundation for wider discussion and so were not regarded as quantitative. This is also because the basic datasets were not subject to any further techniques such as statistical testing that is used to validate data.

phenomena can be developed and explored, and where qualitative methodologies and techniques become invaluable in terms of generating results and analysis.

As such, the key methods that were utilised are participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and focus groups. Ethnography was also initially considered as an appropriate method in itself because ethnography overlaps with other labels such as 'qualitative enquiry', 'fieldwork', 'interpretive method' and 'case study' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 1). However, ethnographic enquiry typically requires the researcher to be immersed within 'the field' for an extensive period of time, which due to the logistical demands and scope of the research was not possible. Research in The Gambia took place over a cumulative three-month period that spanned three years (2010-2013), including a nine-week intensive fieldwork phase in late 2011. This was the longest feasible period of time that the researcher could be outside the UK conducting fieldwork. Therefore, qualitative techniques familiar to ethnographers are incorporated into this research, but there is insufficient ground to state that this method was used in its entirety, or the research process was ethnographic in its purest, anthropological form. For the purposes of this research, ethnography is better regarded as another facet to the wider inductive approach or strategy, whereby developing relationships with a range of actors over time was deemed beneficial to successfully carry out the research and to develop a detailed understanding of the complexities within the case studies.

4.15 Participant observation and time in the field

The methods outlined provide a toolkit to answer the key research aims, namely that of understanding the role of SFSCs as sustainable livelihood strategies in both the UK and The Gambia. The method of participant observation is perhaps most unique compared to the other methods as it is arguably being constantly implemented within the field and not necessarily constructed in the same way that an interview or focus group is. Participant observation is an important part of a qualitative or ethnographic focused research project, as it is "associated with spending a considerable period of time in the field learning how and why things happen the way they do" (Enticott 2011: 40). The goal of participant observation is

“developing understanding through being part of the spontaneity of everyday interaction” (Kearns 2005: 195), and it is this in-depth involvement with research participants and their environments that forms the basis for understanding to evolve and other suitable methods to take place.

Moreover, the nature of *participant* observation is that it enables researchers to gain an insight from the participant’s perspective. This was particularly useful in The Gambia, where ‘getting involved’ on the farms of participants (through irrigating and general manual labour) helped to generate rapport and to gain an insight into their lives. This aspect of the methodology links back to the fundamental philosophical position of the research, as a crucial aspect of interpretivist philosophy is for the researcher to adopt an empathetic stance with those who agree to take part (Saunders *et al.* 2007: 116). Participant observation is thus a practical, credible method that can be used to align practice in the field with the philosophical approach relevant to this research, as it enables researchers to develop an understanding about ‘what is happening’ in any given place.

4.16 Semi-structured interviewing and focus groups

Interviewing has a significant role within this research project, as this method “is based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it” (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 101). Moreover, “the interview allows a more thorough examination of experiences, feelings or opinions” in comparison to a more rigidly structured method such as a questionnaire (Kitchin and Tate 2000: 213). Interviewing is not a standardised method, as the context in where it takes place and with who can dictate the nature of questioning and duration of the interview. As such, interviewing as a method is recognised as ranging from an unstructured, through to a semi-structured or structured format.

Semi-structured interviewing is the most applicable to this research as while a pre-determined line of questioning is followed, there is sufficient scope and flexibility to

allow unforeseen topics that may arise to be explored, allowing the participant to elicit more information about the issues important or significant to them. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are reasonably informal or conversational in nature, but more than just 'chats' (Longhurst 2010: 106), and so this method is particularly helpful in establishing relations and developing rapport with participants in a constructive, professional manner.

Similarly, "the focus group method involves a small group of people discussing a topic or issues defined by a researcher" (Cameron 2005: 116). As with semi-structured interviewing, the topic of discussion is not firmly defined and this format enables the researcher to gain a greater consensus amongst participants. While this can be used as a standalone method, it must be stated that the use of participant observation, focus groups and semi-structured interviewing in tandem meant that the triangulation of data, theories and ideas could be realised. Recording data from interviews, as with participant observation, was done through taking notes at the time of the interaction and afterwards, but the use of a voice recorder to document verbatim the conversations meant an accurate record of what was said and by whom was captured. This enhanced and enriched the analytical procedures after the fieldwork. The analysis of material from such methods will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.21 and 4.22. The narrative now turns to the fieldwork itself, beginning with GiG.

Table 4.4 shows how each of the methods that were used relate back to the aims and objectives. The chapter where each aim and objective is addressed is also given to provide an overview of how the research process has evolved while remaining close to the original questions. As can be seen, several qualitative methods were implemented to meet the overall research aim, and to address the second and third objectives. Seven different methods are provided in Table 4.4 but as has been discussed, there is fluidity between methods such as participant observation and mobile interviews. However, Table 4.4 serves an important purpose because it locates and links the specific methods to the theoretical questions that underpinned the research. The research process with both GiG and TOA is now discussed in more detail, providing an overview of the number and types of participants involved from each case study.

Table 4.4 How the selected methods meet the research aims and objectives

Methods	Aim	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
	Investigate the role of SFSC in enhancing the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in the global North and South	Contextualise the need for the research by critically examining the relationships between sustainable livelihoods and SFSC in contrasting contexts of food production, and develop a practice based conceptual framework to inform methodological enquiry.	Explore SFSC practices in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North) and how actors perceive and practise sustainability through SFSC.	Critically evaluate the role of context and how SFSC contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North), and the wider implications of a cross-cultural, comparative approach to SFSC
<i>Chapter where aim and objective addressed</i>				
	Chapters 1-8	Chapters 1-4	Chapters 5-7	Chapters 5-8
Semi-structured interviewing	X		X	X
Mobile/walking interviews	X		X	X
Telephone interviews	X		X	X
Participant observation	X		X	X
Photography			X	
Focus groups	X		X	X
Secondary data	X	X	X	X

4.17 Researching GiG: a two phased approach

Planning research abroad is fraught with more tasks than in the UK, namely due to practicality and logistics. For this reason, and because knowledge of The Gambian case study from a previous field course was the initial inspiration for the thesis, research with GiG took place before the UK fieldwork. Due to prior encounters, albeit brief, with institutional members of GiG, a degree of access and basic understanding about the case study and context had already been gained.

These links have been capitalised on to enable the qualitative, inductive methodology to be realistically achieved. During the fieldwork itself, participant observation was primarily implemented during research with GiG. This was because research surrounding this case study took place via two phases of fieldwork. Firstly, the fieldwork was initiated as part of a weeklong pilot study in January 2011, generating ideas and contacts and understanding how it relates to the overall research topic. The scoping visit consisted of several informal conversations and interviews with key informants at GiG management level, visits to the GiG farm and local farming communities¹⁰. This provided an initial basic understanding about GiG and generated a degree of access to GiG and the communities they work with. This is an important part in implementing a successful qualitative methodology. A further reason for the scoping trip was because the extent and nature of the research field, or at least the actors that constitute this, was not fully known or able to be known prior to primary data collection.

The second phase consisted of the main field work, which took place between October and December 2011. This gave several weeks to follow up the key issues that arose from the scoping trip, and the nine weeks spent in the field provided an extended period of time to conduct more in-depth research, and to fully implement the desired methodology. By approaching the GiG case study initially through a

¹⁰ The communities and small-scale farms that were visited during January 2011 were not producers associated with GiG, but a wider understanding of Gambian agriculture and farming systems was the aim of these initial visits. Moreover, the researcher had insufficient time to generate access and links to specific GiG producers, though this forms a large part of the main field work phase (Oct-Dec 2011).

short scoping trip and then returning for an extended phase of fieldwork, research was able to be conducted to some extent in a longitudinal fashion, continuously developing rapport with participants and creating access to others. Furthermore, by implementing participant observation, a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which the case study is situated was achieved.

Recording observations and details from interviews took place via a notebook and where possible via photographs and a digital recorder. This meant that visual observations as well as more sensual observations (that cannot easily be documented through note taking) were captured in as much detail as possible. Documenting observations and detail must also be recognised as an on-going, iterative task during fieldwork and data collection stages of research, as detailed notes often had to be written in retrospect, at more convenient places and times after the observations had taken place, and detail that may not be previously regarded as important may later become a more significant aspect to the research focus. It was not always possible to record information as it unfolded due to the nature of conducting research involving humans as it may be impractical document notes in the presence of others who have given time to be a participant. Notes were recorded in as much detail as possible, transcribed and analysed through a process of coding.

The reason for the two phased approach to GiG is largely due to the grounded nature of the research and also because existing, remotely accessible data (from the UK), was not comprehensive enough to reflect the current dynamics of GiG. A degree of flexibility was therefore required both before and during fieldwork to enable relevant actors and field locations to be identified within the scope of the research parameters. Spending extended periods of time in the field was essential to realise this.

4.18 Sampling

Selecting participants for the research took place during the fieldwork itself, as it was not possible to understand the full nature of GiG from the scoping trip or from pre-existing information. A Masters by Research project about corporate social

responsibility and NGOs by Wadham (2007) and a consultation report by Ebrahim *et al.* (2008) provided some academic background to support preliminary findings and context about GiG's scope. However, they are considerably different in focus to this research in terms of investigating rural livelihoods and food supply chains. Wadham (2007) discusses the role of Concern Universal more so than GiG and who they work with, and Ebrahim *et al.* (2008) analyse GiG's business structure and make recommendations as to how this might be improved.

Food producers at the local scale were therefore identified as the research unfolded and as such, snowball sampling as opposed to a more rigid systematic sample structure was adopted. This ensured flexibility in identifying participants, complemented the extended period of time spent in The Gambia, and provided scope to pursue small-scale producers who were usually located in remote areas. In this respect, GiG served as a gatekeeper in locating rural producers. Indeed, understanding the assets and livelihood strategies of small-scale producers was the main focus of the research. However, other actors involved in GiG supply chains were also incorporated. These included market traders in Serrekunda, hotel management staff in Kololi and The Ministry and Department of Agriculture (DOA) in Bakau. These types of actors were incorporated into this research to gain a fuller understanding of agri-food dynamics in The Gambia and to situate GiG in a broader regional and national context with which the researcher was unfamiliar. This is also why the extended period of fieldwork in The Gambia (9 weeks) was needed when compared to the UK. In addition, the underlying grounded approach to data collection aligns with the inductive and qualitative foundations upon which this research is built.

Table 4.5 summarises all of the participants who engaged with the research and agreed to take part in a semi-structured interview. There were other actors who were spoken to when opportunities presented themselves, but the results from The Gambia are based upon 33 in-depth interviews. This is because the interviews loosely followed a similar format and often involved lengthy, detailed conversations that were not explored during other 'chance' encounters. 12 of the 33 interviews were with rural food producers from WCR and NBR, and 1 focus group took place with several members of a women's co-operative farm in WCR.

A more detailed exploration of the food producers and their livelihoods is discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 4.5: The profile and extent of research participants in The Gambia

Participant / actor	Number of participants involved with research	Location
GiG customers ¹¹	8 hotels, 2 restaurants	Coastal areas of West Coast Region (WCR)
GiG market suppliers	2 market traders	Serrekunda market, WCR
Producers	11 farmers and 2 women's cooperative farms (*1 focus group, 1 interview of leader of women's cooperative in NBR)	3 in WCR, 10 in North Bank Region (NBR)
Ministry and Department of Agriculture (DOA)	1 officer (Deputy of DOA)	Bakau, WCR
Training Partners	Kafo (community) Farm National Agricultural Training Centre (NATC)	Sifoe Kafo Farm, WCR NATC, Njawara, NBR
GiG staff	5 staff at GiG Sales and Marketing team 2 Production Managers	GiG head offices, Fajara, WCR 1 based in WCR, 1 in NBR
TOTAL	33 interviews 1 focus group	The Gambia

Source: Author

¹¹ GiG customers in this research refer to the hotels and restaurants that regularly purchase large quantities from the project. Consumers of the tourist industry were not included as part of this research owing to the focus on livelihoods and scope of the research. Engaging with consumers is identified as an area for future research and is discussed in Chapter 8

4.19 Researching TOA

The methodological approach to researching TOA was similar to that of GiG, whereby establishing contact with staff at TOA was the first key task. This is because more contextual information, history and knowledge about the organisation and its remit can be gained, guiding subsequent research enquiry. The key difference in the early stage of research with TOA is that more information was available via the internet than with GiG. This meant it was easier to analyse the characteristics of TOA and identify viable food producers and wholesale customers with whom to engage in more detail. Unlike research with GiG, where the researcher had to generate a degree of 'insider status' and rely on the tacit knowledge of GiG staff or internal data to generate research leads, in the UK much of this could be done remotely using the criteria as outlined previously in the chapter.

Research with TOA took place after the in-depth research with GiG to ensure that the UK case study would be comparable. TOA was thus selected based on five key criteria discussed previously. While the methodological approach to each case study was largely the same, as was the types of methods used, the implementation and conduct was different primarily due to logistics. The first area of divergence is that researching in the East Anglia region did not require an extended period of time based in and around the research participants in the same way that was demanded by travelling to and staying in The Gambia. As such, research with TOA took place through several visits to the geographical area to conduct interviews as opposed to one more intensive period of time as was the case with GiG. Yet the important factor here is that each case of research had a prolonged level of engagement with members of GiG and TOA respectively, both before, during and after the research had taken place.

Research began by contacting TOA to learn more about the organisation and its remit. This involved telephone interviews where it became clear that there are two distinct aspects to TOA: the membership division and trading division TOA Trading. Any food or drink organisation in the East Anglia region that wishes to be associated with or make use of TOA must become a member, though it is not mandatory that members trade with TOA Trading.

Research began by identifying producers following telephone interviews with staff at TOA¹². TOA has over 300 members, 233 of which are food producers. However, this number includes many large, commercial businesses and so these were discounted from the research by way of their size and scope. This is because while some of these businesses have local and regional supply chains, they also operate through national supply chains and so do not meet the methodological criteria. It must also be noted that while GiG is predominantly a fresh produce venture, occasionally buying-selling other foods such as eggs and juices, TOA producers are involved in a variety of food production and manufacturing. These include fresh produce, herbs and spices, dairy, baked goods, processed and packaged foods, meat and fish. It was therefore necessary to include small-scale food producers from a range of food sectors, though only if their remit was local or regional supply chains. All counties of the region who had a producer member with a local and/or regional distribution remit were also approached by email and/or telephone contact and an interview arranged depending on their response.

4.20 TOA as a gatekeeper

As with GiG, TOA was more than a case study exclusively. Crucially, the organisation served as a gatekeeper to the region's food sector and as such, enabled the identification of rural food producers, retailers and wholesalers in East Anglia. This was achieved through the use of TOA's website that lists details about all of their members. This was a useful research tool as the TOA member directory is freely accessible in the public domain to identify participants. It was from here that the food producers were initially identified and contacted.

Sampling during TOA was thus different to GiG, as the Gambian case relied on developing contacts within the organisation in order to access participants. The

¹² A greater engagement with TOA staff was the original intention, so that more information and data could be gathered before targeting specific producers and customers for interview, but due to the busy workload at TOA, the researcher had to wait several months before TOA were able to be of more assistance. Unfortunately, during this time, there had also been a change of management and so the researcher had further delays in establishing contact with the relevant people at TOA.

online directory made purposive sampling possible without the need to spend time amongst staff of TOA. As has been outlined previously, sampling consisted of contacting producers and wholesale customers who fitted the methodological criteria of being small-scale food producers or light processors, and whose range of supply was local or regional. Table 4.6 summarises the research participant profile from the TOA case study.

In total, 16 interviews were conducted, of which 13 were with food producers located in East Anglia. The other 3 interviews were with TOA organisational staff. Fewer interviews were undertaken with institutional actors when compared to The Gambia, which involved a total of 21 interviews with participants who were not small-scale food producers. This is because it was necessary to gain a detailed understanding of broader Gambian agri-food dynamics and GiG supply chains specifically. The same depth was not regarded as essential in the UK case given the researcher familiarity with agri-food dynamics in this context, and the diversity of SFSC that many small-scale food producers use. A more detailed breakdown of the 13 food producers involved in this research, and the types of SFSC they utilise, is given in Chapter 5. It was the intention for a focus group to take place in the UK, but this never materialised due to the organisational changes that occurred at TOA during the main phase of UK fieldwork, which severely hampered efforts to co-ordinate a focus group in the East Anglia region. As such, semi-structured interviewing was the primary method of data collection in the UK.

Table 4.6: The profile and extent of research participants in UK

Participant / actor	Number of participants involved with research	Location
TOA staff	3 staff: 1 from membership and 2 from TOA Trading division	Suffolk
Producers / manufacturers	13 food producers / light manufacturers	Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Cambs
TOTAL	16 interviews	East Anglia

Source: Author

The preceding section has outlined and justified the methods used in the research, and also elaborated in more detail about the nature, type and extent of research participants in each case study context. The next section discusses data analysis in more detail and outlines how the analysis of qualitative material is situated within the broader grounded theory framework.

4.21 Data analysis

This research utilised a range of methods to gather data. The use of notebooks, digital voice recorders and photography were the main formats through which data was ‘captured’ and documented during fieldwork. It must be noted that *participant* observation, photography and focus groups were specific to The Gambia, but semi-structured interviewing was used during fieldwork in *both* the UK and Gambia.

Some quantitative, statistical data has been used to generate basic results to help understand aspects of the case studies. This has been gathered from existing, secondary sources, such as from within GiG and TOA reports and websites. The main source of data on which the results and discussions are based relates to the qualitative data generated from on-going in-depth engagement with actors in each case study. The qualitative data from both the UK and The Gambia has been gathered by means of participant observation, a total of 49 interviews and 1 focus group. 13 interviews with food producers were carried out in each country, resulting in a total of 26 producer interviews that directly explored the relationships between SFSC and livelihoods. The other 23 interviews that took place were with organisational gatekeepers and other relevant actors involved in SFSC, particularly in The Gambia (See Table 4.5 and 4.6).

Since there was a range of participants, four separate semi-structured interview schedules were developed (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 6). Two of the four schedules catered for food producers in The Gambia and UK, while the other two schedules were targeted towards the organisational and institutional actors in each country. The schedules were based upon the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.5, Chapter 3). For example, the two schedules used when speaking with food producers cover topics and questions that link either directly or implicitly to the five capital assets and livelihood strategies that are integral aspects of the conceptual framework. For the organisational interview schedules, topics and questions were more focused around context and the broader role that TOA and GiG have had within the *formal* and *informal* processes section of the conceptual framework. This approach enabled the conceptual foundations of the research to be applied during data collection and analysis.

In line with the grounded theory approach outlined briefly in the chapter (section 4.5), data have been analysed through an iterative, layered process of coding. Coding is the assigning of labels to data to make sense of and to understand the meaning of dialogue, observations and interactions during qualitative fieldwork. There is debate about the terminology and precise 'way' to conduct coding, most notably between the founders of grounded theory, (Strauss and later Corbin and Glaser), but there is an understanding that it involves a movement from generating codes that stay close to the data to gradually generating more abstract ways of

conceptualising the topics and issues at hand (Bryman 2008: 543). Indeed, grounded theorists stick closely to patterns that they define in their data and treat as categories, and these patterns and relationships between categories develop during the iterative interpretation of the data (Charmaz and Bryant 2011: 302). Figure 4.5 highlights the main stages in grounded theory, as well as the key differences between the Straussian and Glaserian approach.

Figure 4.5: Comparison of the coding practices of Strauss and Glaser using grounded theory

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(Source: Heath and Cowley 2004: 146)

The coding process adopted in this research can be broken down into three distinct steps, utilising a combination of both coding techniques outlined in Figure 4.5. The first step involved open or initial coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998, Charmaz 2006). This is a descriptive process that enables one to formulate an initial, basic understanding about events or interactions by making simple categorisations of data, and to become familiar with the richness of the data recorded during fieldwork. As such, interviews that were recorded were transcribed verbatim and, along with documentation and notes, sections of text were assigned descriptive codes, to the point where individual lines had different basic codes to succinctly summarise and capture the meaning of the text. Although this process generates a multitude of different codes and is largely

descriptive and requires a degree of open-mindedness, it enables some initial ideas to be considered and lays the foundations for a more analytical coding process to take shape.

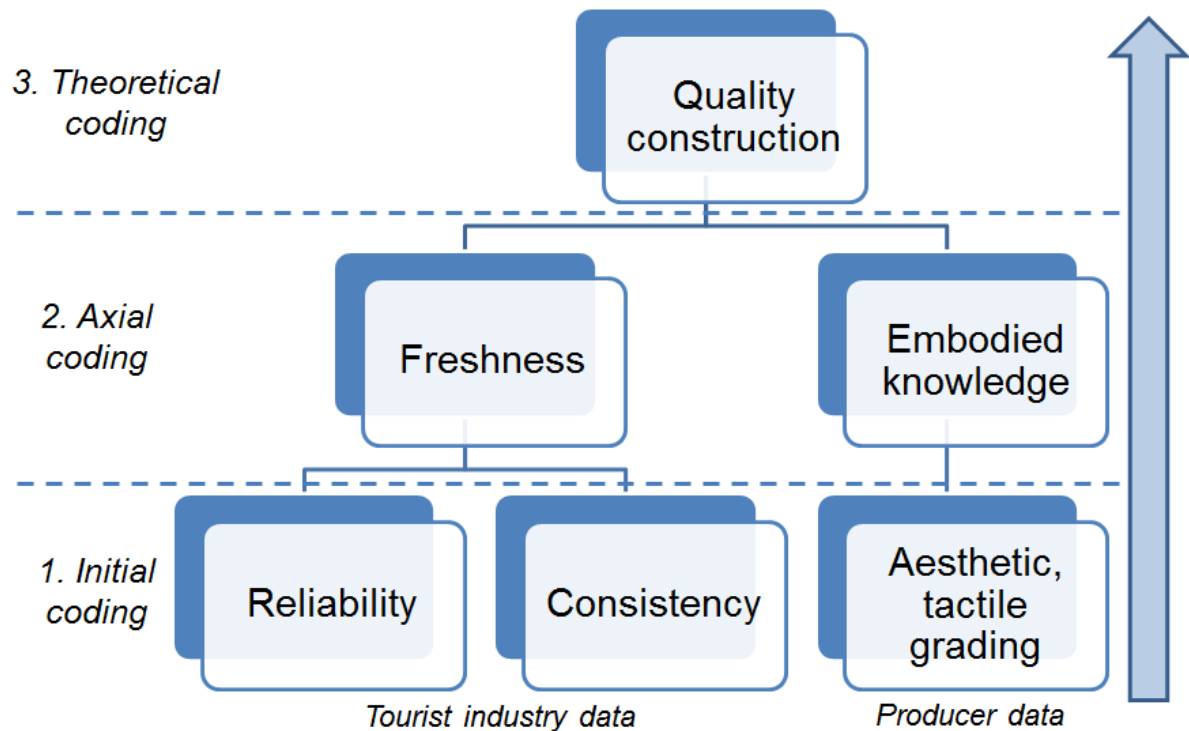
The second aspect to coding is referred to as axial coding, or focused coding, which has an inherent analytical element to it. Initial categories not only coalesce as one interprets the collected data but also the categories become more theoretical because one engages in successive levels of analysis (Charmaz 2006: 3). The second aspect to coding is therefore much more iterative and fluid depending on the codes and themes that emerge, and may require reviewing data in several ways. Indeed, focused or axial coding is about developing the core categories and moving from the initial descriptive understanding to a more conceptual one. This involves “reassembling the data by searching for connections between the categories that have emerged out of the coding” (Bryman 2008: 543). It is for this reason why the process is iterative and only ‘finishes’ when theoretical saturation is reached (i.e., the point where no new themes or concepts that are central and relevant to the research emerge).

The third step is closely tied to the second coding process, in that theoretical or selective coding takes place. At this point, core categories and conceptual codes are developed and refined. Initial, axial and theoretical coding took place manually as opposed to digitally, which is an increasingly popular means of analysing qualitative data. Nvivo, a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programme, was originally considered to conduct the data analysis. However, not all data could be input into Nvivo as some of the encounters, interviews and focus groups in The Gambia were not digitally recorded (due to practicalities or because of discretion of participants) and so could not be transcribed. Moreover, much of the observational data and reflective ‘moments’ recorded in notebooks could not easily be converted into an electronic format. Converting some of the raw notebook material into a digital format may also lose the originality and raw qualities that were captured, especially during the fieldwork in The Gambia. As such, manual coding was deemed the most effective approach for all of transcripts and notes, and so although the organisational benefits of Nvivo were not capitalised on, the coding process was consistent throughout.

Figure 4.6 is a visual representation of how the coding process took place. This example makes reference to how the theoretical core category of 'quality construction' emerged from different qualitative datasets gathered from Gambian food producers and Purchasing Officers in the Gambian tourist industry. Beginning at the lower part of Figure 4.6 with initial or open coding, the analysis of notes and transcripts revealed that the tourist industry valued the reliability and consistency associated with purchasing directly from GiG. Conversely, producers made reference to their fresh fruits and vegetables being of a good 'quality' that they determined from the products sensual attributes and by being in regular close contact with them. Taking these descriptions to a second more analytical level, axial coding revealed that the producers have a more 'embodied' understanding about quality (Carolan 2011), whereas the tourist industry tended to have a more temporal element to their understanding, indicating that they equated quality with 'freshness'. At the theoretical level, each perspective is referring to notions of how quality is constructed and so this formed a core category through which other analyses and codes gravitated towards (see Chapter 6).

This example does not accurately demonstrate the iterative and occasionally chaotic nature of qualitative data analysis, as some categories may emerge from some of the data but can quickly become a 'dead end'. This meant that data analysis can and did involve a lot of movement 'back and forth' across the raw material (Charmaz and Bryant 2011: 302). As such, Figure 4.6 is a simplistic, somewhat ideal representation of one example of data analysis in this research. However, it does serve to highlight how the progression from description to core, theoretical categories can emerge once a 'closeness' with the data and link back to the research aims and objectives is made.

Figure 4.6: An example of the coding process using grounded theory



Source: Author

4.22 Generating grounded theory

The coding process is a key part in the ‘doing’ of qualitative research and is central to the conduct of grounded theory. This is because coding and the analysis of data informs both the conceptual outcomes of research, but also feeds back into the research design itself, guiding subsequent data collection strategies based on the types of codes and categories that emerge. Figure 4.6 reflects how central coding is to qualitative research processes. It is presented sequentially but it is far more iterative than the schematic suggests. The grounded process begins with a set of research questions and some focus as to who the intended research participants are. These participants, such as food producers in the context of this research, are ‘theoretically sampled’ and data are collected. This is an ongoing process as participants are identified and approached during research and fieldwork phases and possibly afterwards, identifying particular places, organisations and people that require investigation to validate codes and concepts that have emerged from prior analysis. Sampling takes place in terms of what

categories have emerged, such as quality construction as noted previously, and by what is deemed relevant and meaningful (Bryman 2008: 416). Relevance and identifying core categories occurs through coding and the exploration of how the data 'fits together'. This is an iterative process.

This analytical process is then repeated until theoretical saturation is reached. This saturation occurs when "the complete range of constructs that make up the theory is fully represented by the data" (Starks and Brown-Trinidad 2007), although this is arguably at the discretion of the individual or team of people responsible for analysis. Following theoretical saturation, definitive concepts and/or theories can be put forward and related back to the research question. Furthermore, these 'final' concepts and theories can be used to drive subsequent research in the same or related field and so the process continues, advancing knowledge and progressing understanding of the social world.

For the analysis in this research, theoretical saturation occurred when it became clear that participants were discussing the same issues with similar responses. As such, very little or no 'new' information was being articulated when compared to the other data that was collected. By the time the number of food producers interviewed had reached double figures in each country, the key issues surrounding capital assets and SFSC were becoming increasingly clear. This meant that core theoretical codes and categories, such as 'quality construction' as noted previously in Figure 4.6, could be substantiated using multiple sources of data, which is an indication of theoretical saturation. The results from this process are presented in Chapter 5 and 6.

Figure 4.7: The iterative processes of qualitative data analysis through grounded theory data analysis techniques

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(Source: Adapted from Strauss and Corbin 1998, Charmaz 2006, Bryman 2008: 545)

A further important point about the final generation of concepts and theory is that they can be either substantive or formal. Substantive refers to theories generated in a certain empirical instance or context, such as a theory about how SFSC in The Gambia affect producers' livelihoods strategies. Formal theory, however, has wider applicability and can apply to multiple instances or contexts, such as a theory about how SFSC in both the global North *and* South affect food producers' livelihoods strategies. "The generation of formal theory requires data collection in contrasting settings" (Bryman 2008: 544). The comparative nature of this research meant this was possible, understanding both the contextually specific and

'universal' elements that apply to the informal socio-cultural and formal structural processes associated with SFSC.

The incorporation of grounded theory has therefore enabled a rich dataset to be gathered about SFSC in The UK and The Gambia. Moreover, this has been achieved in a flexible and contextually relevant fashion without compromising on analytical rigour. The final section of the methodological chapter is now presented. This is largely based around a critical and reflective discussion of ethics and issues of consent in The Gambia.

4.23 Social science research ethics and positionality

This section first outlines the need and nature of research ethics, making the distinction between 'procedural ethics' (the planning phase) and 'ethics in practice' (the fieldwork phase). A central component to research ethics, informed consent, is then discussed with reference to a reflective account of qualitative fieldwork in The Gambia. The narrative then focuses on the importance of adapting to culturally appropriate practices and how greater dialogue between researchers and institutions can help to build understanding about the types of ethical practices that are effective *in place*.

Research ethics is an important aspect in the successful implementation of contemporary social science research and has grown hugely in importance in recent decades (Brydon 2006: 26). The purpose of ethics within qualitative social science research is to ensure that research is carried out in a professional, fair manner where those who are voluntarily involved understand what is asked of them, for what purpose, and how participation may affect them. It is important for researchers to behave ethically because this protects the rights of those affected, assures a favourable climate for the continued conduct of research, maintains public trust and ensures accountability (Hay 2003: 39). Yet the notion of ethics encompasses a range of discourses, which means understanding what it is 'to be ethical' or to 'behave ethically', needs consideration.

For the purposes of qualitative research, Guillemin and Gillam (2004: 263) argue that there are two dimensions of ethics, 'procedural ethics' and 'ethics in practice'.

This is an important distinction as the former relates to gaining approval from an appropriate ethics committee, whereas 'ethics in practice' concerns the everyday ethical issues that arise in the 'doing' of research. Procedural ethics can be understood as the initial planning phase, giving the researcher the opportunity to identify issues that are likely to arise during the research, and outlining how these will be mitigated. Gaining institutional approval for the research to go ahead is the focus at this stage, and is premised on notions of protection, confidentiality, anonymity, justice and respect (Birch *et al.* 2002: 1, Hay 2003: 41). Yet while this is clearly an essential part in the planning of qualitative research, the key issue here is that irrespective of how well thought out the research process is, much of 'what happens' is spontaneous and cannot be foreseen or factored into the planning beforehand.

This is often the case when grounded theory or flexible methods such as ethnography or participant observation are being implemented, as the pre-defined remit about what can and cannot be pursued are not always known beforehand. However, the relatively 'benign' nature of the topics at hand in this research did not cause undue stress or harm to participants, and informed consent and ongoing reflexivity enabled any 'difficulties' or 'unethical' research to be avoided.

4.24 Informed consent

"Informed consent is based on the ethical principles of respect for the dignity and worth of every human being and their right to self-determination" (Miller and Boulton 2007: 2202). This is an integral part of contemporary research ethics as it relates to research participants agreeing to take part in research activity. Edwards (2010) states that there are four criteria which must be met for consent to be legally and morally sound. Firstly, the participant must have sufficient *information* on which to base a decision. Secondly, they must be *mentally competent* to make that choice. Thirdly, they must be *free from coercion* or pressure, and fourthly, a final decision must be made with *intention* (Edwards 2010: 160).

Meeting these criteria and outlining how informed consent is to be obtained is incorporated into procedural ethics, whereby the researcher explains to the

necessary committee what methods will be used to gain participants' consent. It is particularly common amongst institutions in Western countries to use a printed document as the means to gain consent, and so informed consent forms (see Appendices) designed for organisational actors and food producers in both the UK and The Gambia were created. The reasons for this are that the form (and accompanying participant information sheet) provided succinct detail about the research project and what participation involved. This type of communication and consent procedure is common within Western societies.

Indeed, the semi-structured interviews with UK food producers and staff within the TOA organisation were conducted in 'culturally familiar' spaces such as office workspaces and with people in professions who are familiar with such formal discussions about consent. Similarly, interviews with NGO and hotel management staff also understood the purpose of research ethics and the process behind formal consent procedures. This meant that conducting fieldwork was relatively straight-forward in the UK and in the 'culturally familiar' professional arenas in The Gambia. Informed consent via a signature on a pre-prepared, approved form was easily obtained, as the participants understood the content of the form and why it was being used.

However, gaining informed consent in remote areas of rural Gambia unfolded differently, and this required reflexivity to prevent any unnecessary 'awkwardness' or breakdown in rapport between researcher and participants. When engaging with rural food producers, it became apparent that not all participants could interpret the documents easily, and if they could, it was difficult to determine that they fully understood what they were agreeing to. Secondly, there was the issue of social and cultural appropriateness, as this method of informed consent may not be readily understood, recognised or even known amongst various groups of people or cultures¹³. Moreover, the researcher visited the rural areas with a respected and established worker from GiG (Production Manager – PM) who also acted as a translator. This gave greater access to participants and meant rapport was easier to maintain from the beginning of encounters, most of which were

¹³ Similarly, the very presence of a digital voice recorder and GPS device often became a tangential point of discussion owing to their novelty in remote rural areas in The Gambia. The use of these devices was therefore limited in the interests of sustaining dialogue about the issues at hand.

unannounced. The importance of being flexible and employing participant observation was magnified here as while the PM gave initial access and was able to translate, the prominent status the PM had amongst participants meant the researcher often had to 'take the backseat', at least in the early stages of fieldwork¹⁴. It could therefore be argued that the flexibility demonstrated here enabled a positive fieldwork experience in the 'culturally unfamiliar' spaces of rural Gambia.

As such, greater emphasis was placed on adhering to cultural norms when it came to informed consent in the 'culturally unfamiliar' rural locales. Mobilising the established, respected PM (who also translated) to gain a degree of consent by proxy from participants, not just access to them, was a particularly useful approach. This is because African cultures generally value group consensus and the needs of communities as a whole (Araali 2011: 48). Indeed, "an individual-based consent model and the use of written consent documents may be problematic in countries where norms of decision-making do not emphasize individual autonomy and where there are non-literate populations" (Tindana *et al.* 2006: 1). This was taken into account before and during fieldwork in the 'culturally unfamiliar' spaces of rural Gambia, ensuring that the research process was contextually appropriate and ethical.

4.25 Summary

This chapter has detailed the methodological aspects to the research. The philosophical foundations of the research have been outlined, underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology. The case study approach adopted utilises SFSC in the Gambia and the UK, not because this is representative of SFSC in the global North and South, but because an in-depth understanding of the SFSCs can be gained and contrasted in relation to one another. By researching the capital assets of producers in both the UK and The Gambia, a greater understanding of how SFSCs impact their livelihood strategies can be gained. Moreover, the commonalities as well as differences in both countries can be revealed.

¹⁴ This also justified the extended visit to The Gambia as time was needed to build contacts and relations with key informants and the participants.

This research utilises a range of methods and techniques. Firstly, a qualitative approach to data collection was selected due to the nature of the research questions and philosophy. The main technique implemented was semi-structured interviewing, though due to the in-depth nature of fieldwork, particularly in The Gambia, participant observation has also been a significant means of data collection. Secondary data has also been used where necessary, supporting and guiding the primary data throughout the research process. Grounded theory as an overriding methodological means to approach data collection has also been used, as this has enabled the research to evolve in context whilst retaining a rigorous outlook throughout.

This chapter has outlined and identified the reasons for selecting the case studies as well as the way that the research has been conducted. A reflective discussion about ethical research and informed consent has also highlighted some of the issues of conducting qualitative research in cross-cultural contexts. The analysis which follows is separated into two results chapters, which present the key findings from TOA and GiG respectively.

It is to the results that the narrative now turns, beginning with the UK material and then the Gambian results. The reasons for this is because, as will be discussed, some of the most important results and implications associated with SFSC in The Gambia are about what is *lacking* when compared to the UK context. This refers to some of the capital assets, vulnerability context and particularly the *informal* socio-cultural processes that determine the success of SFSC. As such, explaining and developing material by way of its absence is only made possible once a discussion about the UK is given.

Chapter 5

Understanding Short Food Supply Chains and livelihoods in the UK: evidence from the East of England

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the results from the UK case study. The chapter begins by discussing Tastes of Anglia (TOA) in more depth, which, as outlined in the methodology, is an organisation that was used as a gatekeeper to access food producers engaged in SFSC. The narrative then discusses some of the contextual factors that affect SFSC in the UK. This section enables some of the formal structures and processes as noted in the conceptual framework (Figure 3.5, Chapter 3) to be discussed.

The concept of food relocalisation (Ricketts-Hein *et al.* 2006) is used as the basis for discussions about SFSC in the UK context, as the evidence from this research resonates strongly with this concept. Proximate and extended SFSC are discussed and it is argued that producers use cultural capital as a means to market and differentiate products, drawing on the linkages between artisanal food production processes and place to construct notions of quality and provenance (Ilbery *et al.* 2005). For direct, more localised SFSC, the role of social capital is more important as this facilitates the personal relationships between food producers, consumers and other regional actors such as retailers and distributors.

The chapter closes by applying the concept of 'profit sufficers' and 'profit maximisers' (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999) to categorise the types of people involved in small-scale production and SFSC, as often they are driven by a range of motivations and implement livelihood strategies accordingly.

5.2 Tastes of Anglia

As outlined in chapter 3, TOA was initially identified as a 'gatekeeper' organisation through which small-scale food producers in a defined region could be identified. This was to ensure that the organisational case study selection in both the UK and The Gambia were similar in terms of structure, scale and purpose, and that rural producers engaged in SFSC could be accessed.

TOA is a regional food and drink membership organisation located in Suffolk in the UK, although as the name implies, its remit extends to the East Anglia region. TOA supports its members, which are producers, outlets and service providers by communicating the latest news and events to the trade (TOA 2012). TOA was initially born out of the UK Government through DEFRA's now defunct consultancy body 'Food From Britain', in 1992. It was created to promote the interests of local producers, independent retail and catering businesses, major wholesalers and multiple retailers (TOA 2012). It does so by providing a collaborative network for the region's food and drink economy by linking the goods, needs and services of producers with local customers. Similar groups exist in other regions of the UK. For example, Heart of England Fine Foods fulfils a similar role for counties such as Warwickshire and Shropshire located in central England. Furthermore, TOA is dedicated to nurturing local and seasonal food throughout the six counties of the region (Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Essex and Bedfordshire) (TOA 2012).

In addition to the marketing and membership aspect to TOA, there is also a separate trading and distribution business division called TOA Trading. This Trading division was formed in 2001 to help local producers with a route to market and help retailers and caterers source local food more easily (TOA 2012).

5.3 TOA structure

As Figure 5.1 depicts, TOA is split into two divisions: the membership, marketing and training division, and the trading business (TOA Trading). This is a similar structural distinction as seen with GiG, whereby TOA Trading functions for the same reasons as GiG's business division (profitability and distribution), and the

membership and marketing for similar reasons to GiG's development division (support for food sector). TOA has a similar purpose to GiG in that it is about creating routes to market for the region's food enterprises and businesses, connecting and strengthening the regional food sector. However, TOA is structured differently as it is a membership-based organisation unlike GiG. TOA has over 300 members who pay an annual subscription fee (which varies based on the size of business) for the services and marketing provided by TOA. This type of model is not possible in countries such as Gambia or indeed throughout most of Sub Saharan Africa, as the people and enterprises responsible for much of the food production in the global South do not have the same level of financial capital to pay for support services.

The benefits of membership to TOA are that it enables producers to link with customers who may be interested in establishing trade relations (and vice versa), either through detailed exposure on the TOA website (Figure 5.2) or by being located in directories such as the 'Buyers Guide and Trade Directory' that are regularly circulated to all members. In addition, TOA also have an active online social media presence, using the popular platform of Twitter as another way to interactively communicate with existing and potential members in 'real-time'. This also serves as a space for TOA to showcase their services and to interact with prospective members or consumers who may be interested in the region's food and drink products.

Figure 5.1: Structure of TOA

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Source: Adapted from TOA (2012)

Figure 5.2: TOA member directory freely available to view online

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Source: TOA (2012)

There are five types of membership options available: producer, associate, wholesaler, affiliate and corporate (TOA 2012). Producers are the main type of members belonging to TOA (233 members). Producer members are comprised of the region's food producers, farmers, production businesses and enterprises, while associate members consist of the retail outlets who stock food products grown or manufactured by the regions producers. Wholesale members are similar in that they provide an outlet for local regional produce. Affiliate members are professional organisations who may be able to provide further services to TOA members, while corporate membership is available for larger retailers.

TOA Trading was created in 2001 because of the need for TOA to be self-funding following the withdrawal of external assistance in 2002. Currently they work with 75 producer members, linking and distributing local produce to outlets in the region in a similar system as with GiG. However, TOA Trading operates within a context where there are less infrastructural constraints and where road networks in rural areas are reliable, accessible and well maintained. As has been discussed in chapter 2, ineffective infrastructure is a major limiting factor for the efficient functioning of short supply chains, presenting a major obstacle for small-scale rural producers and organisations attempting to get food from 'farm to fork' (Freidberg and Goldstein 2011).

TOA Trading is TOA's way of creating and sustaining SFSC by linking the producers with retailers and outlets in the region; what Renting *et al.* (2003) refer to as 'proximate' SFSC (given the role of the intermediary between producer and end consumer within a region). However, TOA make no reference to SFSC specifically and are instead concerned with generating trading relationships, of which SFSC are a part, rather than specifically focusing on SFSC. Indeed, one of TOA's core principles is to help facilitate and develop external relationships and trade throughout the region's food and drink sector, serving as a catalyst for a variety of SFSC across the counties of East Anglia. Members of TOA are not obliged to use TOA Trading as a way to market or source food as it is an optional market outlet that can be used in the same way as any distribution or wholesale service. However, unlike other distribution businesses, TOA Trading can utilise attributes associated with SFSC, such as proximity and quality, whereby those in receipt of food products have a degree of knowledge about the food's provenance

and can make a judgement as to its quality through the geographical TOA brand and identity. This is an advantage over other distribution businesses who may take a more commoditised, 'placeless' and 'faceless' approach to food distribution and make no connection between PPP as is the case with TOA. Indeed, the very name evokes some PPP linkages and draws on quality attributes through the very language of its name; *Tastes* (product) of *Anglia* (place).

As part of the marketing and membership services, TOA host regular promotional events. These include 'meet the buyer/producer' events, whereby producers and customers from the region come together to showcase their products and services, establishing trade relations and developing networks. TOA also provide support workshops to help members with their business development and routes to market. These training events address aspects of social media marketing and customer service, and a separate online social media account was created by TOA specifically for these events in 2013. This serves to increase the awareness and uptake of training events that are available to members to improve their skills and strengthen the livelihoods of the region's food producers and enterprises. As such, membership to TOA can be seen as a way of fostering SFSC amongst producers, retailers, distributors and consumers throughout the region. This includes nurturing direct relationships and trading based around shorter, direct supply chains amongst its members.

SFSC that occur between businesses can therefore be understood more as producer-*customer* relationships, as the end consumers of food are not always the person who buys and interacts with the producer. However, establishing 'relations of regard' and supply chains that are founded on 'close' social proximity relations (and not just geographical proximity) between producers and *customers* is important for small-scale producer's livelihood strategies. Indeed, it is this aspect of social proximity that distinguishes SFSC from other less 'personal' (or 'conventional') supply chains. As such, social proximity, trust and embeddedness between producers and the intermediaries – and not just the end consumer - is a key part to spatially proximate and extended SFSC. This is captured by one of the participants, Producer X, who is based in Suffolk and runs a small, independent deli and local food outlet. They regard the personable, socially embedded

relations between other actors in the region's food industry as fundamental to their livelihood strategies. They say:

“If you work it back, I'm a customer and using a smaller company I can talk to them more and it is done on more of a trust basis, so things like your credit terms and that sort of stuff... I use [a fish supplier who are part of] the Brake Brothers Group, so they're a big multinational company and we are just a number in their system, so if you're a week late on paying your bill you have to stop and that sort of thing whereas my butcher, he knows me very well, in fact all my suppliers, apart from that one know each other very well. We pay each other on time and sort of look after each other. So that sort of smaller, more personal relationship going the other way is important as well.”

(Producer X, Suffolk)

These 'producer-business' or 'producer-customer' relationships, however, have received far less attention than 'producer-consumer' relationships within recent AFN and SFSC research, but as noted in the preceding quotation, play an important role in sustaining locally based supply chains, and in sustaining small-scale food producers and retailers. Indeed, the trust and 'regard' for one another is an important differentiating characteristic from other types of supply chains and business relationships that occur on larger, more anonymous scales.

5.4 Producer members

This research is especially focused upon small-scale food producers and so the 'producer members' within TOA were of particular interest and investigated further to better understand and profile the types of producers in the East Anglia region. Unlike GiG, who do not have as detailed a profile/database of the producers they work with, a breakdown of existing secondary data (online) available about TOA's producer members was possible. The basic analysis of this data reveals some notable results. Figure 5.3 shows a breakdown of the 233 TOA producer members (as of summer 2012) by county, revealing that although TOA operates across the six counties in the East Anglia region, membership is concentrated in the three counties of Norfolk, Essex and Suffolk. There are also a small number of members

based in the Greater London area (Middlesex, Surrey and central London) who are deemed to be legitimate members of TOA by way of supplying *into* the East Anglia region and/or to TOA Trading.

The inclusion of members from outside the region is due to the presence of food producers in Greater London who have identified the geographically close counties of the Eastern region as a viable market outlet. Furthermore, this situation reflects the on-going difficulty with scale and defining relational terms such as 'local' and 'regional'. It also highlights the arbitrary and porous nature of geographical boundaries because although producers in Greater London are not 'officially' affiliated with or recognised as part of East Anglia, they are physically close. As such, they can engage in short(er) supply chains in much the same way as producers and retailers trading across different counties within the East Anglian region (for example, a Norfolk based producer selling to a farm shop in Suffolk).

Figure 5.3: TOA producer members, members involved with TOA Trading and members with a local/regional distribution remit by county/city

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Source: Adapted from TOA (2012)

For the purposes of the Producer Directory, TOA categorise their members based on types of food product (such as dairy, fresh produce, meat), location (county and post code) and distribution capabilities. For the latter category, TOA use the labels local, regional and national so that other members and prospective traders can instantly see the distribution capabilities of individual food enterprises and to determine whether they would be viable suppliers. Although the total producer membership base of TOA is 233, there are 123 producer members who are categorised as having a local and/or regional distribution remit, as opposed to nationwide. As outlined in the preceding methodology chapter, producers who have a local or regional distribution capability (as opposed to national or beyond) were contacted as this meant they engaged in 'face-to-face' and spatially proximate SFSC. The 123 producer members identified as small-scale account for just over half (52%) of the total TOA producer membership base, indicating a reasonable presence of small-scale food producers, businesses and enterprises throughout the region. It is from this base of 123 producers that the 13 in-depth semi-structured interviews took place.

TOA Trading, which is the distribution side to the organisation, currently sources from 93 of the 233 producer members. This is only 39% of the total number of producer members of TOA. Moreover, of these 93 producers, 77 are based in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, meaning 83% of the producers who are engaged in TOA Trading throughout the East Anglia region are highly concentrated into just three of the Easternmost counties. This is important in that it may indicate limitations for TOA Trading operating over a region as large as East Anglia, especially in terms of the cost of travelling across several counties.

5.5 TOA and Food (Re-)localisation

TOA's services and scope extends throughout the Eastern region of England, but as noted in Figure 5.3, producers are primarily located within just three of the six counties, with most of the region's SFSCs concentrated within these counties. Suffolk (85) has the most producer members, followed by Norfolk (62) and thirdly Essex (42) respectively. The pattern and concentration of these results resonates with existing research that is about the social, cultural and historical context of

food, including the 'Index of Food Re-localisation' (Ricketts-Hein *et al.* 2006). This is a means of understanding how 'relocalised' a region's food system is and an indication of the amount of 'alternative' food networks situated in a given place. 'Relocalisation' is used to capture this because as noted in Chapter 2, much of the recent growth around SFSC, local food and AFNs has occurred as a response to the dissatisfaction and shortfalls of 'conventional' food systems. The 'relocalisation' index is useful to understand patterns around SFSC as it is a quantifiable index and enables comparisons about the extent of local food activity across the UK to be gained. Ricketts-Hein *et al.* (2006) use the following indicators to determine the extent of a region's food relocalisation, with 1-3 being 'production' oriented and 4-6 being 'marketing-oriented' indicators:

- i) Number of local food directories.
- ii) Number of local food producers advertising in local food directories.
- iii) Number of organic farmers and growers licensed with the Soil Association.
- iv) Number of farm shops selling food items registered with the Farm Retail Association (FARMA).
- v) Number of Women's Institute co-operative markets.
- vi) Number of farmers markets.

Ricketts-Hein *et al.* (2006) argue that, according to their indicators, the South West displays the strongest characteristics associated with food relocalisation (Figure 5.4). Of the six counties of East Anglia, Norfolk and Suffolk display a more developed or active 'relocalised' food system in comparison with much of England and Wales. Furthermore, the counties of Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Essex have a less developed index of food relocalisation, with Bedfordshire being the least developed. This suggests that there is less activity around local, quality food products and thus SFSC in the more central counties of East Anglia.

Figure 5.4: Food relocalisation in England and Wales

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Source: Ricketts-Hein *et al.* (2006)

The Index of Food Relocalisation resonates strongly with the geographical concentrations of regional food group membership revealed by this research, but neither fully explains *why* these trends exist. Ricketts Hein *et al.* (2006) suggest that counties with the greatest concentration of local food and AFN tend to be those rich in resources and where there is a diverse agricultural base, and so the presence of SFSC is more a product rather than a driver of regional development (see also Tregear 2011, Kneafsey *et al.* 2013). Primary qualitative data from this research also supports these conclusions, as when asked about the reasons for a membership concentration in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, the Commercial Director of TOA suggests that it is not by design or a deliberate marketing strategy by TOA, but rather through the historical socio-economic profile of the counties, and due in part to the Eastern region's sense of identity:

"I think because of where our location is, where we've pioneered from, is much more that area [referring to Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex] and there's more of a relationship with TOA and East Anglia being the Eastern region. People in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire perhaps don't consider themselves as being 'Anglian'".

(Commercial Director of TOA, 2012)

This reference to 'Anglian' being more applicable in the Eastern areas of the region arguably accounts for the concentration of members in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, as the terminology used by the food group (Tastes of *Anglia*), aligns more with the place identity of food producers in these Eastern, rather than more central counties (such as Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire). In addition to place identity, another important factor for the concentration of producers in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex is due to the more established, active and localised food 'culture' being located there. Indeed, Producer P, a member of TOA engaging in local and regional supply chains, alludes to this by citing the vibrant 'food scene' in Suffolk as a reason for the strong presence of farmers, food producers and growers in the area. This reinforces the Commercial Director of TOA's comments about there being stronger relationships between regional food producers in the Eastern parts of East Anglia:

“I think this part of Suffolk has a very comprehensive network of really good quality local food, all sorts of things [like that].”

(Producer P, Suffolk)

Producer P’s comments about rural Suffolk’s ‘richness’ in local food supports existing arguments by Ricketts Hein *et al.* (2006). However, these comments also indicate that there is a relationship between ‘comprehensive networks’ and the abundance of quality, local food products. This shifts ideas about the reasons why some regions display a greater degree of local food activity, as it is not just the resources and diverse agricultural base that is a determinant to more SFSC, it is *accessing* these resources and being connected to other food sector stakeholders that is a defining feature. As such, at the micro-level and with reference to the capital assets pentagon, social capital plays an important role in the development and sustainability of SFSC. This suggests that being immersed and connected within inter and intra-regional food networks is an important pre-requisite for small-scale enterprises who rely on SFSC for their livelihood.

In addition, regions such as the East of England with ‘more developed’ food relocalisation activity, such as Suffolk and Norfolk, implies that there is a certain ‘culture’ in these areas where consumers value food products with strong linkages to place and artisanal production processes associated with small-scale businesses and enterprises; the PPP linkages discussed in Chapter 2. In this regard, notions of provenance, tradition and ‘speciality’ that are regularly used to demarcate quality in SFSC can be conceptualised as a form of dormant ‘cultural capital’ that the region’s small-scale food production sector draws upon to market their products. This assertion is substantiated and discussed drawing on qualitative material later in the chapter. Firstly, however, an overview of SFSC in East Anglia is presented drawing on the primary qualitative data collected. While the focus of this research was on the spatially proximate and direct, face-to-face SFSC, there is also evidence of extended SFSC.

5.6 Types of producers and SFSC involved in semi-structured interviewing

There is a range of food producers located in the East Anglia region who are involved in different types of SFSC. As noted in Table 5.1, smaller-scale producers with an exclusively local and regional distribution capability engage in direct or face-to-face SFSC, or proximate SFSC. This is due to the geographical proximity between producer-consumer, or retailer, and minimal amount of intermediaries in the chain. This is in comparison to some of the larger producer members of TOA who usually supply locally and regionally, but also have the production capabilities to supply wholesalers throughout the UK, often using supply chains facilitated by internet orders and outsourced distribution services. In these cases, extended rather than more direct SFSC are used, where information about the product and place of production is communicated in some way to the end consumer (e.g. through e.g. quality cues on packaging, certification). While none of the interviewees specialised or produced food that was certified as PDO or PGI, they could still be regarded as 'extended' because of the communication of 'value-laden information' of the food was consumed outside the region of production.

Table 5.1: Distribution capabilities of TOA producer members and types of SFSC

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(Source: Adapted from TOA 2012, Renting *et al.* 2003)

The information about how to categorise SFSC was gathered through questions surrounding where and how products are distributed to consumers. The conceptualisations as made by Renting *et al.* (2003) were used as a means to categorise SFSC. Here, direct SFSC involves a 'face to face' exchange between the producer and end consumer, proximate SFSC involve an intermediary (for example, a distributor) and an extended SFSC involves the sale of goods outside the region of production, but where the provenance and quality of the food is communicated to the consumer through quality cues on labelling and packaging, for example. Table 5.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of the types of producers who took part in the research and where their products are marketed.

Table 5.2: The types of SFSC food producers in East Anglia use to market food products

Producer	Location	Type of products	Supply chains used to market products	Types of SFSC
Producer P	Suffolk 1959	Fruit, fruit juice	Own farm shop, regional wholesalers	Direct & Proximate
Producer A	Suffolk 1998	Fruit and vegetables	Box scheme	Direct
Producer S	Suffolk 1933	Fruit, fruit juice, jams, chutneys	Own & other farm shops, national wholesalers	Direct, proximate and conventional
Producer X	Suffolk 1997	Lightly processed goods e.g. pastries, pies	Own deli, independent retailers in region, farm shops	Direct and proximate
Producer J	Suffolk 2010	Lightly processed goods e.g. pastries and pies	Local and regional retailers	Direct and proximate
Producer B	Suffolk 1940	Meat (chicken, pork)	Local restaurant, friends and family	Direct and proximate
Producer F	Suffolk 1995	Condiments (Jams and chutneys)	Regional cooperative, farm shops	Direct and proximate
Producer G	Suffolk Since 2011	Meat (pork) and lightly processed goods e.g. pastries and pies	Local shop	Proximate
Producer R	Norfolk Since 2004	Meat (pork)	Local butchers, regional wholesaler	Proximate
Producer C	Essex Since 2008	Fruit juice	Friends and family, local cafes and farm shops	Direct & proximate
Producer L	Essex Since 1886	Fruit and vegetables	Pick Your Own, own and other local farm shops	Direct
Producer H	Suffolk Since 1987	Dairy (Ice cream)	Own farm shop, independent retailers throughout region and UK	Direct, proximate and extended
Producer E	Cambs 2011	Condiments	Farm shops and independent retailers	Direct & proximate

Source: Author

Figure 5.5 maps the locations of the 13 producers interviewed across the East Anglia region. The majority of the respondents are located in Suffolk (9), with others based in Essex (2), Norfolk (1) and Cambridgeshire (1). These smaller-scale producers were of interest to the research as they have a more localised scope and focus in terms of who they supply to in terms of their size, capacity and distribution capabilities. This is also a characteristic that enables comparability between types of supply chains with the small-scale producers in The Gambia.

Figure 5.5: The location of producers who took part in semi-structured interviewing in East Anglia

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(Source: Google Maps 2013)

Figure 5.6 breaks down the food producers who were interviewed by type of supply chain and also through product category as prescribed by TOA. Of the 13 producers interviewed, all but four were engaged in multiple types of SFSC, the most common being direct and proximate SFSC. This highlights how producers often utilise a combination of SFSC to market their products. The range of food

that is produced is more varied in comparison to the fresh produce supply chains as seen in The Gambia case studies because there is more diversity in the types of products that are made by small-scale food enterprises in a UK context. Moreover, small-scale food businesses and enterprises in a UK context have greater physical capital and financial capital, especially in terms of accessing credit needed to instigate business development and growth. UK food producers can therefore create and store lightly processed or manufactured goods such as pastries, condiments and 'value added' products such as fruit juices because they have access to the key resources and assets needed, and have the financial capital to be able to (re)invest into their physical capital asset base. This is captured in the following quotation from Producer H:

"We process all the fruit ourselves and so we kind of make up the fruit flavour mixes as it were on the farm, so we're not buying in any pre-processed flavourings and purees and things like that, and then we make them all here and pot them all up and we've got a walk in freezer on the farm where they all get stored and then they all get packed for the orders on the farm here and then either picked up by the courier or the wholesaler or however they are being distributed".

(Producer H, Suffolk)

The types of SFSC are now discussed in more detail, beginning with proximate SFSC. Primary data collection indicates that these chains formed the most common type of chain that producers use as a livelihood strategy. As noted previously, producers typically draw on a combination of SFSC, but separating each type of SFSC in the following sections is necessary for the purposes of fully discussing and explaining the results.

Figure 5.6: Types of food and supply chains used in East Anglia

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(Source: Adapted from TOA 2012)

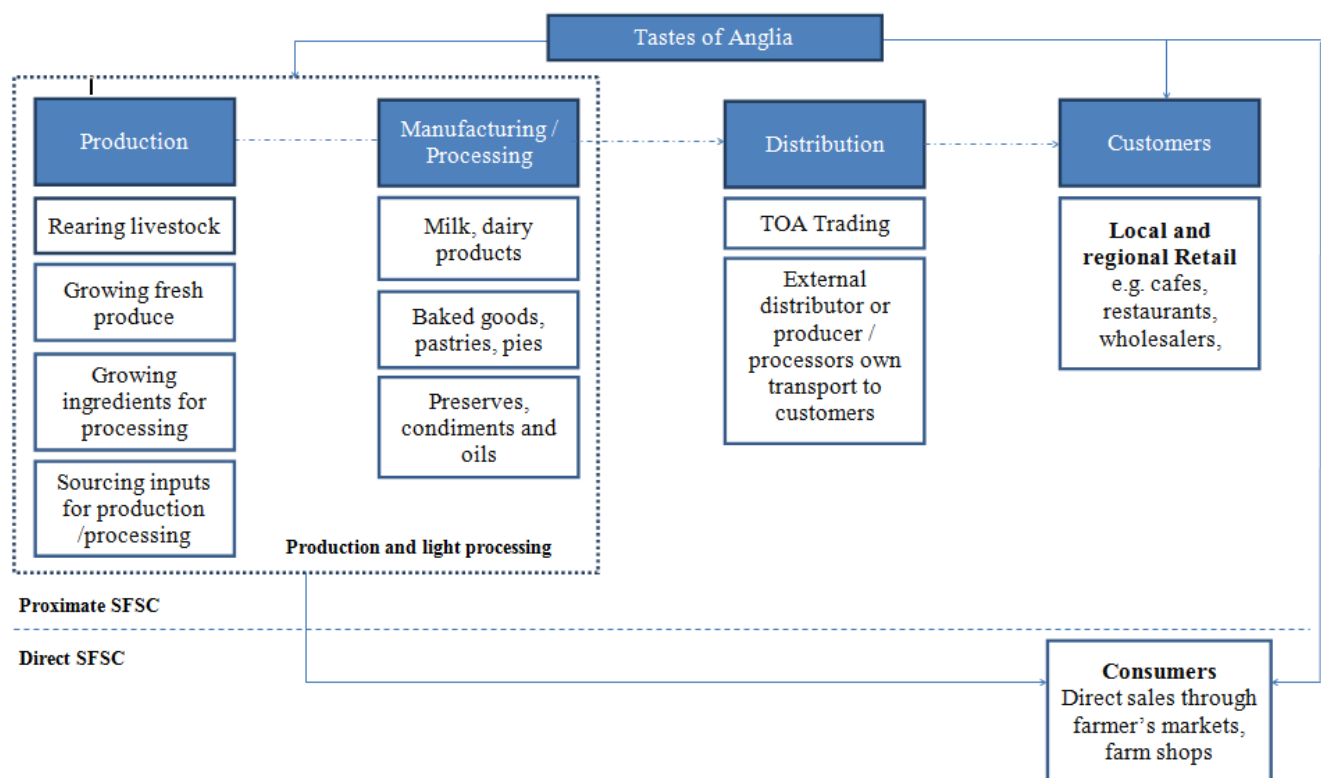
5.7 Local and regional: spatially proximate SFSC

The types of SFSC that small-scale producers use are typically 'direct' or 'proximate' SFSC, whereby relationships with consumers occur on a 'face-to-face' basis, or where there exists at least one intermediary in the supply chain, such as a distributor or retailer (Figure 5.8). There is also evidence of producers engaging in more extended SFSC, and one producer engages in 'conventional' chains.

It is unsurprising that direct and proximate SFSC are the most common form of marketing, as the physical production and distribution capabilities of small-scale producers tend to be limited to a smaller local or regional market. Indeed, production ranges from operating out of garages and place of residence, as is the case with Producer C and Producer E, to farmers with up to 270 acres of land. The latter was the case with Producer L, an arable farmer, although a smaller amount of this land is dedicated to fruit and vegetable production and Pick Your Own (PYO). As such, the food chains the producers engage with are often

physically short and involve very few intermediaries. As Figure 5.7 shows, production and light processing form the start of surveyed UK SFSC in East Anglia, and are either direct or proximate based on whether there is an intermediary, as well as the type of relationship that exists with customers or end consumers of food. TOA also serves to connect customers with food producers and enterprises by showcasing members in their online directory (see Figure 5.2), trade shows, events and circulated brochures. Producer members receive these benefits and opportunities through their membership fee, although members of the public are able to browse the online directory for free.

Figure 5.7: Supply chains of food production businesses who distribute locally and regionally in East Anglia



Source: Author

A determinant to the types of SFSC that producers can use also depends on the type of food products involved. For meat based products that require a degree of manufacturing or light processing, more 'links in the chain' are necessary, and this can make SFSC more intricate than their direct counterparts. This is captured by

Producer R when discussing how their pork is distributed throughout the region using proximate SFSC:

“I send the pigs to an abattoir initially. Approximately half my pigs go to a wholesaler who is also a TOA member, and the other half I sell direct. I suppose I’m the wholesaler. I then wholesale to the local butchers and they are on the same delivery schedule as the slaughter house, so our local slaughter house in Norwich, they come to the butchers once or twice a week with whatever they need and our pigs are in the fridge and they get chucked on the lorry and delivered round on that basis.”

(Producer R, Norfolk)

However, this does not mean that more complex chains that characterise proximate SFSC dilute the embeddedness and provenance of the meat, because as Producer R goes on to say, an essential aspect to their small-scale business revolves around strong branding about the quality attributes of their products. They recognise the importance of communicating this information with customers and consumers who may not have any direct contact with Producer R, or who are familiar with the exact location and production methods. They say:

“The key to us is the brand and that is where we are at, you know. Raising the profile of the brand and brand awareness, it is quite relevant. It is all about the brand and what it means... I want them [consumers and customers] to be aware of the type of pig we’ve got, we’ve got this Large Black sow which is a rare breed and native to East Anglia. We actually cross it because if we didn’t it would be too fat. We’ve got something very saleable and it is one of the rarest pig breeds in the country now and very much endangered.

(Producer R, Norfolk)

In communicating the uniqueness and rareness of the product, which is inherently linked to the region of production, the meat can be differentiated from other commodities. This is evidence of regional or artisanal characteristics being utilised as a quality mechanism (Renting *et al.* 2003), enabling a niche market space to be occupied by the producer and to be valorised based on quality cues such as provenance by consumers. Furthermore, this type of SFSC provides a viable

livelihood strategy not just for Producer R, but to other local butchers who are integral in getting the food to market. Indeed, the notion of provenance is an important differentiating factor in occupying a niche market space. This is also captured by Producer B when discussing the types of transparent relationships that they want to have with their retail customer and consumers:

“One of the things the lady from the Orford stores says is ‘my customers all ask and want provenance’ and I said they can come round here [to the farm] and I’ll show them the chickens, there’s the sheep, and I said, you know, that’s how we’ll do it. And she said that’s great, that’s what people want to see.”

(Producer B, Suffolk)

In a similar fashion, Producer S emphasises the importance of locality and place as having an inherently ‘better’, distinct quality when compared to larger retailers. This enables them to communicate strong product and place linkages that, as noted by Ilbery *et al.* (2005), are an important part of quality construction and market differentiation. Producer S states:

“We try to stress to our customers that local and seasonal is always tastier, fresher, going to be better for them and to spread that through everything rather than just the fruit and vegetables... and it is something that the supermarkets can’t do. They may be able to sell things cheaper than us but they can’t get everything that they sell locally and we can. So it is a point of difference”.

(Producer S, Suffolk)

In the same manner, Producer J recognises that communicating transparency and notions of place, provenance and authenticity to end consumers allows them to differentiate from competitors who cannot make such claims, especially larger companies or businesses who are not located in the region. They state:

“A lot of our customers want to know where [the product] has come from. We only supply within East Anglia so it makes sense for us to only use East Anglian produce as much as we can. It gives us a bit of a ‘unique selling point’ within the area because we are one of very few pastry manufacturers in the East of England,

so it gives us the opportunity to say this to our customers and it gives us a selling point over others.”

(Producer J, Suffolk)

Producer J’s recognition that customers value food products embedded with information about place means that they are able to adopt a livelihood strategy whereby marketing is linked inherently to the social and cultural context in which they are situated in. Moreover, emphasising the nature of production – the process – which is an integral part of the PPP triangle, is another differentiating factor. Indeed, embedding products with information about process is another area where value and differentiation can be created amongst consumers. As Producer G elaborates, the artisanal nature of production, which can also be linked to tradition, is their key area for market differentiation:

“Everything of ours is hand-made individually because that’s what makes you different. We can all do a ‘Pukka Pie’ stamp can’t we and make them all look the same, but every pie comes out looking hand-made, literally. All the pastry is made by hand. Well, sausage roll pastry is bought in but that comes locally, but it’s our own recipe from my husband’s grandfather’s old recipe book.”

(Producer G, Suffolk)

5.8 Extended SFSC

Direct and proximate SFSC were the original focus of this research, but it has emerged that there are some producers engaging in extended SFSC (and in one case conventional supply chains), where retail and consumption occurs outside of the East Anglia region. This is unsurprising given that producers often engage in a combination of supply chains. Although the TOA database lists producers by distribution remit (local, regional, national, the latter of which were excluded from the primary research as per the criteria outlined in Chapter 4), this categorisation does not always accurately reflect the nature of supply chains that producers use in practice. Indeed, 1 of the 13 interviewed producers engaged in extended SFSC.

Producer H, who also uses direct and proximate SFSC, also supplies nationally through several distribution companies. They state:

“Yes they [distributors] cover most of the UK, they don’t go into the depths of Cornwall, Wales or Scotland, but yes, we have got stockists from Glasgow to Kent and across to Cheltenham.”

(Producer H, Suffolk)

These types of supply chains are clearly not physically short and involve at least one intermediary in the supply chain. However, the extended SFSC differ from more ‘conventional’ food chains because of the way provenance and quality is communicated at the point of consumption. Moreover, extended SFSC often use a geographical indicator such as a PDO label as a way to construct difference through connections between product, process and place (PPP) (Ilbery *et al.* 2005). Although no certification is present with Producer H, they recognise the importance of embedding quality attributes within the product and then communicating this to consumers despite the physically long distances between the spaces of production and consumption. Indeed, it is this strategy that enables their products (in this case ice cream and other products) to occupy a niche market space that can command a higher premium over competitors that perhaps do not effectively capitalise on concepts such as provenance. This awareness of marketing attributes associated with product, process and place is encapsulated by the following statement:

“I think people are to a certain extent [prepared to pay more] but they need to know that they are getting something for that. They need to know they are getting something that is better quality, better flavour, better texture, as well as the story and things.”

(Producer H, Suffolk)

This highlights the importance of effective marketing in order to create and sustain market access, and as previously discussed with Producer R, who engages in proximate SFSC, branding is an essential part of sustaining market access, constructing quality and differentiating from competitors.

Producer S supplies fruit beyond the East Anglia region. However, unlike Producer H, the embeddedness and quality of the food is immaterial because the fruit is supplied to a large packing and distribution business in Southern England who then distribute nationally and even internationally. This type of supply chain could be classed as 'conventional' because the food products are treated as commodities by wholesalers who primarily seek 'value for money' as opposed to 'values-for-money'; the latter of which depends on consumers and retailers making purchasing decisions based around provenance and a willingness to support small-scale producers. These are decisions that are not made based on cost alone (Lang 2010). As Producer S states when discussing where the majority of their fruit is sold, conventional, elongated supply chains result in a lack of control. Given that these supply chains are largely disembodied, it prevents producers from determining their own marketing strategies and they are therefore unable to differentiate their products by drawing on production process and place:

"We send all our fruit for the supermarkets to Kent, or to Ireland. We don't have any control. We market our fruit through Worldwide Fruit and they have contracts with whoever they can manage to get contracts with. We used to have quite a bit with Sainsbury's but it is now whoever really. We don't get any choice whatsoever, we don't get any control over what we get paid for our fruit."

(Producer S, Suffolk)

These findings suggests that extended SFSC are viable types of supply chains for food enterprises who produce food that has a longer shelf life and where there has been some light, artisanal processing. It must be noted, however, that the ability to engage with more extended SFSC typically requires greater in-house production capabilities (physical capital) and regular substantial orders for distribution to remain cost effective. However, unlike 'conventional' chains, extended SFSC and chains with reduced links such as proximate SFSC enable producers to retain a degree of control and to add value by embedding products with quality cues around provenance and/or production processes.

5.9 Proximate and Extended SFSC and cultural capital

It is this juncture where cultural capital is evident and being drawn upon as an asset by food producers to market and differentiate their products. This is because the social and cultural context of food production is used to create meaningful linkages between product, process and place. As mentioned previously, the East Anglia region displays evidence of ‘more developed’ food relocalisation in comparison to much of the UK (Ricketts-Hein *et al.* 2006), and it is especially developed in the Eastern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. These are areas that appear to more closely align with an East Anglian identity, and are places where there is agricultural heritage and a stronger, clearer association with food production. Moreover, and as noted by Producer P, who is located in the coastal areas of Suffolk, these counties are home to an affluent consumer base, with relatively close markets where niche products can be sold:

“I think we live in a relatively affluent part of the country, I don’t know what the indicators or numbers will be, but I think it’s a relatively affluent part of the country and I think that makes our life an awful lot easier. You know, there are people who have a) the time and b) the money to perhaps spend a little bit more, you know, not constrained to tearing to Tesco’s, buy everything and then tear out because they’re short for time.

(Producer P, Suffolk)

Given the extent of relocalisation activity around regional, quality and ‘speciality’ foods in East Anglia, producers located there are at an advantage in terms of the livelihood strategies available to them. This advantage relates to marketing strategy and drawing on the quality cues associated with provenance because “although region of origin is not necessarily synonymous with quality, it does imply artisanal skill, purity of ingredients, environmental and employment benefits, and differentiation of products in terms of perceived authenticity” (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999: 2215).

The key point here is that when quality cues draw upon a sense of place and/or the small-scale, artisanal nature of production, food producers in areas of more developed food relocalisation utilise particular contextual attributes as a form of

'cultural capital', enabling them to have a livelihood strategy that makes use of strong, clear linkages between PPP (Ilbery *et al.* 2005). Conversely, food producers in areas of 'less developed' food relocalisation have less clear, weaker PPP linkages, which inhibits their ability to construct quality cues associated with place, process and tradition. As discussed as part of the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, cultural capital is not included as a bespoke asset in the original SLF (DFID 1998). However, more recently, culture has been increasingly recognised as an important form of capital in promoting sustainable development agendas (Cochrane 2006, Dakson and McGregor 2012). Cultural capital, as with social and human capital, can be 'intangible' and embodied, a set of values and beliefs that are learned and performed as part of social traditions and customs.

However, Bourdieu (1986) states cultural capital can also be tangible and exist in an objectified form as material products of a society. This is significant in terms of food because, as with other material cultural products such as music, dance and language, food is an important tangible product that can be experienced as a representation of a particular culture, place or identity, even if the end consumer has no direct affiliation with such people or places. Indeed, food presents an opportunity for consumers to embody culture and place, if only momentarily, through acts of cooking and eating (Hayes-Conroy and Martin 2010, Carolan 2011). It has a unique role in communicating particular identities, tastes or production processes associated with a particular place or social group. Crucially, food producers who are able to communicate these notions of provenance and authenticity, and embed products with value laden information are therefore making use of cultural capital for their livelihood strategies.

Cultural capital is therefore highly dependent on context and is an asset that not all food producers, businesses or enterprises engaged in SFSC may be able to capitalise on. Indeed cultural capital may not be as easily utilised or communicated where there is 'less developed' relocalisation, or where there is less tradition and association between products, processes and place. Such linkages are needed for concepts such as provenance and 'tradition' to be constructed as a means of differentiation. This may account for less SFSC and small-scale producer members of TOA from regions such as Hertfordshire and

Bedfordshire, as linkages between products, processes and place are less clear or established.

Figure 5.8 is a conceptual representation of the relationships between food relocalisation, cultural capital and the construction of quality amongst proximate and extended SFSC. This is based on evidence from research situated in the UK, although as discussed in Chapter 7, this can also be applied to the Gambian context where food relocalisation is less 'developed'. In explaining Figure 5.8, areas of 'less developed' food relocalisation (e.g. Hertfordshire) have 'weaker' linkages between product, process and place. This prevents food producers from adopting marketing strategies that construct difference around notions of provenance and 'speciality', even if the process is small-scale and artisanal and the retail is through SFSC. Where there is 'more developed' food relocalisation and a stronger heritage of small-scale food production, as seen in Norfolk and Suffolk (and indeed large parts of the South West of England), producers are able to draw upon cultural capital because the socio-cultural and historical context enables them to showcase the 'stronger', more established linkages between product, process and place.

Cultural capital in the context of SFSC can therefore be understood as the usable outcome or utility of the entanglements between heritage, provenance, tradition and socio-cultural processes such as social embeddedness. These entanglements are arguably what comprise the linkages between PPP and are what enable the all-important process of quality construction to take place within SFSC. In relating this back to the conceptual framework from Chapter 3 (Figure 3.5), cultural capital as a usable asset for food producers is therefore dependent on the context and *informal* processes associated with quality construction and horizontal embeddedness, more so than *formal* structures and processes associated with law and regulation. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, these are linked and inter-dependent and are connected through vertical embeddedness (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). Cultural capital ultimately allows producers in 'more developed' food (re)localisation contexts to differentiate products throughout proximate and extended SFSC, allowing a degree of reconnection that would otherwise take place through the face-to-face interaction between producer and consumer (Kirwan 2006). This result adds another layer to the work of Ricketts-Hein *et al.*

(2006) as well as to future work on livelihoods and SFSC, and as such is presented in the concluding chapter (Chapter 8) as part of a discussion about future research agendas that have emerged from this research. Moreover, cultural capital and the diagram presented in Figure 5.8 is also revisited in Chapter 7 as part of the discussion, comparative chapter between SFSC and livelihoods in the UK and The Gambia. This is because The Gambia arguably aligns more with the 'less developed' food relocalisation side of the spectrum discussed in Chapter 7.

Figure 5.8: Conceptual diagram to show the relationship between food relocalisation, cultural capital and constructing difference in proximate and extended SFSC

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(Source: Adapted from Ilbery *et al.* 2005: 119, Ricketts-Hein *et al.* 2006)

However, for direct SFSC, where there are no intermediaries, other forms of capital are more important in terms of sustaining and differentiating products. Direct SFSC are now discussed to explain how they function differently.

5.10 Direct SFSC

The preceding discussion about cultural capital was centred primarily on proximate SFSC. For more direct SFSC, where interaction occurs on a 'face-to-face' basis between producer and consumer, branding and constructing quality cues around provenance, and therefore utilising cultural capital, is less important. Rather, it is social capital that is the key asset and process that facilitates these types of SFSC. This is because quality is more easily communicated through the personal relationships between producers and consumers as opposed to solely through other quality cues implicit in packaging, labelling or other materials. This is noticeable with Producer B's direct supply chains, as they sell direct from the farm to consumers, adding that "its friends and family that buy at the moment basically". Here, the quality of the product requires no further 'guarantee' given the close relationships that exist between producer and consumer. Similarly, Producer C runs a small fruit juicing business whereby local residents often bring their own supply of apples to be juiced, or consumers purchase directly from Producer C's own supply of apples obtained from local orchards. With this artisanal and small-scale enterprise, the direct SFSC is highly dependent on the type of relationship that exists between the producer and consumers rather than any marketing strategy based around product, process or place. As such, the SFSC is facilitated by social capital more so than cultural capital. They say:

"Yes, we do have a few regular people pop in, we have a shop here and although we're not really open, we do have the odd person who knocks on the door and asks if they can buy some apple juice and they tend to be regular or have brought their apples before."

(Producer C, Essex)

This shows the importance of informal local networks amongst consumers in securing sustained, repeat custom, these networks and relationships develop through direct contact and not through any official, deliberate marketing using the quality attributes. Notions of quality are implied and do not need to be explicit. In addition, personal contact with direct SFSC over time fosters a greater sense of

care between producers and consumers (Kneafsey *et al.* 2008) and also a sense of loyalty and trust (Sage 2003). This is captured by Producer A, who cites direct relationships with customers as their 'Unique Selling Point'. They say:

“The thing about a lot of our produce, particularly when we are selling face to face, is we can tell people this comes from so and so, we sourced this from here, we’ve sourced this from there. Our product knowledge is very good but the big thing is customer service. When you go to Sainsbury’s you might get the smiling face *et cetera*, but you don’t get to know people. We’ve built up quite a relationship over the years with customers who come week in and week out.”

(Producer A, Suffolk)

5.11 Direct SFSC and fresh produce

Direct SFSC are also more conducive than proximate SFSC when certain types of food products are involved. This is most notable with fresh produce supply chains, of which five of the 13 producers interviewed are involved with (see Figure 5.7). This is worth exploring because fresh produce chains were the exclusive focus of research in The Gambia, and so more detailed comparisons can be drawn. As discussed in Chapter 4, the perishable nature of fresh produce presents certain limitations regarding transport and retail. This perishable property of fresh fruit and vegetables is a determinant for the type of SFSC that can be used. Unlike ambient, frozen or processed and packaged goods, fresh produce has a far shorter 'shelf life' and is more vulnerable to damage, meaning that the more extended the supply chain becomes, the smaller the window for final retail and end consumption. This is an undesirable position for retailers and distributors alike as it creates more pressure to manoeuvre the food to points of retail and consumption quickly to avoid waste and losses. This is captured in the following statement by Producer S when they discussed supplying TOA Trading to distribute throughout the region:

“I did look into trying to supply [TOA Trading] but it seems very difficult with fruits and vegetables and perishable produce. When I spoke to them it didn’t seem to

work and it seemed to get too expensive to make it worthwhile, which I was disappointed about.”

(Producer S, Suffolk)

Producer S was attempting to make an arrangement that would see their produce distributed to retail outlets in East Anglia, creating proximate SFSC via TOA Trading, who would serve as the intermediary between producer and consumer. The reasons for this ‘not working out’ as Producer S puts it are captured in the comments made by a senior member of staff based at TOA who is involved with the commercial aspects of TOA Trading. They cite a lack of space and the perishable nature of fresh produce as limiting factors when dealing with supply chains involving fruits and vegetables:

“We don’t do an awful lot on what I would call totally fresh vegetables and salads. We’re not really geared up for that very fresh produce for two reasons. One it is a lack of space, and two, the majority of those products take up a lot of space and perishes very quickly”

(TOA staff member, based in Suffolk)

Producer P, a fruit farmer, is aware of the difficulty of supplying fresh produce to a regional distributor such as TOA for the reason given above, but they recognise it is also a competitive environment. As such, they regard enrolling into proximate SFSC in this way as financially undesirable in comparison to retaining control and supplying direct. They say:

“We haven’t made use of TOA Trading. We’ve never sold anything through that primarily because the only thing that would lend itself to selling in that way would be the apple juice, and they’ve got a couple of other people who do apple juice through that channel and, you know, it’s just not worth it. So we’ve looked into it and rejected it. They take a cut. There are financial elements to it as well so we wouldn’t be able to sell to them for as much as we can sell direct.”

(Producer P, Suffolk)

Direct SFSC are therefore arguably more suitable when fresh produce is involved and where producers have the capability and capacity to supply directly, because

there are less 'links in the chain' and the food arrives at the point of consumption more quickly and without additional distribution or handling costs. This is a reason why Producer L continues to operate a successful PYO fruit farm and farm shop in Essex where supply chains are direct.

However, direct SFSC are only made possible if producers: i) have the physical capacity to supply directly (at a farmers' markets or home/box delivery, for example), ii) they are located in close proximity to these market outlets, and iii) if there is efficient infrastructure that allows for effective transportation. Direct SFSC are less likely to occur when one or more of these three factors is lacking. If this is the situation for food producers, then proximate SFSC through outsourced distribution will be necessary, although as discussed, this is still problematic where fresh produce is concerned.

Furthermore, this highlights the tension between 'scaling up', which may inevitably require producers to use more extended types of supply chain, and retaining control, which is increasingly difficult to retain once supply chains become more elongated and involve more intermediaries. Indeed, direct and more localised forms of food provisioning based around personal, regular contact with retailers and consumers enable small-scale food producers to retain greater control of supply chains, but at the expense of scaling up or commercialising production. This is clearly a trade-off that food producers face when determining their livelihood capabilities and strategies.

The discussion now focuses on the relationships that exist amongst food producers throughout the region, as the collaborations and networks food producers form with one another has emerged as a key finding from the UK research.

5.12 Collaboration within the local and regional food sector

Direct and proximate SFSC are evident in the region. These supply chains that are made possible through the collaborative relationships within the region's food sector. A focus on collaborative networks and relationships is needed in order to

understand how and why small-scale food producers capitalise on and engage with direct and proximate SFSC as part of their livelihood strategies.

The relationships that exist amongst small-scale producers throughout the region's food and drink sector is an important finding from the UK research. It not only highlights that local food systems are dependent upon food producers collaborating with one another, but also that producers themselves are typically more dynamic than the one-dimensional label of 'producer' suggests. Indeed, producers can simultaneously be food retailers, processors and/or distributors, activities that are better encapsulated in the term 'local food *providers*'. The links that are often established at regional trade events or through use of the TOA directory foster mutually beneficial relationships with one another. This enables them to have a wider range of livelihood strategies at their disposal, and to utilise other local food producers as a route to market.

Moreover, producers usually have an in-house retail outlet, such as a farm-gate shop, cafe or 'over the counter' space, and in order for these to be viable for consumers, a range of stock beyond the producer's own food growing and/or processing speciality is needed. This is captured by Producer S, who also alludes to going 'beyond local' to source particular foods in order for their retail outlet (in this case a farm shop) to be a sustainable, viable option:

"The original plan was only to sell produce grown on the farm, however, it soon became apparent that that wasn't really a viable option and over the years the range has steadily increased. So we stock most of the main local producers. Where we can't buy locally we go further afield, so across the UK and we do have some imported things as well. We finally decided that you have to have lemons because if you haven't got lemons they'll [consumers] go to the supermarket to get their lemons and then they might not come to you."

(Producer H, Suffolk)

Similarly, Producer S is often 'forced' into going beyond the 'local' in the interests of stocking a wide range of products in their retail outlet. Aside from Ilbery and Maye (2005), this trade-off between local sourcing and business viability is not

captured in prevailing conceptions of SFSC. However, it is evident that supporting other local food enterprises is a priority in terms of sourcing food for their on-site farm shop. They say:

“We don’t have a set catchment that we call local. When we do all our fruit and vegetables we label where it comes from because it is a legal requirement, so when we know... you know our potatoes have come from Elveden or whatever else, we will be making sure that we will be writing that in big letters and making sure that people know where that is and that it is only 20 miles away or whatever it is so that people are aware that we’re trying to be as local as possible. Obviously you can’t do it with everything all year round. We do have South African apples in the shop at this time of year and people expect to be able to buy apples so you can’t really avoid that. But wherever we can be local we are.”

(Producer S, Suffolk)

5.13 Supporting local producers: priority or pragmatic?

The reason Producer S prefers to support other local food enterprises cannot be reduced to cost or convenience alone. Rather, it is because of the desire to support others in a similar position to themselves.

Similarly, Producer A aims to support local, smaller-scale growers as part of their strategic business model:

“We run a box scheme, and as with all box schemes, we source in locally, and that is where we come in to support other local businesses as well, which is really important for us. Particularly to support small growers, it is very, very important to get them on board. So they supply us with some of our produce, because our thing is we try and source everything within a 10 mile radius. We try to, it is not always possible and we have some quite good relationships with our growers who tend to be small scale.”

(Producer A, Suffolk)

This supports the work of Ilbery and Maye (2005) who argue that food producers heavily engaged in SFSC and AFN often draw upon more 'conventional' chains as and when is necessary (in times of high consumer demand, for example). As such, it is unsurprising that there is a 'hybridity' of both short, alternative chains operating alongside more conventional chains, but there exists an underlying preference to source locally.

While there is evidence of a strong preference to work and develop relationships locally, Producer R's business model goes beyond preference to one of *reliance* on other local food providers. In this instance the ability to develop and sustain local collaborative relationships with other actors involved in the meat trade (such as local butchers, slaughter houses) is essential to their own livelihood strategy. However, this reliance is a deliberate choice and reflects the sense of care that Producer R has for the local community and local businesses. They say:

"Our business model is based on an understanding that we're the pig farmers and the butchers are the butchers, and we've got a working relationship with the butchers and we don't cross over. So part of what we're doing is... hopefully our brand will help the butchers remain in business, because things in the high street are pretty tough... If we can give them and other local businesses can give them a point of business, then hopefully they can stay in business, and we need them to stay in business because we're not looking to supply the supermarkets"

(Producer R, Norfolk)

Thus, the existence of collaborative local relationships amongst small-scale producers can be understood as primarily about economically driven (livelihood) business decisions and strategies. However, this collaboration can be regarded as a livelihood strategy born out of some degree of care for others in the same sector, as well as preserving the local fabric. The widespread preference to collaborate with other local food producers also means that there exists a range of livelihood strategies and local supply chains for small-scale food producers and enterprises to 'tap in to', providing both local routes to market for producers, and a variety of local products for retailers and consumers throughout the Eastern region.

However, developing networks locally and regionally can also be based upon pragmatism or solely by business reasons, more so than a 'regard' for other food producers. This is captured by Producer L who says:

"If people want it [our products], they'll come and get it and that is what they do. For instance, we sell local cream and they come in to drop the cream off and they pick up some fruit. We do the same with ice cream, we've got a brand of ice cream that somebody makes with our strawberries, it is not branded with our name it is branded with his name but the strawberries come from us. He does the same and we also have a small café from this year, which again the bread and stuff will come in and they will take fruit away so we just try and make it as efficient as possible really."

(Producer L, Essex)

The degree to which producers collaborate and develop networks with others depends on their underlying motivations, business goals and livelihood expectations. This is now discussed, considering how producers engaged in a range of SFSCs determine their livelihood strategies and make use of the resources and networks available to them.

5.14 'Profit sufficers' and 'profit maximisers'

The results presented here support the assertion that there are two broad 'types' of small-scale producers who are engaged in SFSC in the UK. These can best be understood using the terminology of 'profit sufficers' and 'profit maximisers'. To some degree, all food producers who trade as a business are 'maximisers', as they seek to earn income and a livelihood through the production and/or retail of food products. This is most relevant to larger businesses who may have grown to a capacity where they trade (inter)nationally and do not rely solely on SFSC. However, for small-scale producers, not all are driven by the logic of growth, rather they purposefully remain relatively small. The reasons for this are captured by Producer X:

“We have deliberately kept to a size where we have been manageable, so myself, brother-in-law, and one other guy are the delivery drivers, so we have very much tried to keep personal relationships with customers, and it works really well”

(Producer X, Suffolk)

Given that direct SFSC especially are founded upon and sustained through relationships of trust, care and regard between producers and consumers, Producer X recognises that this way of trading could be compromised through growth and expansion. Similarly, Producer C’s business emerged from a hobby and in order to retain this ‘enjoyment’, they regard their business more as a local service, choosing to operate more as lifestyle business. They say:

“[My husband] thought he’d start it off as a hobby and then that’s what we started doing, juicing local people’s apples in this area and then producing extra juice for ourselves to sell to local farm shops, local cafes and small pubs and things, so that started in about 2008, but only on a very small scale. We haven’t really grown a huge amount and we don’t really supply anywhere further than about a 10 mile radius at the moment because we basically offer this service to people rather than produce a lot of apple juice to sell on, it tends to be just people bringing their own produce and taking it away.”

(Producer C, Essex)

‘Profit sufficers’ may be driven by a range of ‘selfless’, ethical motivations, such as care for the environment as opposed to profitability or growth. For example, Producer H is active in sourcing ‘ethical’ or ‘environmental’ ingredients for their dairy products (which sometimes come from overseas):

“I do buy fairly traded or organic ingredients to make sure that they are being produced in a sort of ethically, responsible manner.”

(Producer H, Suffolk)

Producer H clearly has consideration beyond profit maximisation, but they are engaged in a variety of SFSC. This is an indication that although they have ‘profit sufficer’ tendencies in terms of how and where they source their raw ingredients from, they are also active in identifying and participating in new markets to

generate income and increase brand exposure beyond the region. This is in contrast to other producers who are engaged in SFSC such as Producer C and Producer G. Such producers can be regarded as having 'profit sufficer' goals, but more because 'sufficiency' rather than growth aligns with their lifestyle ambitions. Indeed, for Producer C and G, their livelihood strategies are much more about keeping production relatively small-scale and more localised rather than participating in extra-local and regional markets that require investments to expand capital assets and thus production and distribution capabilities. Moreover, deliberately choosing to remain relatively small-scale affords a greater degree of control over the supply chain and food production process. Producer G, for example, makes reference to running their small-scale business where they can retain control and keep it manageable:

"We make pork pies, various varieties. Beef pies, chicken pies, sausage rolls. We're not aiming to be big... I don't want to build it enormously as I'm at the wrong end of life."

(Producer G, Suffolk)

In this sense, Producer G is involved in small-scale, artisanal food production and localised SFSC primarily as a lifestyle choice where they can reproduce their livelihoods in a manageable way. Their 'sufficer' tendencies and livelihood outcomes reflect what Bebbington (1999) describes as hermeneutic action, making living *meaningful* rather than just 'making a living'. Producer R also continues to be involved in small-scale pig farming for lifestyle reasons and because it affords them a livelihood that goes beyond the instrumental logic associated with 'profit maximisation'. They regard their livelihood strategies as an occupation that provides satisfaction and enjoyment by way of the day-to-day working environment, something they have valued since leaving agricultural college in the 1990s. They say:

"For me, I prefer working outside rather than working in a building. Pig buildings aren't necessarily the best place to work I don't think, so I like the open air and I enjoy pigs when they're outside. I won't criticise indoor pig production, but for me it is a situation where I feel happiest."

(Producer R, Norfolk)

This situation whereby small-scale food producers involved in SFSC are either driven by growth or 'sufficiency' and lifestyle factors is because the people behind the businesses can be from a range of backgrounds. Indeed, they may be descendants of established family firms, recent start-ups or individuals with limited knowledge of food production or running a businesses (Treagar 2005: 5). This has an effect on the types of SFSC that producers engage with and also determines the types of livelihood strategies they pursue.

5.15 Summary

This chapter has focused primarily on the results that have emerged from UK based research. This chapter has outlined the structure of TOA, and how the profile of producer membership to the organisation supports the Index of Food Relocalisation by Ricketts-Hein *et al.* (2006). The three counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex display 'more developed' food relocalisation in comparison to the other counties of East Anglia (Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire). As such, food producers from the 'more developed' areas can draw upon cultural capital to differentiate their products sold through proximate and extended SFSC. Cultural capital refers to constructing difference through horizontal embeddedness, notions of provenance, tradition and speciality, and is more effective where the linkages between product, process and place are stronger and more established.

For direct SFSC, drawing on cultural capital and marketing quality attributes is less important. Rather these types of SFSC are facilitated by relations of 'regard' and trust amongst producers and consumers. Moreover, the same notions of trust often underpin the direct relationships that exist between small-scale food businesses and enterprises in the Eastern part of the UK. However, there are also food producers who seek to 'scale up' and as such, this research supports the existing typologies of profit maximiser and profit sufficer. These labels reflect how SFSC food producers are driven by a range of ambitions and motivations that cannot be reduced to instrumental action alone (Treagar 2005), rather there is

evidence that they seek livelihood strategies and outcomes that align with broader values and lifestyle choices. As such, there is evidence that livelihood strategies are characterised by more hermeneutic, meaningful outcomes (Bebbington 1999) in tandem with instrumental ones, further reinforcing the argument that maximiser and sufficiency tendencies are not a dualism but rather a spectrum. Re-producing rather than expanding livelihoods is often the ambition of small-scale producers of local or traditional food products.

The thesis now turns to The Gambia case study and presents the empirical material that has emerged from exploring SFSC dynamics facilitated by GiG.

Chapter 6

'Doing' Short Food Supply Chains in the global South: evidence from The Gambia

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results of the case study from The Gambia. Firstly, the context is presented, focusing on the socio-economic geography of the country, followed by a brief discussion on the current and historical political economy of The Gambia. Food security, agricultural and horticultural production, and the tourist industry are then discussed and information about GiG, the case study that was the focus for research, is provided. This develops into a critical debate about GiG and the livelihood strategies and outcomes of rural and peri-urban food producers with whom GiG work. Direct and proximate SFSC are incorporated into this discussion, and the supply chain dynamics are explored and unpacked with reference to production, distribution and consumption. This chapter then concludes with a summary about how the GiG model is largely inappropriate to the context in which it operates, and that SFSC as conceptualised in the global North need critically re-drawing if they are to have impact in a developing world context.

6.2 Introduction to The Gambia

The Gambia is a former British colony located in West Africa, which gained independence in 1965. It is the smallest country on the mainland African continent with a total land area of 11,295 km² (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). It is almost 22 times smaller than the total land area of the UK. The Gambia's population is also dwarfed by the UK at 1,840,454, while the UK stands at 63,047,162 (CIA 2012)¹⁵. The Gambia is bordered by Senegal to the north, east and south, and has a coastline with the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The capital city and administrative centre of Banjul is located on the southern bank and in the far west of the country, along with the two other major urban centres of

¹⁵ Data accurate at July 2011

Serekunda and Brikama. The country is divided into six geographical regions, formerly known as divisions (Figure 6.1). The six regions are named as follows: Upper River Region, Central River Region, Lower River Region, North Bank Region, West Coast Region (formerly Western Region) and Banjul.

6.3 Geographical context

The GDP per capita is \$1,900 with 75% of the labour force employed in agriculture (Central CIA 2011). In terms of its contemporary developmental position, The Gambia ranks very low at 151st out of 169 countries in the 2010 Human Development Index (UNDP 2011a) and is classified as a Low Income Country by the World Bank. The Gambia has experienced rapid urbanisation in recent decades and continues to be an urbanising society, placing pressures on infrastructure and resources for sustainable livelihoods and food security. Indeed, over half of the population (57.8%) lives in urban areas (World Bank 2013). A recent Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis by the World Food Programme (WFP) found that a higher proportion of food insecure or vulnerable populations are to be found in areas that are predominantly urban (WFP 2011: 6).

The most urbanised areas in The Gambia are located in the Kombo Districts in the west of the country on the South bank. Between 1983-2003, the urban population grew massively by 223% and the rural by 42%, such that the percentage of the population living in urban areas had increased from 31% in 1983 to 50% twenty years later (UN Country Team 2011: 9). The main administrative and populous cities of Banjul and Serrekunda are located in the Kombos, as is the rapidly expanding market town of Brikama. The Gambia's mass tourism industry is also primarily located in the WCR, situated in the coastal towns of Fajara, Bakau, Kotu and Kololi which are served by Banjul International Airport.

Just over 90% of The Gambian population is Muslim although they are comprised from many ethnic backgrounds, the largest of which are Mandinka, Fula, Jola, Wolof, Serer and Serahule. Relations between the many ethnicities are generally peaceful. The structure of the population is also typical of a developing country,

with a high proportion (39.2%) of the population under fourteen years of age and 32% aged between 25-54 years (CIA 2012). These data are an indication of the relatively poor socio-economic context of The Gambia.

Figure 6.1: Map of the Gambia

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Source: GambiaHelp (2014)

6.4 Political and economic context

The Gambia is a Republic, and is governed by President Yahya Jammeh, who came to power in a bloodless coup d'état in 1994 and has since been re-elected as leader of the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) party on four occasions. However, the multi-party elections that he comfortably won in 1996, 2001 and 2006 have been strongly criticised as flawed and unfair (Hughes and Perfect 2008: 110). Prior to Jammeh's tenure, Dawda Jawara served as president from 1970-1994. The Gambian political system has been subject to

criticism¹⁶, but the country's post-colonial trajectory has been less dramatic and volatile when compared to its regional neighbours. There has been no civil war and only one bloodless military coup d'état in 1994, although there was a failed attempt in 1981, which was largely a reflection of political feeling towards the corrupt, elitist governing structures of Gambian society at the time (Hughes 1991). The Gambia has enjoyed a relatively peaceful, stable independence when compared to other West African states such as Burkina Faso (6 coup d'états), Nigeria (6), Ghana (5) and Sierra Leone (5). However, there exists a longstanding civil conflict in the Southern Senegal region of Casamance between the Senegalese State and the 'Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance' (MFDC) who seek independence. The Gambia has occasionally hosted refugees from this area in times of sporadic violence or heightened tension between the Senegalese Government and MFDC¹⁷.

At the time of independence, Jawara inherited few important assets in the key sectors of health, education and agriculture because most governmental expenditures had been designed to facilitate the efficacy of colonial administration and revenue generation (Sallah 1990: 623). Moreover, severe droughts throughout the late 1960s and 70s adversely affected overall economic performance. At the time growth dropped to 1.5% and by 1977 GDP per capita had fallen to a low of \$200 (Sallah 1990: 625). The financial situation continued to deteriorate in the 1980s, mainly due to costly public sector expansion, inappropriate pricing policies and adverse exogenous factors (Sallah 1990: 628). As such, The Gambia followed the global trend of entering into Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in an attempt to instigate development and alleviate poverty.

The Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) was launched in 1985, ending four years later, and although the reforms largely succeeded in satisfying the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the ERP "failed to increase the living

¹⁶ The Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) criticised the 2011 elections that were comfortably won by President Jammeh, claiming that "The Gambia does not have a political environment conducive for free and fair presidential elections" (BBC News 2011)

¹⁷ A discussion about the implications of the Casamance conflict for The Gambia is beyond the scope of this thesis. For more detail, see Evans (2009)

standards for the majority of the rural poor” (Cooke and Hughes 1997: 99). This is because the majority of Gambians rely on an established informal, largely agrarian, economy for their needs, and this was largely neglected by the macro-economic approach of Government institutions. Another SAP, the Programme for Sustained Development (PSD) which followed, was also relatively unsuccessful given its private sector focus in dealing with debt and resource utility, failing the needs of many Gambian people. More recently, The Gambia outlined its plans for sustainable development through ‘Vision 2020’ and the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment 2012-2015. These strategic mandates “recognise that poverty reduction in rural areas requires priority investment in the agriculture, health and education sectors” (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2013: 3).

6.5 Agricultural context of The Gambia

Agriculture is a very important aspect of The Gambian economy and society. This is reflected in the political vision for a vibrant future economy and society. It is a sector that requires continued attention, input and intervention to secure sustainable livelihoods for the majority of the population, as 75% of the Gambian labour force works in agriculture (CIA 2012) and most Gambians are involved in some form of small scale land based production. This includes cultivating groundnuts (the traditional export crop grown predominantly by men), rice, horticultural produce, as well as a number of other food crops (Kea 2012: 2). As with many developing countries, agriculture is a vital sector for the Gambian economy as it comprises 26.7% of GDP. In contrast, the agricultural sector of the UK represents less than 1% of GDP. In The Gambia, peanuts are the primary export crop, with staples such as rice, millet, and sorghum traditionally planted for food (Moseley *et al.* 2010: 5775). In 2011, groundnut exports totalled 137,631 tonnes, millet 158,018 and rice 99,890 (FAO 2012, CIA 2012). Furthermore, fisheries and livestock are important sectors, as is small-scale horticultural production.

Food production levels have steadily increased overall in recent years, but efforts to improve food self-sufficiency by the Government through increased rice production have yet to be successful, due in part to the growing population (Nuijten 2010: 45). However, other external factors such as increasingly erratic rainfall, food price volatility and financial crises (IFAD 2013: 1) that are largely beyond the control of The Gambia have conspired to leave the country's population in a vulnerable position. The result of these factors is that The Gambia remains a net-importer of food staples and the majority of the population susceptible to unpredictable food shortages. Indeed, "domestic production of major grains such as rice has traditionally only covered up to 60% of consumption requirements on average in the last decade, with the remaining gap filled by commercial imports and a small proportion of food aid" (WFP 2011: 13). This deficit exists despite just over 60% of total land area in The Gambia being classified as available agricultural land in 2011 (World Bank 2013).

In an attempt to improve the national food security situation and to alleviate poverty, President Jammeh has regularly urged an increasingly urban population to go 'back to the land' for farming. This has been promoted both as a means of subsistence and to provide income in the form of horticultural trading. The government is also keen to improve larger-scale agricultural production by increasing the area identified for rice cultivation, and assist in the provision of a loan facility to enable farmers to purchase tractors (FAO 2008: 9). However, Carney (2008) and Moseley *et al.* (2010) argue that at present there exists a 'disarticulated national food sector' in The Gambia as a result of policy that has largely favoured imports as opposed to subsidising domestic agricultural production. As Moseley *et al.* (2010) state:

"The long-term effect of economic reforms is a disarticulated national food sector and the emergence of two Gambias. One exists along the urban seaboard, where one-third of the country's population is fed with low-quality broken rice imported from Southeast Asia. The other Gambia is found in the country's interior, where rice cultivation remains significant yet fails to supply urban consumers located a few hundred kilometres away."

(Moseley *et al.* 2010: 5776)

A key point in relation to food producers here is that there are no routes to otherwise viable markets in the Western, more urbanised, part of the country. The transportation, marketing infrastructure and input deliveries available to growers in Asian rice-exporting countries, the source of the majority of imported rice, are simply not present in rural Gambia or West Africa in general (Carney 2008: 131). The weak domestic situation perpetuates the need to import dietary staples and means many rural Gambian food producers are left with a limited range of livelihood strategies despite their otherwise relatively sufficient production capabilities. Moreover, a similar scenario exists with another important aspect to the Gambian agricultural and rural economy, groundnut production and trade. Within this sector, increasing numbers are moving away from groundnut production because of drought, poor market returns, and the lack of subsidies for inputs and groundnut crops (Kea 2012: 7).

6.6 Small-scale fruit and vegetable production

The situation with the horticultural sector is similar in terms of producer vulnerability and accessing commercially viable routes to domestic markets. Small-scale fruit and vegetable cultivation is a very common activity for the majority of the Gambian population in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Indeed, horticulture is emerging as a key area of growth for the Gambian economy as this sector employs 65% of the agricultural workforce and 88% of all women farmers. Horticulture is considered a significant source of income for people living in rural areas and a key contributor to food security, improved livelihoods and poverty alleviation (UN Country Team 2011: 11). Sanyang *et al.* (2009) support this point adding that:

“The production of fruits and vegetables mainly concentrated in the peri-urban and rural communities, contributes 4.2% to GDP. Fruits and vegetables production hold the greatest potential for the provision of additional sources of food, nutritional value and income particularly for the women farmers in the Gambia.”

(Sanyang *et al.* 2009: 169)

The extra income and nutrition that horticulture provides has been essential for micro-scale food and livelihood security in recent years, as highlighted by the recent food crisis and price spikes in 2008 and 2011. Owing to the import-led economy, the impacts of these crises priced many households and communities out of sufficient dietary staples such as rice, and so horticultural production has been essential for the majority of the population to maintain their nutritional intake and income. However, horticulture is also a vulnerable agricultural sub-sector due to the Gambian climate and variations in the wet and dry seasons.

The large proportion of women farmers within the horticultural production sector is due to the traditional gendered division of labour and prevalence of community gardens throughout the country and much of Western Sub-Saharan Africa. These community spaces are traditionally the preserve of women, providing a further livelihood strategy to supplement household food security and income. Community gardens are primarily cultivated in the dry season (November-April) with rice production being the main focus throughout the wet summer months (May-October). However, women who comprise the vast majority of all small-scale fresh produce production do not traditionally own or control land, and often lack access to credit and micro-finance for income generating activities (IFAD 2013: 2). Indeed, the agricultural and horticultural sector of The Gambia is highly gendered (Carney 1993), whereby women bear the burden of both domestic and income generating activities against an historic backdrop of marginalisation and limited access to livelihood assets and resources. Furthermore, while it is traditionally the male responsibility to take care of domestic costs, the reality is that women's income is invaluable in covering expenditures such as school fees and food purchases (Nuijten 2010: 46). It is therefore important that women food producers have sustained access to resources and local markets, enabling them to generate much needed income for themselves and their families. It is largely for this reason why GiG was formed. It was set up to equip women with skills to produce effectively and provide a market outlet in an otherwise crowded, competitive marketplace. The GiG case study is outlined following a discussion about the third key aspect of the economy, and an integral part of the GiG model, the tourism industry.

6.7 Gambia and tourism

The Gambia is relatively unique in comparison to many of its Sub-Saharan Africa counterparts as there exists a tourist industry. This is mostly situated along the Atlantic Coastline in the western part of the country south of the river (Figure 6.2). This sector has an increasingly important role to play in diversifying the country's economy that has in recent decades been largely based on re-export trade and agricultural activity. Indeed, The Gambia has until recently largely functioned as a regional entrepôt, using the river to re-export goods to the West Africa region. However, this has declined due to a combination of tensions with Senegal, harmonization of import and sales taxes in the region and improved port and customs operations in Senegal and other neighbouring countries (World Bank 2014). Given that the re-export economy is increasingly untenable, tourism is an aspect of the economy that The Gambia is keen to develop. This is reflected in the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2007-2011 (IMF 2011).

Tourism brings in about one fifth of the country's GDP and supports over 10,000 direct and indirect jobs, generating taxes that contribute to the national budget. Tourism in The Gambia primarily attracts European winter sun holidaymakers through package tour operators. Although The Gambia offers year-round tourism, the peak season is in the dry, warm winter months from November to April. The remainder of the year is typically wet and humid, less than ideal conditions to attract European holidaymakers away from popular, accessible Mediterranean competitors. The main tourist market is British. In the peak month of January 2011, 48.8% of all arrivals (7,904 tourists) arrived from British shores followed by The Netherlands (2,160) and Sweden (1,060) (GTA 2013). The package holiday appeal of The Gambia is due to the warm climate and beaches, relatively short flight times from several mainland European airports, GMT time zone, favourable exchange rates and cultural heritage. Tourism has experienced steady growth in recent decades with over 30% of total export earnings and about 20% of all private sector formal jobs generated by the sector (Mitchell and Faal 2007: 448).

However, the tourist industry is dictated by large tour operators and is largely restricted to a select few foreign owned hotels, supermarkets and restaurants

along a small part of the Atlantic coast stretching from Greater Banjul to Kololi. Crucially, there are few linkages and very little trickling down to local food producers despite the opportunities that winter tourism presents (Ebrahim *et al.* 2008: 6). Indeed, only about 14% of the Gambian part of the tourism value chain flows to poor people in the form of retail markets, agricultural supply chains, non-managerial hotel workers, tourist guides and taxi drivers (Mitchell and Faal 2007: 463). Furthermore, virtually all goods to support the tourist industry are imported, mainly from Europe and surrounding parts of Senegal, and so relatively few of the country's population are able to capitalise and benefit from tourism (Sharpley 2000: 12). This unfavourable situation is another important factor as to why GiG was created in 2004. It was set up to assist small-scale Gambian food producers with a viable route to the tourist industry in the form of 'short' fresh produce supply chains. The overall objectives of GiG are to reduce imports and provide a viable livelihood strategy for growers in The Gambia, and this case study is now discussed in more detail.

Figure 6.2: The location of the main tourist industry along the Atlantic Coastal strip

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Source: Mitchell and Faal (2007)

6.8 Gambia is Good: context and background

GiG is a fresh produce marketing company, based in the coastal town of Fajara, West Coast Region, in The Gambia. It was conceived as a partnership between an international NGO named Concern Universal (CU), which is of Irish origin, and Haygrove Development (HD). HD is a not-for-profit company started in 2004 by Haygrove Ltd, a leading horticultural SME based in the UK. GiG has received considerable funding, including a £197,000 grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and a total of £120,000 from Haygrove and other partner contributions since its inception (Haygrove 2013).

The purpose of GiG is to link small scale rural producers with the high value tourist market (Ebrahim *et al.* 2008: 6). It was created because in The Gambia producers follow the conventions of subsistence farming, resulting in typically poor yields of poor quality and seasonal flooding of the market, leaving growers unable to sell their produce (CU 2011). Allied to this, and before GiG's inception, the Gambian tourism industry, comprised of restaurants, hotels and supermarkets, was importing produce from The Netherlands, France, Las Palmas and Senegal. This meant that opportunities for the local population to capitalise on the tourism industry have been limited, as tourism development is largely restricted to the Atlantic coastal strip in WCR, in the coastal Tourism Development Zone. According to Ebrahim *et al.* (2008), GiG was created with three core objectives:

- 1) To use GiG as a catalyst to stimulate a vibrant Gambian fresh produce market that develops local livelihoods, inspires entrepreneurship, and reduces the environmental and social cost of imported produce.
- 2) To establish the best practice and up-take of low cost, appropriate packing, storing, and grading of fresh produce by small-scale farmers.
- 3) To leverage technical excellence in horticulture as a catalyst to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor and to replicate the GiG approach in other countries in West Africa.

These objectives clearly reflect GiG's focus on improving the situation for food producers, which as previously mentioned comprises the majority of the Gambian population. GiG can be seen as a response to the shortfalls that have been created by ineffective agricultural policy that has left many Gambian food producers, particularly women, in a vulnerable position and without access to markets. GiG, however, aims to create viable livelihood opportunities for rural and peri-urban food producers in the form of routes to once inaccessible markets. This enables food producers to have a wider range of livelihood strategies and to grow commercially for the tourist industry. Without this, producers are left to grow for subsistence and limited local markets or 'Lumo' markets, regular trading events that take place along the Northern Senegal-Gambia borderlands where prices are notoriously competitive.

GiG can thus be regarded as a means to alleviate this situation by providing a route to the many hotels, restaurants and supermarkets concentrated along the Atlantic coastal strip in Western Gambia. GiG has largely been regarded as a success, winning various international accolades and local awards that endorse the positive impact it has had amongst Gambian farmers, especially amongst women. Indeed, in 2007, GiG diverted £34,000 of sales away from importers and into the hands of local, small-scale producers, helping to redress poverty in rural areas (CU 2011). This system occurred through quality mechanisms that resonate with SFSC as constructed in the global North. These include communicating provenance and using geographically short chains between the point of production and consumption. Furthermore, in 2010, GiG continued its positive impact by purchasing a total of 209.87 tonnes of fresh produce, costing 5,743,724 Dalasi (c. £121,472), all of which was sold on for consumption in the tourist industry.

6.9 GiG structure and organisation

GiG is a social enterprise, but within this GiG also functions as a horticultural sales and marketing business. The organisation of GiG is captured in Figure 6.3. The two key partners are CU and Haygrove, with various external donors constituting the other management elements. Operating under this are the business functions are sales and marketing, business development, the GiG Farm and production.

The final aspect to the structural model (the lower part) highlights the supply chain itself. Firstly, the producers who supply GiG are located in various rural villages in in North Bank Region (NBR) and West Coast Region (WCR). NBR and WCR are the two westernmost regions in The Gambia. NBR is predominantly rural with little tourism, while the WCR is located to the south of the river. This Region, particularly towards the West in towns such as Serrekunda, Brikama and Banjul, is the most populous and urbanised part of the country, and the coastal areas of WCR such as Kololi is where the majority of the tourist industry is situated and where the package holiday hotels are based. Other places where GiG sources its produce are local markets, such as in Serrekunda, and from market traders based in Dakar in neighbouring Senegal to the North. Dakar and the local markets are used as a source of produce only when there is insufficient supply from Gambian producers. NBR is located to the north of the River Gambia and access depends on the short ferry crossing point between the capital, Banjul, and Barra. This infrastructural issue is discussed later in the chapter as a limiting factor that impacts how successful GiG can be in NBR.

The customers of GiG produce are hotels, supermarkets, restaurants, street vendors and retail, with the final consumers being a combination of tourists and locals alike. The key point here is that fresh produce travels a relatively short distance through distribution channels with minimal links in the supply chain, connecting local producers to local customers. The other aspect to the GiG structural model is in the form of agricultural training. The NATC (Njawara Agricultural Training Centre) in the village of Njawara near Kerewan, NBR and Besse Training Centre foster sustainable farming practices amongst producers. They provide skills and guidance for prospective farmers and horticulturalists who wish to be more commercial and access the tourist markets via GiG.

However, the other part to the training model, the GiG Farm, that would otherwise fulfil a similar role to the NATC and Besse Training Centre is in a state of transition and has been since late 2011. The Travel Foundation, a UK based charity, became involved with GiG in 2006, establishing the 'GiG Farm' that served to demonstrate sustainable farming practices to prospective regional entrepreneurial farmers, as well as growing extra produce to supply GiG when certain varieties were in short supply or in high demand. The GiG Farm also generates income

through excursions whereby tourists can 'connect' to the food and producers responsible for providing much of the fresh produce they consume in their hotels and nearby restaurants. However, the GiG Farm, based originally in Yundum near Banjul International Airport, ended operation in 2011 due to the land on which it was based being reclaimed by the Government at relatively short notice. However, another demonstration farm was developed in collaboration with a local community in the village of Sifoe near Brikama in rural WCR in 2011, although this has not been as successful as intended for various reasons. These are discussed later in the chapter¹⁸.

Figure 6.3: GiG organisational structure

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Source: Concern Universal 2011

¹⁸ In addition, following an interview with GiG management staff in 2013, a further farm in the more urbanised area of Sukuta, near Serrekunda and the tourism industry is currently being developed. This is called Songdeh's Farm Enterprise which is designed to support the produce of GiG when in short supply, and to act as a demonstration training centre.

GiG is not a member or subscription organisation and so funding for the project has largely been provided by external, overseas donors. Moreover, the amount of producers and customers 'officially' involved with GiG is unknown. However, GiG purchases from nearly 1,000 growers, 90% of which are women (CU 2011). This is a reflection of cultural farming practices in The Gambia and GiG's desire to improve the livelihood strategies of women horticulturalists and agriculturalists. Indeed, the 1,000 growers GiG claims to have worked with include community gardens, which are predominantly the preserve of women. GiG also works with individual food producers, who are typically male, in rural and peri-urban Gambia. It does not have the scope to purchase from 1,000 growers all year round as there is not the demand from the wholesale tourist industry, nor is there any system to document the producers who take advantage of training provided by GiG. This means that accurate data about the impact GiG is having on rural food producers, and the role of SFSC in rural development, is lacking.

However, there have been some attempts to assess and evaluate various aspects of GiG over the last decade. In 2006, a survey by the Integrated Framework for Trade Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries suggested that household income for the farmers involved has improved fivefold as a result of the GiG initiative. However, the assessment also points out that "tourism does not have the potential to develop a more substantial national horticultural industry and expectations should not be exaggerated" (World Bank 2014: 110). Furthermore, the recent report by Ebrahim *et al.* (2008) focused on evaluating the structure of GiG, arguing that GiG needs to prioritise financial independence and develop principles associated with sustainable business, as opposed to those of NGOs, if it is to be a longer term success. This has implications as to how GiG develops into the future and the effect that this type of restructuring would have on the many rural food producers who engage with GiG is unclear. The narrative now turns to consider some of the food producers who supply GiG, examining how the short food chains made possible by GiG function and how they provide livelihood strategies.

6.10 GiG and an overview of SFSC

The results presented in this section are derived from qualitative fieldwork that took place in The Gambia over several months throughout 2010-2013¹⁹. To begin, clarification is needed about why food chains facilitated by GiG can be conceptualised as 'short'. There are three reasons for this.

Firstly, GiG was originally conceived in 2004 as a partnership between Haygrove, a UK horticultural company based in Herefordshire, and Concern Universal, an international NGO operating in The Gambia. At the time of inception, the Country Director of CU in The Gambia was Niall O'Connor, an Irishman. As such, GiG's strategy was implicitly constructed based on knowledge of 'alternative' and local foods as practised and understood in the global North (UK and Ireland). This is a similar scenario with North American scholars Freidberg and Goldstein (2011) in Kenya. Their AFN project was based on an American CSA model that they were familiar with, which they transplanted to Nairobi and the surrounding rural area. The creation of GiG follows a comparable story, although its discursive roots lie in Western Europe as opposed to North America. Moreover, GiG's market is the tourist industry rather than wealthy urban consumers (such as expatriates) who were the target consumers in the Kenya example.

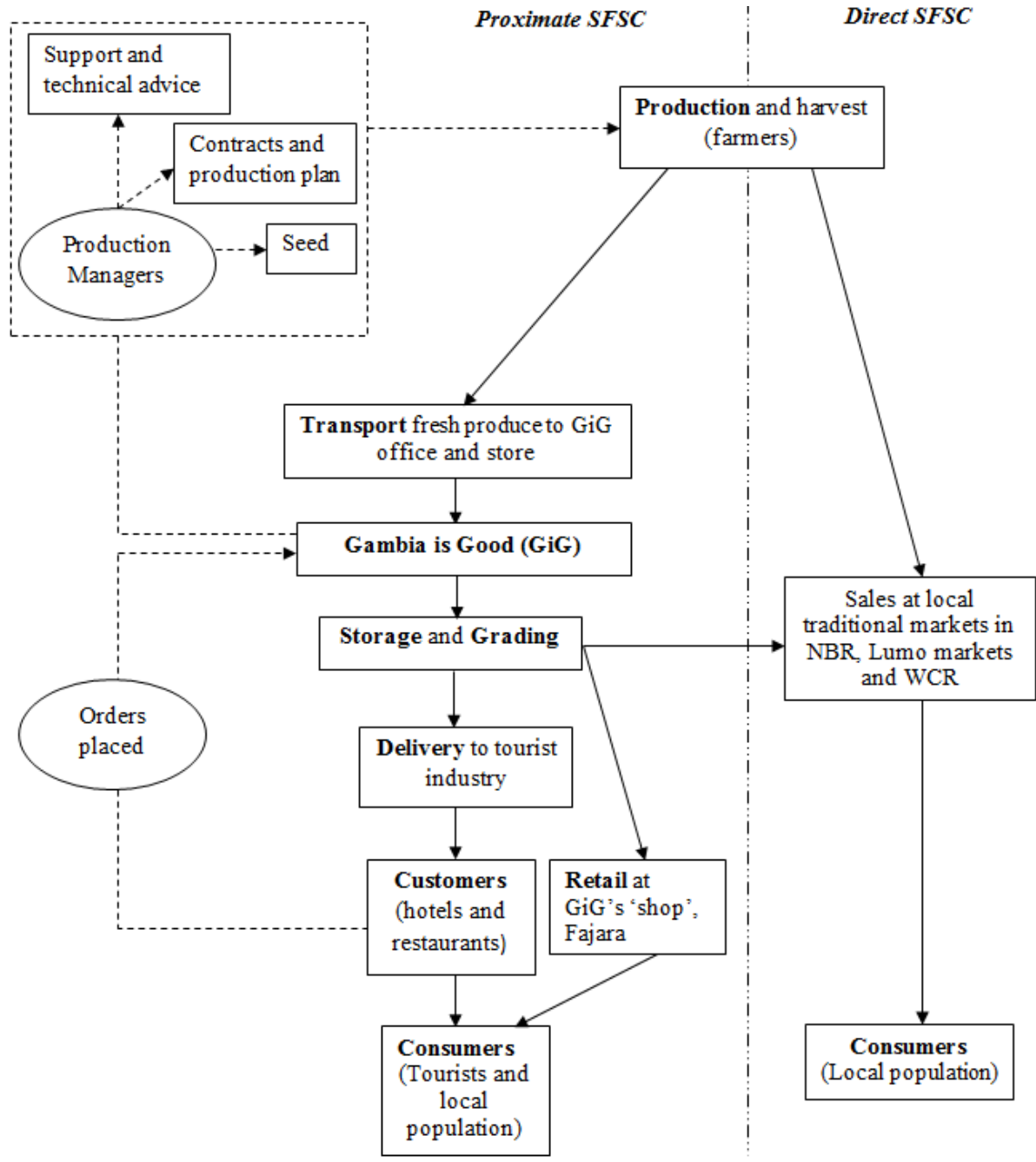
Secondly, GiG's mandate of instigating entrepreneurship, rural development linking local producers with local markets and reducing national imports resonates with some of the core principles associated with SFSC. This means that although GiG does not self-identify with terminology such as SFSC, it embraces the core tenets associated with short. Thirdly, the food chains GiG facilitate can be considered as SFSC because of the ways they make use of quality cues associated with provenance, taste and locality to market the produce. In this respect, GiG's strategy is designed to enable products embedded with value-laden information to arrive at the point of consumption (Renting *et al.* 2003, Ilbery and Maye 2005). As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.11), value-laden information is a defining feature of SFSC from 'conventional' types of food chains

¹⁹ The main period of data collection occurred over a 3 month period from October to December 2011. However, data was also collected and triangulated during a weeklong scoping visit prior to this in January 2011. A follow up visit in November 2013 for one week also took place although this research was not the primary focus of this trip.

along with a reduced number of links in the food chain. However, as Figure 6.4 shows, the SFSC are more intricate and complex than the label of 'short' implies.

Moreover, it is possible to distinguish between types of SFSC. Drawing on existing conceptualisations, it is evident that both 'direct' and 'proximate' SFSC exist. 'Direct' refers to the personal contact between producer and consumer, and proximate refers to supply chains where food is sold in the region of production and consumers are made aware of the 'local' nature of the product at the point of retail (Renting *et al.* 2003: 400). All producers who supply GiG are engaged in proximate short food chains of some description, as GiG serves as an intermediary, supplying the tourist market on a wholesale basis with fresh produce sourced from local producers. However, many producers are involved in some form of 'direct' food chain as they also supply consumers on a 'face-to-face' basis when selling at traditional, local markets.

Figure 6.4: An overview of proximate and direct SFSC in the Gambia amongst producers involved with GiG



Key: ←----- Flow of information, knowledge and exchange
 ←----- Flow of food
 - - - - - Line to separate proximate and direct SFSC space

(Source: Author)

GiG operates as a business by purchasing from producers and then selling it to their customers. However, and by its own admission, GiG is more than just a business. There is also a fundamental development aspect to GiG concerned with improving producer livelihoods through training and by providing a viable market for their produce. This is done through proximate SFSC, which involves a flow of fresh produce from Gambian farms in WCR and NBR, to the country's tourist industry. These supply chains operate when GiG identify and enrol farmers into production plans and contracts based on the demands and orders for local, quality food from the tourist industry. Production Managers assist with the on-farm processes and serve as extension workers to oversee production, whilst GiG staff in sales & marketing liaises with the tourist industry and co-ordinate orders. Once produce is cultivated and harvested, it is transported from the site of production in either NBR or WCR to GiG's head office and storage and distribution centre in Fajara. Here, fresh produce is purchased from the producers by GiG (the sales and marketing team specifically), where it is sorted, graded and stored in a large, secure container (Figure 6.5). The storage container is an important form of physical capital in terms of sustaining SFSC in The Gambia, as it functions as a secure storage space for retail and wholesale customers such as hotels and restaurants (Ebrahim et al. 2008: 29). Indeed, this is a valuable asset given that structures and practices of storing horticultural produce are very limited both in quality and volume throughout The Gambia, undermining the quality and competitiveness of domestic fresh produce (IMF 2011: 69).

This is partly why GiG endorses a grading and quality assurance system. The better quality (grade 1) produce fetches a higher price than poorer quality goods (grade 2 or 3). The produce is then distributed to Gambian hotels and restaurants (GiG customers). Small amounts of produce remain at GiG where it can be purchased by individuals, typically the local population, from their shop. However, the vast majority of fresh produce is sold on and delivered by GiG staff and vehicles to establishments within the tourist industry. For direct SFSC, any surplus produce that is not sold onto GiG by the producer is taken to nearby local markets and sold on to the local population. However, the supply chain dynamics are not as simplistic as this in practice. To explore this further, the supply chain can be broken down into three parts: production, distribution and consumption.

Furthermore, by deconstructing the food chain in this way, the effect that these types of SFSC have on the livelihoods of the producers involved can be fully considered. This is explored following a discussion about the types of producers who are involved with GiG.

Figure 6.5: The GiG storage container at Fajara



Source: Author

Table 6.1: Profile of food producers who supply GiG

Producer	Location	Type of products grown	Supply chains used to market products	Type of SFSC
Producer T Male Gambian	NBR Not known from when	GiG contract: cabbages, sweet pepper, cucumber non-contract: okra, onion	GiG Local and Lumo markets, market in Kaolack, Senegal	Proximate Direct
Producer I Male Togolese	NBR Since 2010	GiG contract: Tomato, onion, hot pepper	GiG Surplus produce to local and Lumo markets	Proximate Direct
Producer M Male Gambian	NBR Since 2008	GiG contract: cassava, onion, sweet pepper	GiG Surplus produce to local and Lumo markets	Proximate Direct
Producers N 30+ Females Gambian	NBR Since 2006	GiG contract: Courgettes, broccoli, cauliflower, beetroot	GiG Surplus produce to local and Lumo markets	Proximate Direct
Producer D Male Gambian	NBR Since 2008	No GiG contract. Tomatoes, cucumber, cabbage, onion grown under no contract	GiG Surplus to Lumo markets, market in Kaolack, Senegal	Proximate Direct
Producer U Male Gambian	NBR Since 2003	GiG contract: Tomato, cucumber, cabbage, aubergine, sweet and hot pepper, occasionally onion	GiG Surplus to Lumo markets, markets in WCR	Proximate Direct
Producer W Male Gambian	NBR Since 2004	No GiG contract. Tomato, cabbages, aubergine, cucumber grown under no contract	GiG Surplus to Lumo markets, markets in WCR	Proximate Direct
Producer K Male Gambian	NBR Since 2004	GiG contract: Aubergine, tomato, bitter tomato, cabbage, onion Other: Cassava	GiG Surplus to Lumo markets, markets in WCR	Proximate Direct
Producers F 100+ Females Senegal & Gambian	NBR Since 2010	No GiG contract: Onion, courgette, tomato, cucumber, cabbage, pepper, aubergine	Subsistence, local Lumo markets	Direct
Producer Q Male Malian	WCR Since 2006	GiG contract: Tomato, sweet pepper, lettuce	GiG Surplus to WCR markets	Proximate Direct
Producer Y Male Guinean	WCR Since 2008	Tomato, hot pepper, water melon, paw-paw, lettuce	GiG Surplus to WCR markets	Proximate Direct
Producers V 200+ Females Gambian	WCR Since 2006	No GiG contract but various fresh produce grown for GiG & other local markets in dry season	GiG Local markets, markets in WCR	Proximate Direct

(Source: Author)

6.11 Profiling small-scale food producers in The Gambia

As discussed previously, GiG claims to have worked with or had an impact upon a large number of producers. GiG works with producers in the North Bank Region (NBR) to the north of the river, and West Coast Region (WCR) to the south. Table 6.1 provides detail about the producers who took part in the primary fieldwork, outlining the type of food grown and for whom, where they sell their produce and the type of SFSC used. A total of 10 individual producers participated in the research, along with 3 women's community farms. The majority of the producers with whom GiG works, and who took part in this research, are Gambian nationals. However, populations in the West Africa region have been historically mobile, with migration from some of the poorest countries such as Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone to more politically stable or relatively affluent countries such as Senegal and Nigeria. Owing to the relatively porous borders that characterise much of Sub-Saharan African countries, The Gambia has been subject to much in-migration from more volatile, conflict zones such as Casamance in Southern Senegal, and from poorer regions where employment opportunities are scarce and poverty is rife. As such, The Gambia, like many of its neighbours, hosts migrant agricultural labourers from surrounding West African countries. This is reflected in Table 6.1 with three of the male producers interviewed who originating from Mali, Togo and Guinea.

The size of producers' land is generally small in terms of commercial production, ranging from a quarter hectare to 2 hectares for individual producers, and up to 10-15 hectares for community gardens. However, of the three community gardens who participated in the research, the total number of women members cultivating them ranges from around 30 (Producers N), to 100 (Producers F) to 206 (Producers V). This means that the individual space per grower is actually very limited, and considerably smaller than the space cultivated by individual male growers. The length of time surveyed producers have been practising horticulture on their current plots ranges from 2003-2010, coinciding with the inception of GiG in 2004. However, their experience and knowledge of cultivating fresh produce often dates back further, as it is an activity they have always been involved with or exposed to through their families from a young age. This is reflected by Producer

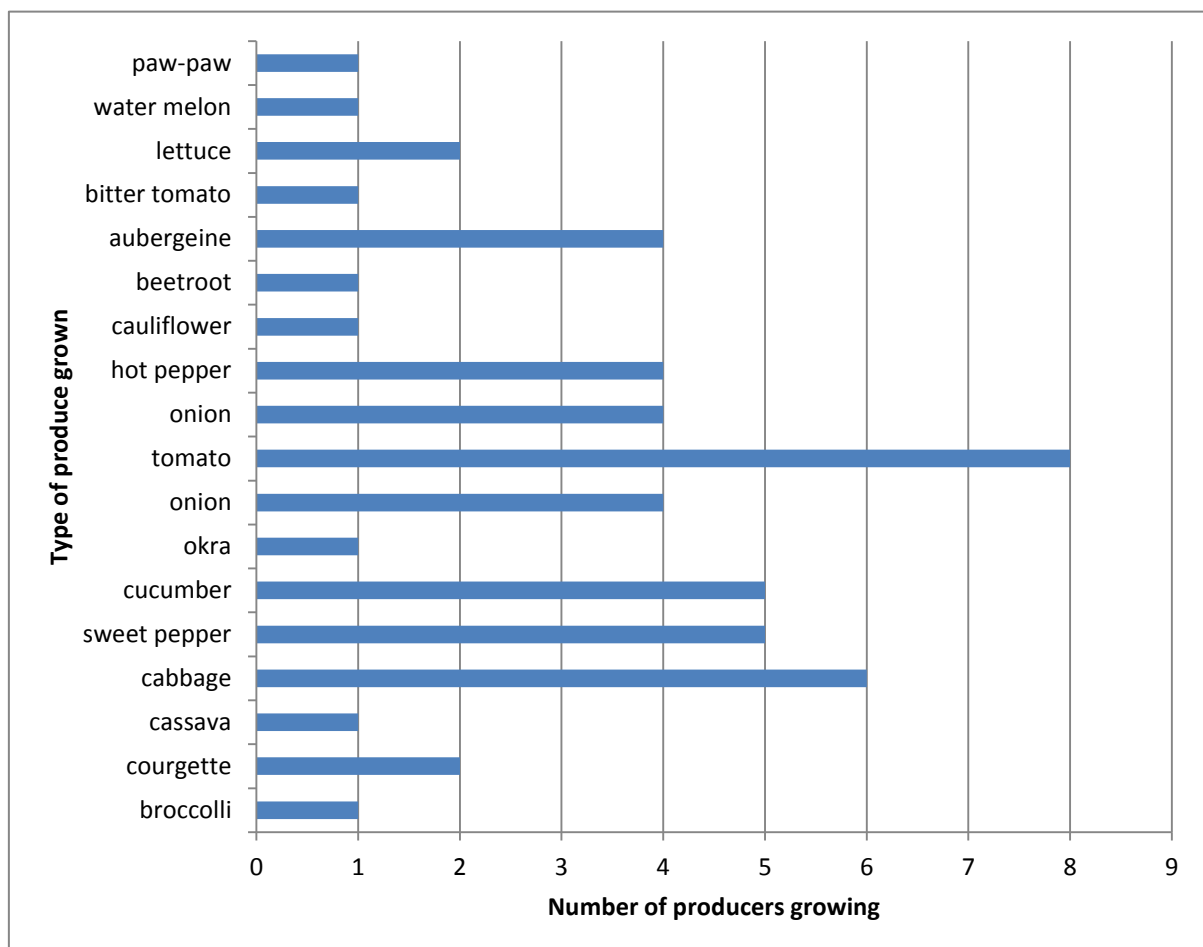
K who in 2004 graduated from the National Agricultural Training Centre (NATC) based in Njawara in NBR following a 9 month training course:

“Since I was in primary school I’ve enjoyed agriculture. I’ve wanted to farm since I was a small boy as I was born in the village and we’ve just always farmed.”

(Producer K, male Gambian farmer)

All but one of the participants (Producers F, a female community garden in NBR) supply a range of fresh produce to GiG through a contractual arrangement, with other non-contracted produce being grown either for subsistence or for retail at Lumo markets that regularly occur along the Senegal-Gambia border, or for trading markets in the large Senegalese town of Kaolack close to the Northern border of The Gambia. The range of fresh produce grown by the producers in Table 6.1 and circulating in the Gambian tourist industry is displayed in Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.6: Type of produce grown in NBR and WCR (derived from interviewees)



Source: Author

The most common type of produce grown is tomato (8 producers), cabbage (6 producers), cucumber and sweet pepper (5 producers). These are common horticultural products grown throughout The Gambia. These data confirm a recent Impact Assessment conducted by Concern Universal who found that tomato, onion, sweet and hot pepper are still the most commonly grown vegetables in rural Gambia (CU 2013: 13). Furthermore, the Assessment makes the assertion that some of the least commonly grown vegetables such as bitter tomato and cucumber can fetch high prices in the tourist market, and so their relatively low production levels may reflect the still relatively poor connection to the tourist industry by many producers, particularly women (CU 2013: 13).

These datasets raise important questions about the impact GiG has had in terms of improving the livelihoods of small-scale horticultural producers in The Gambia. The issues surrounding the success of GiG is now explored by examining the supply chain dynamics. Indeed, the proximate SFSC in particular that are facilitated by GiG do not always function as intended or necessarily follow the linear model as depicted in Figure 6.4. Instead, there are caveats and coping strategies implemented to ensure that GiG can achieve both its business and development goals. This is not to say that GiG has been ineffective, or that their strategic model is entirely appropriate. Rather, it is largely a reflection of the inherent difficulties that exist in challenging contexts such as rural Sub-Saharan Africa, where the stakeholder capacity, basic infrastructure, technologies and resources for food supply chains to operate successfully are generally limited. These issues are now explored and organised thematically to reflect the main limitations that exist within production, distribution and consumption activities throughout SFSC.

6.12 Production aspects of SFSC

GiG engage with the food producers profiled in Table 6.1 in the form of two Production Managers (PM), one for each region. The role of PMs, who are trained in plant science and production systems, is twofold. Firstly, their purpose is to provide practical and technical support for the growers who supply GiG. Secondly, they administer contracts and production plans, and ensure that what is being

grown is being done so accurately and effectively. The PMs are the personal link between producers and GiG, and they visit a core set of producers supplying GiG on a regular weekly or bi-weekly basis. As well as giving general advice about (trans)planting, maintaining, irrigating and harvesting fresh produce, they often provide seed when making such visits, although producers incur the cost for this input. The seed available in this way are imports from Europe and acquired by GiG from an agri-business called Technisem based in France (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: Imported onion seed



Source: Author

6.13 Production plans and contracts

GiG works with producers through the brokerage of production plans and contracts. The production plans set out the details for the producers, such as when to plant and harvest certain varieties, and the amounts of seeds required to grow specific amounts. Figure 6.8 is an example of a typical production plan. The production plans are three month plans (due to the nature of growing fresh fruit and vegetables) and so vary throughout the year depending on demand, as this is the driving factor for production. The PM works directly with a small number of producers, who are typically in close proximity to one another, which has occurred

through practicality as opposed to design. In 2012, the PM for NBR worked with 12 producers, including a women's community garden. The contracts administered by the PM are drawn up by the management staff at GiG formalise and to some degree legalise the production plans, in that producers commit to growing a specific quantity of a certain variety by an agreed deadline. Figure 6.9 is an example of the typical terms and conditions of contracts, and Figure 6.10 shows Producer Q signing a contract following a visit from the PM for WCR. As can be seen from the wording in these contracts, GiG is only obliged to purchase what they regard as high quality grade 1 items. One of the conditions is that "*GiG guarantees to buy the guaranteed target grade 1 yield of this crop*" (see Figure 6.9).

As such, GiG utilise a set of guidelines to ensure consistency. An example of the grading criteria used by GiG and delivered to producers who supply them is given in Figure 6.11. In this case, although a 'quality guidance sheet' exists for all the commonly grown produce as noted previously in Figure 6.6, the purpose of the basic quality criteria is to assist in the cultivation of fresh produce and to ensure that both the Quality Assurance Manager at GiG and the producers they work with are clear about the differentiating characteristics between 'better' and 'poorer' quality produce. The intended outcome is that this prevents disagreement between the producer and GiG at the time of harvest and ensures that GiG supply high quality produce to the tourism industry.

Figure 6.8: A typical production plan administered to producers by Production Managers

Group	Month	Target Date	Crop + Variety	Total kg	Seed (g)	Area (m2)	Min Price	Harvest Start/End
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Courgette	100	25.0	83	15	10-Jan-12 09-Feb-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Cucumber	100	5.0	100	10	20-Jan-12 19-Feb-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Iceberg	50	0.1	3	10	20-Jan-12 30-Jan-12
WRKombo								
<i>Nov 2011</i>								
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Cabbage T-C	800	40.0	800	10	03-Feb-12 24-Feb-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Cauliflower ✓	30	1.5	30	35	08-Feb-12 29-Feb-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Courgette ✓	400	100.0	333	15	30-Dec-11 29-Jan-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Cucumber ✓	400	20.0	400	10	09-Jan-12 08-Feb-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Eggplant ✓	150	2.0	100	10	08-Feb-12 08-Apr-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Iceberg ✓	70	0.2	4	10	09-Jan-12 19-Jan-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Radish ✓	150	150.0	150	10	15-Dec-11 25-Dec-11
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Sweet Pepper	50	1.0	50	25	18-Feb-12 03-Apr-12
Nov 11 #1	10-Nov-11	10-Nov-11	Tomato Nadira ✓	1000	20.0	1000	10	08-Feb-12 09-Mar-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Cabbage T-C	500	25.0	500	10	14-Feb-12 06-Mar-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Cauliflower ✓	10	0.5	10	35	19-Feb-12 11-Mar-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Cucumber	400	20.0	400	10	20-Jan-12 19-Feb-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Parsley	50	#Num!	#Div/0!	10	14-Feb-12 06-Mar-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Radish	200	200.0	200	10	26-Dec-11 05-Jan-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Sweet Pepper	50	1.0	50	25	29-Feb-12 14-Apr-12
Nov 11 #2	21-Nov-11	21-Nov-11	Tomato Nadira	600	12.0	600	10	19-Feb-12 20-Mar-12

Source: Author

Figure 6.9: Typical contract agreement between GiG and producers

signing this agreement I acknowledge and accept the following terms and conditions set out by Gambia is Good (GiG), and understand that any breach of these terms will render this contract null and void:

- 1) That I will adhere to the choice of crops and varieties outlined above.
- 2) That I will have finished sowing my committed area within SEVEN DAYS of the stated sowing date.
- 3) That in exchange, GiG guarantees to buy the guaranteed Target GRADE 1 Yield of this crop, as given above. I fully understand what is meant by "Grade 1" and am aware that GiG cannot guarantee to buy any produce that does not meet this quality standard. If the yield is larger than the target amount, GiG has the option of purchasing this amount but is not obligated by this contract.
- 4) That GiG guarantees to pay a MINIMUM purchase price for all contracted crops as stated above. However, I understand that GiG will always strive to pay a fair MARKET PRICE above this minimum price as determined by market conditions.
- 5) That GiG MAY purchase any left-over GRADE 2 produce for a REDUCED PRICE as determined by GiG, but ONLY for items where a secure Grade 2 market has been established.

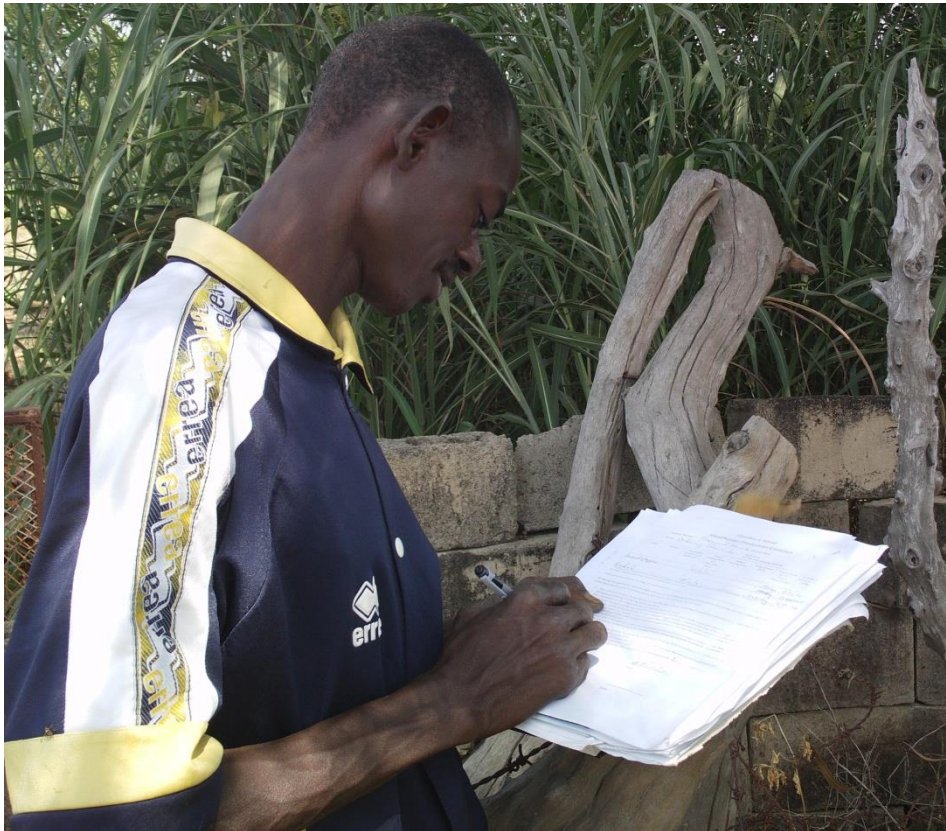
That GiG will provide an extension officer to visit the garden and provide technical support ONCE PER WEEK, but only that portion of the garden under contract to GiG. I may request technical advice for non-contracted produce, but on the condition that GiG has the right of first refusal to purchase this produce and will exercise this right by placing it under a separate SHORT TERM CONTRACT.

That GiG will give PURCHASING PRIORITY for items that are not under contract at the time of buying but for which GiG has established a secure market (as communicated by GiG production staff).

 (Signature or Thumbprint) _____
 Date

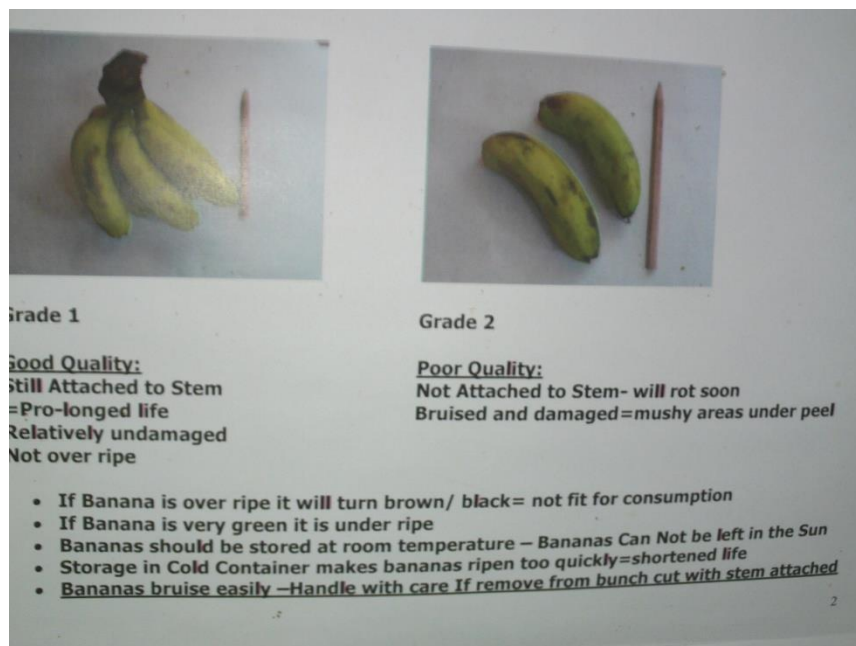
Source: Author

Figure 6.10: Producer Q signing a production plan in rural WCR



Source: Author

Figure 6.11: Guidance on grading for producers to ensure optimum grade 1 yields



Source: Author

However, this arrangement, whereby contractually bound quality criteria exists, means producers remain in a vulnerable position. This is because GiG is only obliged to purchase grade 1 quality produce, with surplus, poorer quality grade 2 items usually being the responsibility of the producer to market. Contracts make reference to this by stating: *“GiG may purchase any left-over grade 2 produce for a reduced price as determined by GiG, but only where a secure grade 2 market has been established (see Figure 6.9).”* It is often the case that a ‘secure market’ for grade 2 quality produce cannot be found as the tourist industry are only interested in purchasing the highest quality products. This is reflected in the following comment by a Purchasing Officer in the tourism industry who feels the consistency in high quality produce offered by GiG is what makes them desirable to work with:

“If I order tomatoes from a market woman now, she will just bring me tomatoes. If I order it from GiG, they have grades one, two, up to three. So the excellent ones should be a little bit more expensive than the very good ones, and then those ones will be a little more expensive than just the good ones, and that is very important. You know exactly what you are buying. When you tell some other people, a woman in the market, that I want tomatoes she only brings you tomatoes. She doesn’t care about the quality that much, only if they are spoiled, but they are doing no grading selection. At least if you know you order grade one, you know the types of tomatoes you are expecting as the quality will always be the same.”

(Hotel Purchasing Officer, Kololi, The Gambia)

The contractual arrangement can therefore be regarded as favouring the wholesale customers and GiG rather than the producers themselves. Indeed, even if all of the produce is deemed grade 1 quality, GiG does not always purchase the quantities stipulated in contracts simply because there is often insufficient demand from GiG’s customers to warrant purchasing all of the producers’ harvest. If GiG honoured their commitment to purchasing the stated quantities of produce irrespective of the demand, then GiG is burdened with potential wastage and thus heavy profit losses. This means that producers are often left with the burden and

responsibility of finding markets for their surplus produce that is typically of a poorer quality (Grade 2 and 3) and so fetches a lower price.

Figure 6.12: Producer D, NBR

This item has been removed due to Data Protection. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed in the Lanchester Library Coventry University.

Producer D (Figure 6.12) cites a personal example of this scenario. He recently agreed to produce 250kg of different vegetables for GiG, but when it came to selling the harvest GiG only purchased 60kg due to their customers' demand at the time. Furthermore, Producer D received 25 Dalasi (£0.55p) per kilogram from GiG, though he claims the contract agreement was for 30 Dalasi per kilogram. This left him with 190kg of fresh produce to sell, which he took to Serrekunda market in WCR, one of the largest urban markets in the country, and received 800 Dalasi (£16.95)

for the leftover produce (less per kilogram than what GiG paid). This meant the majority of his harvest was sold for less than what was expected and valuable time and effort was spent sourcing an alternative market (in this case, Serrekunda) to sell the leftover produce. Another producer, also based in NBR, and who grows tomatoes, cabbages and sweet pepper for GiG, echoed Producer D's sentiment, stating:

"Sometimes with the contracts, I feel lost. I'm not very happy with the contract situation, but what can you do? It is not like Europe."

(Producer M, NBR)

Conversely, Producer W based in NBR has a different, more positive view of the contracts GiG implement, claiming that they have enhanced his income. However, a positive view of contracts was rare with most participants claiming that they are not always fulfilled:

“I have not got a contract right now but I want one, I have had several in the past. Contracts are very important for me. Supplying GiG has improved my livelihood, I am earning more money.”

(Producer W, NBR)

These divergent views are a reflection of the dilemma that comes with implementing a formal contractual arrangement where business and profitability objectives co-exist alongside development-led objectives, as is the case with GiG. As Blandon *et al.* (2009) note with reference to their study of commercialising food supply chains in Honduras, working with small-scale producers on a contractual basis is a difficult balance to strike:

“The contract farming literature reports that small-scale producers may benefit from enhanced access to credit, technology, management skills, market information and/or inputs under the commitment of delivering produce of specific characteristics to the contractor... however, a parallel literature raises concerns about the scope for exploitation of small-scale producers.”

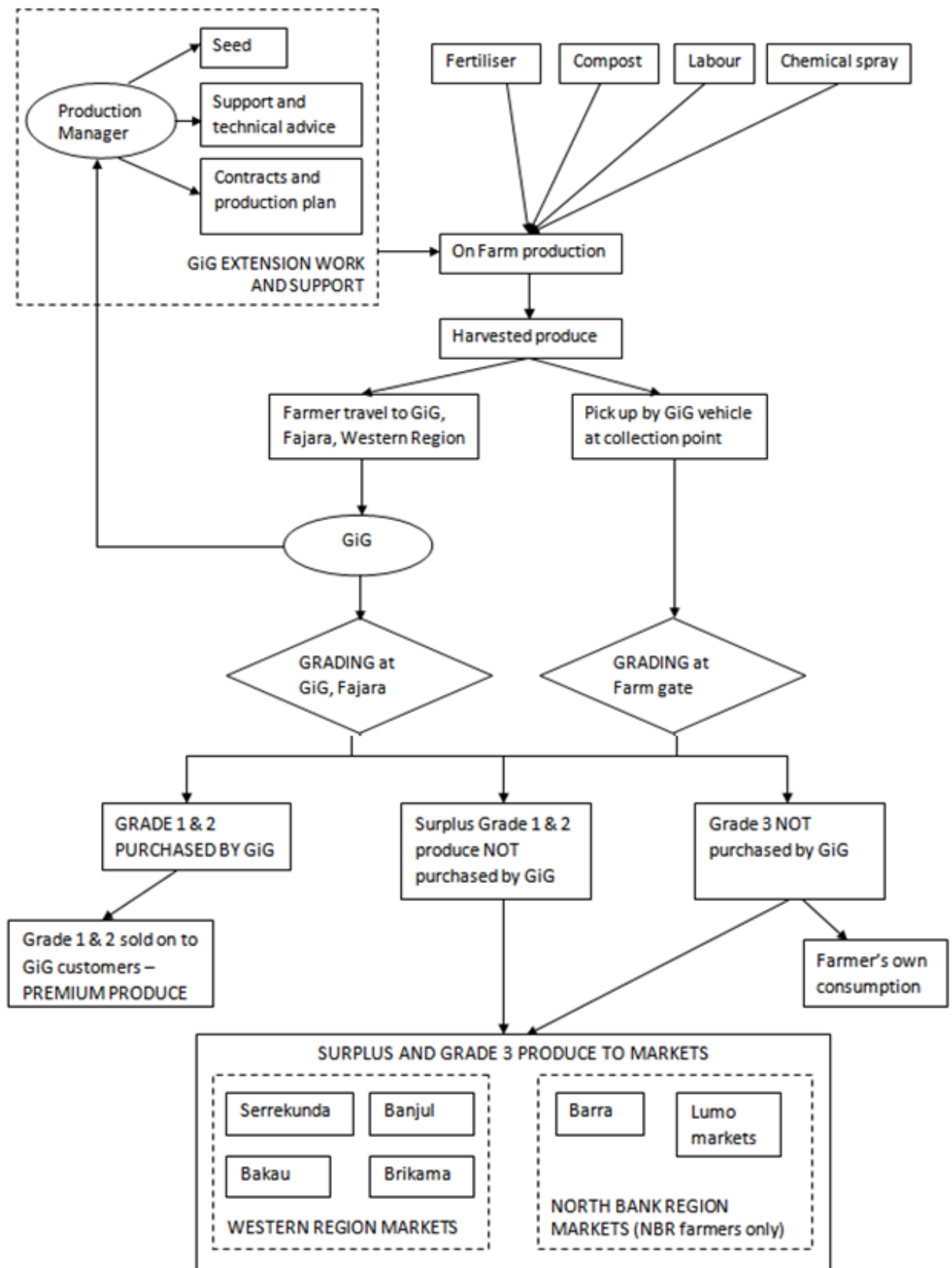
(Blandon *et al.* 2009: 972)

While GiG are not intent on exploiting producers (their mission is indeed the opposite), the reality is that GiG cannot afford to blindly fulfil contracts and so producers have to implement coping strategies to ensure their harvests do not perish and livelihoods are secured. As such, many producers have little choice but to go to urban markets such as Serrekunda, Bakau, the capital Banjul and Brikama in WCR to sell their leftover produce. Grading can also take place at the farm-gate as GiG have vehicles to collect harvests from the more remote producers, typically in NBR, where a ferry crossing is needed to facilitate the supply chain and travel time much longer. However, the same issue can apply in that grading at the farm-gate is at the discretion of GiG and so can leave producers with food that is not regarded as a high enough quality to distribute on to the urban tourist industry. In such instances, GiG is unable to fulfil the contract in its entirety if products are not deemed either grade one or two quality. As such, and specifically in NBR, farmers often take their poorer quality produce to ‘Lumo

markets' and receive a much lower price, sometimes up to a third less than what GiG offer. This situation often leaves producers apathetic towards GiG.

This situation therefore raises the appropriateness of contractual relationships as although it is favourable for wholesale customers and to some degree fosters professional working relationships with food producers, their livelihoods are characterised by an undercurrent of vulnerability through this arrangement. The livelihood strategies implemented in this situation are captured in Figure 6.13. It can be argued that the proximate SFSC that occur through GiG are not always effective, and the more direct SFSC through local informal markets (such as Lumo markets) are more a coping strategy than a preference for producers seeking to commercialise and access wholesale (tourist) markets. However, the often ineffective proximate SFSC cannot be exclusively attributable to GiG's quality grading process, or due to the contractual way of working, as in many cases these have proven to be desirable and successful. There are other contextual challenges associated with on farm production and fluctuations in market demand that would present a barrier to success for any intervening organisation with a similar remit to GiG, and these are now discussed.

Figure 6.13: Supply chain dynamics and livelihood strategies when contracts are unfulfilled by GiG

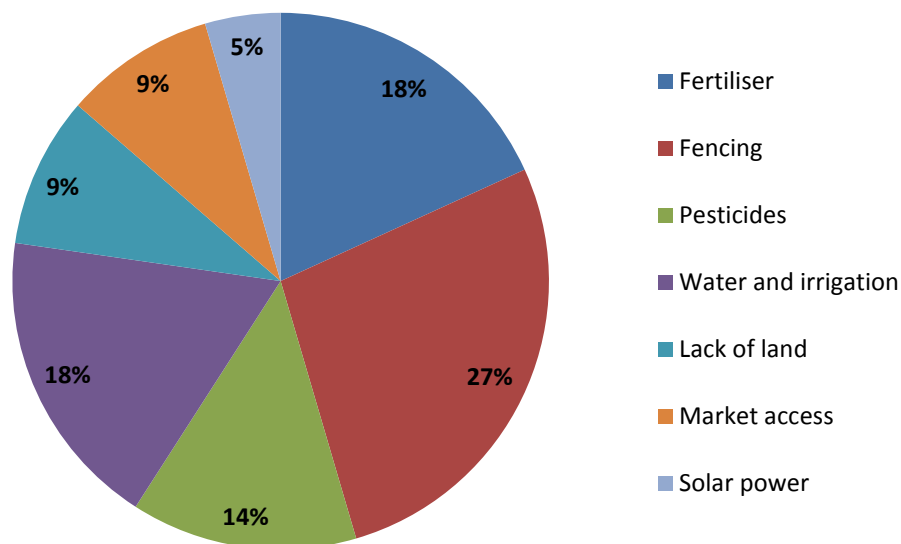


(Source: Author)

6.14 Further issues in on-farm production

In addition to the contractual issues, there are several on-farm practices that limit the production of fresh produce. As can be seen from Figure 6.14, the key issues identified by participants are access to affordable fertiliser and compost to increase yields, fencing to keep pests and wandering livestock out, and more efficient irrigation.

Figure 6.14: The main issues affecting the production of fresh produce as identified by producers in WCR and NBR



Source: Author

Producers have primarily identified fertiliser, fencing and irrigation as key *physical* barriers that need to be addressed to improve on-farm production. This suggests that access to physical assets and capital at the micro level are lacking to secure production. This is unsurprising as the physical facilities required to maintain quality and volume are relatively expensive for small-scale enterprises that dominate agri-food systems in West Africa (IMF 2011: 69)²⁰. Moreover, only 9% of

²⁰ Furthermore, the 5% response rate about solar power refers to an increasing interest in the use of solar panels for generating energy, mainly for pumping water and irrigation.

participants cite issues with market access and there were no responses citing a lack of production knowledge or skill. This implies that human capital and social capital, the knowledge and networks that underpin food growing, distribution and retail, are relatively strong and are not regarded as a major limiting factor. The reason for physical assets being a greater issue is because of access and cost. For example, with reference to irrigation in The Gambia, methods range from the costly yet efficient drip irrigation system, to less efficient, time consuming methods such as manually watering plots via a bucket from a well which is the most common method. The results suggest that support is needed in accessing more efficient irrigation equipment. This is also the case with fencing, as purchasing costly robust fencing materials and having the time to maintain boundaries limits on-farm production capabilities.

As such, GiG's training partners (The National Agricultural Training Centre, Sifoe Kafo²¹ Farm and PMs) assist producers on how to optimise their time and be resourceful in their practices. For example, Sifoe Kafo Farm uses dried leaves from nearby trees as mulch (Figure 6.15) and Producer Y in WCR uses ground nut shells that would otherwise go to waste on his plots, reducing evaporation once irrigated (Figure 6.16). These practices are clearly positive steps in helping producers make the most of their resources and time, and although they are improving irrigation, this is not addressing the primary issue of fencing.

However, the high initial capital input for such equipment was regarded as a barrier to improve on-farm production.

²¹ Kafo is a term used to describe a community ran or organised land-based enterprise in The Gambia

Figure 6.15: Dried leaves as mulch on courgette plots, Sifoe Kafo Farm



Figure 6.16: Producer Y using ground nut shells on his farm in WCR

This item has been removed due to Data Protection. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed in the Lanchester Library Coventry University.

(Source: Author's photography)

The production of food is inherently tied to the seasons, as this affects what can be grown, when and where. However, with the correct knowledge and training, growing certain varieties can be achieved in The Gambia during times of the year generally considered not possible. For example, during the wet season (June-September), women's community gardens are typically empty, as the women who cultivate them focus their efforts on growing rice. Yet tomatoes, cucumbers and courgettes, for example, *can* be grown, and as such, fetch a high market price due to the scarcity of local Gambian varieties in the market. For example, a staff member of GiG said that in October, tomatoes can be sold for 50-60 Dalasi (up to £1.26) per kilogram, yet in January-February, they can only be sold for around 10 Dalasi (£0.21p) per kilogram. Courgettes harvested at Sifoe Kafo Farm in November 2011 were sold to GiG for 60 Dalasi (£1.26) per kilogram, while cucumbers fetched 30 Dalasi (£0.63p), generating shared profits for the Kafo members in a model similar to a producer co-operative.

However, there is also the issue of demand, as during the wet season, tourism is low, meaning that producers often have to find alternative markets other than GiG to sell their horticultural produce. This is an important factor in accounting for reduced production and sales to the coastal urban tourist industry. However, the two Production Managers spoke of issues of 'convincing' some producers to grow certain varieties not traditionally grown during the wet season for the first time. This included products that could be sold in other local and regional markets when

tourism demand is low. For example, during the wet season, watermelon is widely grown throughout the country and by way of their abundance, prices remain generally very low. PMs therefore encourage the production of other crops such as tomatoes and lettuces, which although not traditionally grown during the rainy months, can be successfully cultivated and command a higher price in local markets (and some of the larger hotels who maintain year-round business) by way of scarcity.

This means that disseminating the correct knowledge and training about what can be grown does not necessarily guarantee intended productivity outcomes within the context of established cultural traditions and knowledge systems. Indeed, producers are not always easily convinced or willing to change their production cycles and systems and prefer income from a guaranteed lower value crop such as watermelon, as opposed to adopting new practices such as cultivating a higher value, 'riskier' crop such as tomatoes during the wet season. Although this was not identified as a barrier to production by the producers themselves, the PMs comments suggests that there are cultural and traditionally ingrained processes that present barriers to improving livelihoods. As such, physical issues are not the only limiting factors.

6.15 Distribution issues

In addition to the production and contract issues, producers are further undermined by GiG's current inability to regularly collect produce directly from the farm gate. Since its inception in 2004, GiG has always strived to collect harvests from farm gates using their own easily recognisable vehicles (Figure 6.17). These vehicles are a mobile, visual way GiG communicate its wider message to people. The vehicles and strong GiG brand and slogan ('Helping Gambia Grow') is another means of communicating notions of provenance to ensure customers and consumers are made aware of the 'value-laden' framework within which GiG aims to operate within.

Figure 6.17: GiG vehicle

Harvests collected from the farm gate is clearly advantageous for producers, as it saves them valuable time and money that would otherwise be spent on finding their own means of transport to shift food from the site of production to the GiG storage container (where they receive cash payment). This is especially beneficial for producers who are not located close to GiG in Fajara.



Source: Author

However, as of December 2011, the GiG vehicle had not been on any collection trips since August-September 2011. This was not driven by changes in output or demand, but because the vehicle had continually broken down and become unusable. A new vehicle arrived in October, but at the time of writing, the new vehicle was at the Banjul ferry port waiting for various registrations and clearance in order for it to be collected by GiG. It was anticipated that the new vehicle would be 'up and running' by the busy months of January-February 2012 (the peak tourist season) to once again collect produce from farms, but at present it is unclear if the situation has improved.

When food is not being collected by GiG, producers have to transport their harvests to the head office and container in Fajara to sell their produce and receive payment from GiG. As has been mentioned, this diverts time and money away from on-farm activities, but quality can also be undermined if transport is the responsibility of individual producers, particularly if transportation involves long distances. This is because of the reliance on poor infrastructure. For example, farmers based near Njawara in NBR have to travel up to 90 kilometres to the GiG storage container, which includes a ferry crossing from Barra to the capital city of Banjul and then onto Fajara. The journey can take as long as 4-5 hours one way given that travel is only partially by tarmac road and delays are often incurred at the ferry terminal and at regular police check points en route.

In addition to this, producers do not have access to their own transport, meaning they have to take crowded 'gelly-gellys' (also known colloquially as 'bush taxis')

(Figure 6.18), which do not operate on any formal timetable²². The typical cost of a 'gelly gelly' from Njawara, NBR to GiG (Fajara) is 75 Dalasi (£1.60). In a country where 56.7% of the population live on less than US\$2 per day (£1.27) (HDR 2009), this is a significant cost for many rural people.

Figure 6.18: Gambian 'gelly-gelly'



Source: Author

6.16 Infrastructure

Clearly this system is less than ideal for improving rural livelihoods. Furthermore, the lack of infrastructure to efficiently and securely transport food undermines its quality upon arrival at GiG. Fresh produce in particular can easily be damaged through impact caused by the uneven road surfaces and prolonged exposure to heat (there is no cold storage facilities on 'gelly-gellys'). Freidberg and Goldstein (2011) make this infrastructural point with reference to another SFSC in Kenya, citing how more affluent regions of the world 'forget' how sound infrastructure and logistics facilitate successful food systems. They write:

²² 'Gelly-gellys' travel to major centres like Banjul, Serrekunda and Fajara from rural areas early in the morning, but making a return journey to rural villages is more ad-hoc. In my own experiences of 'gelly-gellys', travelling to remote locations involved waiting for several hours in the town of Barra, NBR, as they do not depart until they are full. This is to make journeys cost-effective for the owner of the vehicle as it is not a public transport service. Thus the round-trip to GiG for producers in rural locations such as Njawara can be a very long day, all of which is spent away from the farm.

“Successful marketing within SFSC demands adequate technology and *infrastructure*. In the industrialized world it is easy to forget how much food’s basic edibility and appearance depend on *decent roads, reliable transport*, electricity and logistic systems, clean water, and *refrigeration*.” (Author’s emphasis)

(Freidberg and Goldstein 2011: 26)

The technologies and infrastructure required to ensure food travels from ‘place-to-plate’ free from spoilage are thus arguably the ‘unsung heroes’ of not just SFSC, but of all modern agro-food systems. As has been highlighted by this research in The Gambia, the need and reliance on such infrastructure is made all the more explicit when it is absent. The many coping mechanisms employed, and the decline in the quality of the food as it travels along the supply chain from ‘farm to fork’, are arguably a result of infrastructural limitations associated with the context of rural and peri-urban Gambia.

6.17 Issues with retail and consumption

The final aspect of SFSC relates to the issues associated with retail and consumption. This section focuses on SFSC dynamics by firstly exploring how and why GiG often source relatively large quantities of fresh produce from sources outside of The Gambia. Secondly, the perspective of the tourist industry is presented, which helps to account for the way GiG operate and explains why producers often find themselves seeking alternative local markets to sell surplus produce.

6.18 GiG and imported produce

Figure 4.19 gives a breakdown of where GiG sourced horticultural produce in 2010. These data show that for 2010 only 16% of produce was sourced directly from producers based in the North Bank region and 30% direct from small-scale producers in the urban and peri-urban areas of West Coast Region. The latter are

farms that are relatively close to the tourist industry and GiG. The total sourced from farmers and then sold onto the tourist industry in the form of proximate SFSC is therefore less than half (46%) of the total produce that GiG purchased and sold onto the tourism sector. However, some 7% was sourced from Serrekunda market and thus deemed as Gambian produce, although there are no guarantees for both GiG and customers as to the provenance of such food. Furthermore, 41% of food was known to be imported, either purchased from Serrekunda market (21%) or through market traders who make regular trips to Senegal to buy large quantities of food to sell for retail in The Gambia (20%). More recent data displayed in Figure 6.20 also confirms that GiG still operate a system that is not entirely 'local' (i.e. sourced from within The Gambia) and still reliant on other sources of food production to meet the demands of the tourism industry. By sourcing produce in this way ensures that the business side of GiG can survive.

Figure 6.19: Quantities of fresh produce (in Kilograms) sourced by GiG, 2010

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Thi

Source: Adapted from GiG monitoring and evaluation data

Figure 6.20: Quantities of fresh produce (in kilograms) sourced by GiG, 2012

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Source: Adapted from CU Senegambia Impact Assessment Report (2013)

This type of only partial 'local' or 'regional' food system, which accounts for nearly half of the food that ends up circulating in the tourism industry, offers little to no traceability. However, GiG are honest about this with their customers, as can be seen from the sign at their premises that displays the provenance and origins of produce (Figure 6.21). In many ways this is offering transparency that is integral to SFSC, although given that there is limited reference to specific producers or areas from The Gambia, this suggests that the relationships between producers, GiG, customers and indeed final consumers is relatively weak and that provenance is not being fully utilised as a means to create value and desirability of commodities. This means that the economic benefits of SFSC are not being filtered back to producers, nor are social relationships between producers-customers-consumers being fully developed and consolidated. In many ways, 'relations of regard' (Sage

2003) that can help foster SFSC is lacking in this particular context of food production.

Figure 6.21: A daily updated board of the available produce to customers, by source

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE	PRICE	ORIGIN
<u>VEGS</u>		
CABBAGE		SENEGAL IMPORT
CARROTS		SENEGAL IMPORT
CUCUMBER		GAMBIA LOCAL
ONIONS		HOLLAND IMPORT
SWEET POTATO		GAMBIA LOCAL
TOMATOES		GAMBIA LOCAL
SIPEPPER		
PLANTAIN		GAMBIA LOCAL
H I PEPPER		
GARLIC		
E/PLANT		
OKRA		
PLANTAIN		

GIG BAGS DIOD

(Source: Author)

6.19 Perspectives from the tourist industry

Some of the reasons why GiG's food system appears this way have been outlined previously and are in part due to GiG's structure, whereby business and development run parallel to one another. However, there are further factors associated with seasonal market demand that explain why 'relations of regard' and social embeddedness are not always present. GiG are often 'forced' to seek varieties of food from other sources in times of high or sudden demand. They cannot rely on producers alone to meet the needs of the tourist industry, as the business then internalises the cost of wastage and surplus. At the same time, quality plays an important role for the tourism industry and as has been discussed, GiG's grading system means that sufficient 'grade 1' high quality produce is not always readily available to distribute to the tourist industry. This is a key reason why GiG source what they regard as 'quality' produce from external sources.

Furthermore, the reason why the tourist industry prefers to work with GiG and receive their fresh produce from them is not because of the horizontal, social embeddedness of SFSC. Rather than basing their purchasing decisions primarily because of a 'regard' for the rural livelihoods of food producers in the surrounding locale, business and economic factors are the main reasons why hotels work with GiG. The tourist industry equate quality with GiG, but quality is constructed in a specific way by the retail end of the chain. The tourist industry associates quality with a consistent product that is regarded as *fresh* (and acquired at a reasonable price) rather than for produce that is local. This means their interpretation of quality and 'value-laden information' (Renting *et al.* 2003) does not always work in the favour of the rural producers located in WCR and NBR because although physically close, the limitations of accessing markets quickly with sufficient grade 1 quality fresh produce can compromise freshness. The following point by a hotel purchasing officer based in one of the main Atlantic coastal tourist areas clarifies this point. They state:

"As long as I have a good quality I don't care how [food] is produced or where it is from. If I want tomatoes, I want a good quality. So how you do it, it is up to you. .. one advantage GiG has is if I tell them I want 100 kilos of this, 100 kilos of that,

and they show me that they have it, I don't have anything to worry about. I don't think of [where it is from] twice. It makes life very easy for me.”

(Hotel purchasing officer, Kololi, The Gambia)

The underlying message here, as with other hotel purchasing officers who were interviewed, is that GiG are valued because of their ability to deliver what is regarded as fresh, quality produce on a reliable and consistent basis, not necessarily because they can provide 'local' or regional varieties or because they are working towards improving rural livelihoods. Evidence of this important result is captured in Figure 6.22, a word cloud from coded interviews with key informants in the tourism industry.

Figure 6.22: Tag cloud of coded interviews with key informants in the hotel industry



Source: Author's primary data, word cloud produced by Wordle.net

These data reveals that wholesale customers work with GiG because they provide quality, fresh produce at relatively short notice, and their reliability is due to them delivering consistently good quality produce when they say they will. Moreover, the hotels value that they can negotiate prices with GiG, driving a hard bargain and paying their bills on a monthly as opposed to daily basis (as is the case when a more informal system of provisioning is used). The key point is that although

themes associated with social embeddedness, regard and social capital are present in the word cloud (such as trust, local), it is overshadowed by more real-time, market based purchasing factors. For example, participants spoke of trusting GiG and having regular contact with them by phone, being confident in them in sourcing quality local foods direct from regional producers. This suggests that the tourist industry prefer more formal markets, structures and processes as opposed to informal ones as a means to source quality food.

These findings are also a reflection of the real-time nature of the tourist market as often GiG will be able to provide what they regard as quality produce to the hotels at relatively short notice (often by sourcing 'top up' produce from the local markets). This is clearly a good system for the wholesale customers in the tourist industry as they are able to receive relatively good quality food at short notice and at a competitive price (negotiations are common). In the context of largely informal domestic food systems, being able to work with a more formal organisation in the form of GiG means the tourist industry can satisfy guests with fresh produce that they construct as being 'quality' food. Before GiG was operating hotels were largely relying on informal road-side sales and unreliable market traders who could seldom guarantee the quantities, varieties and quality that GiG now can.

However, if GiG becomes unable to maintain their reliability, consistency and flexible approach to price negotiations, wholesale customers would look elsewhere and likely seek a more reliable source irrespective of the traceability of these supply chains. The implication here is that the social embeddedness essential to build and sustain SFSC is relatively weak and fragile. As noted in Chapter 2, notions of social embeddedness are fundamental to sustaining SFSC and thus the livelihoods of those who depend on them. This fragility in the social relations between the tourist industry and GiG (and ultimately associated rural producers) is because of the context of The Gambia whereby socio-economic relations are determined by business led-factors. Customers and retailers seek economic 'value' for money as opposed to basing purchasing decisions around provenance and goods that are embedded with information about the places of production (Renting *et al.* 2003). As such, wholesale customers in the tourist industry do not always draw on social factors and the horizontal embeddedness throughout SFSC

to make decisions, what Lang (2010) terms a '*values-for-money*' approach to food systems.

Indeed, what is lacking within this system is that customers do not tend to make their purchasing decisions based on socially embedded, 'value laden' information, as the provenance of food is not always communicated to the customer, and even if it is, it is often from beyond the national borders of The Gambia and is untraceable to a place of production. This lack of communication through GiG's proximate SFSC, and wholesaler preference for reliability means that the producers with whom GiG work have no niche selling point to diversify their products from other commodities circulating within the Gambian markets and tourist sector. This means the proximate SFSC used to access wholesale markets require strengthening in a social, horizontal capacity to ensure the livelihoods of producers have a better chance of being sustained and improved.

6.20 Summary

An important question that arises from this analysis is whether GiG are meeting their objectives of improving rural livelihoods and helping to foster a more entrepreneurial approach to fresh produce cultivation. GiG arguably improves livelihoods, but only when their system works, and in order to do so, there are many variables that need to be functioning in tandem with one another. The contracts need to be fulfilled to ensure proximate SFSC, the ferry crossing between Banjul to Barra in the NBR needs to be clear and operational, tourism needs to be strong and thriving sector that continues to grow, and physical assets and infrastructure need to be usable. When one or more of these variables is not functional, the system breaks down and leaves producers more so than customers or GiG in a vulnerable position. In addition, the reliance on imported varieties is evidence of the shortfalls of the GiG model in practice.

Horticultural production is typically informal, smaller scale and market demand is unpredictable with far more competitors and thus lower prices. Furthermore, the unfavourable situation experienced by producers is symptomatic of the real-time nature of the market in which GiG operates, their customer's demand for fresh

produce fluctuates depending on the nature and demands of an unpredictable tourism industry. As such, GiG cannot afford to blindly fulfil contracts and so producers have to implement coping strategies to ensure their harvests, and profits, do not perish²³. As such, many producers go to prominent, busy market places such as Serrekunda, Bakau, Banjul and Brikama in WCR after visiting GiG to sell their leftover produce. Specifically in NBR, farmers often take their poorer quality produce to 'Lumo markets'.

On the one hand, GiG's customers continually receive local, quality food products through such arrangements. Yet the reality of the various caveats and coping strategies employed by producers means that the financial benefits of being involved with a direct marketing initiative like GiG are not always filtered back to them, and producers have to be resourceful to sustain their livelihoods in such instances. Furthermore, the lack of social embeddedness and relations of regard throughout SFSC between GiG and the urban customer base of the tourist industry means that producers who work with GiG are unable to foster closer social proximity relations (Aubry and Kebir 2013) necessary to sustain these types of food chains. This is because the food producers cannot fully differentiate and communicate 'embeddedness' and concepts linked to PPP. The wholesale market value GiG's reliability more so than what they are trying to achieve in the long term. If food producers in rural Gambia are to be valued and genuinely integrated into the tourist industry then other strategic models that can help generate social embeddedness urgently need to be explored.

However, this may not be an appropriate model because the SFSC concept that GiG operate through is ultimately a product of the global North, which has a very different agricultural and politico-economic history to places such as Gambia. As such, rather than GiG follow a strategic plan underpinned by (spatially proximate) seemingly ineffective SFSC ideals, they arguably require a far more pragmatic and contextually relevant approach. This could include a more co-operative based model where producers themselves have more control over what they grow, and possibly by linking food producers directly to key agents in the tourist industry

²³ There appears to be no legal mechanism or 'complaints procedure' for producers to fall back on in terms of breach of contracts or if there are grievances about their position within supply chains.

using increasingly available mobile communications technology (Pretty *et al.* 2011, Henriques and Kock 2012).

Chapter 7

Discussion and Comparisons: Revisiting conceptualisations of Short Food Supply Chains and Sustainable Livelihoods in the UK and The Gambia

7.1 Introduction

The comparative and conceptual discussion presented here forms the penultimate chapter in the thesis. It draws together some of the key findings that have emerged from the preceding two chapters and relates back to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 has outlined the results from research about SFSC in the East of England and Chapter 6 provided a detailed overview about how SFSC in The Gambia function. This chapter enables the key similarities and differences found within each context of food production to be critically discussed. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3, which was formulated through the amalgamation of sustainable livelihoods and SFSC literature, is now able to be revisited and more fully contextualised. This is an important aspect of this research because the results have been largely confined to the context in which they have emerged, and as yet, have not been fully conceptualised in relation to the framework and literature from which they are related to. As such, this discussion chapter meets the conceptual needs of the research and in doing so, directly addresses the third objective of this research: ‘Critically evaluate the role of context and how SFSC contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North), and the wider implications of a cross-cultural, comparative approach.’

The chapter begins by presenting re-drawn conceptual frameworks of the SLF in the context of SFSC in the East of England and The Gambia. The evidence informed frameworks can therefore be regarded as grounded *theory* which justifies the philosophical and methodological approach underpinning this research. The ‘alterations’ of the frameworks that have emerged in both the UK and The Gambia are captured by re-colouring elements (such as arrows or text) within the diagrams in red. This can refer to processes or aspects of the SLF that are evident in the

original framework (Figure 3.5) but lacking in the data, or it can refer to new elements that have emerged but are not sufficiently captured in the original, review based framework. The presence or absence of different components of the re-drawn frameworks presented in this chapter are discussed in turn to clarify how and why they appear the way they do, and the implications this has on the livelihoods of food producers.

The two re-drawn frameworks share similarities, but also important difference. The vulnerability context is first discussed to highlight how in the UK, regulatory frameworks and *formal* governance structures and mechanisms often present a barrier or obstacle to small-scale food producers engaging with SFSC for their livelihood strategies. This is particularly an issue for producers who are relatively 'new' to the food industry or who have little experience or knowledge of regulation. By contrast, regulation in The Gambia is far less of a concern for food producers; their vulnerability context is shaped instead by seasonality and access to secure land.

The capital assets pentagon is then discussed, beginning with physical, financial and natural capital. However, the two intangible assets have emerged as particularly relevant and important forms of capital. The role of human and social capital in *both* the UK and The Gambia play a key role in creating and sustaining SFSC as viable livelihood strategies. The way these assets are drawn on differs between each case study, particularly with reference to the bonding, bridging and linking social capital (see Chapter 3). The role of cultural capital is then discussed and the reasons and implications about why it is lacking in The Gambia are presented. Moreover, the role of *informal* and *formal* structures and processes are examined as part of this and the point about a lack of horizontal, social embeddedness and strong PPP linkages in The Gambia, as alluded to in Chapter 6, is further substantiated. Finally, livelihood outcomes are considered with reference to profit maximisers and sufficers (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999) to highlight how these concepts apply in the global North, and to some extent in the global South. The chapter is then summarised and concluded. The re-drawn conceptual frameworks are now presented, forming the basis for discussion.

Figure 7.1: Sustainable Livelihoods and SFSC in the context of East Anglia, UK

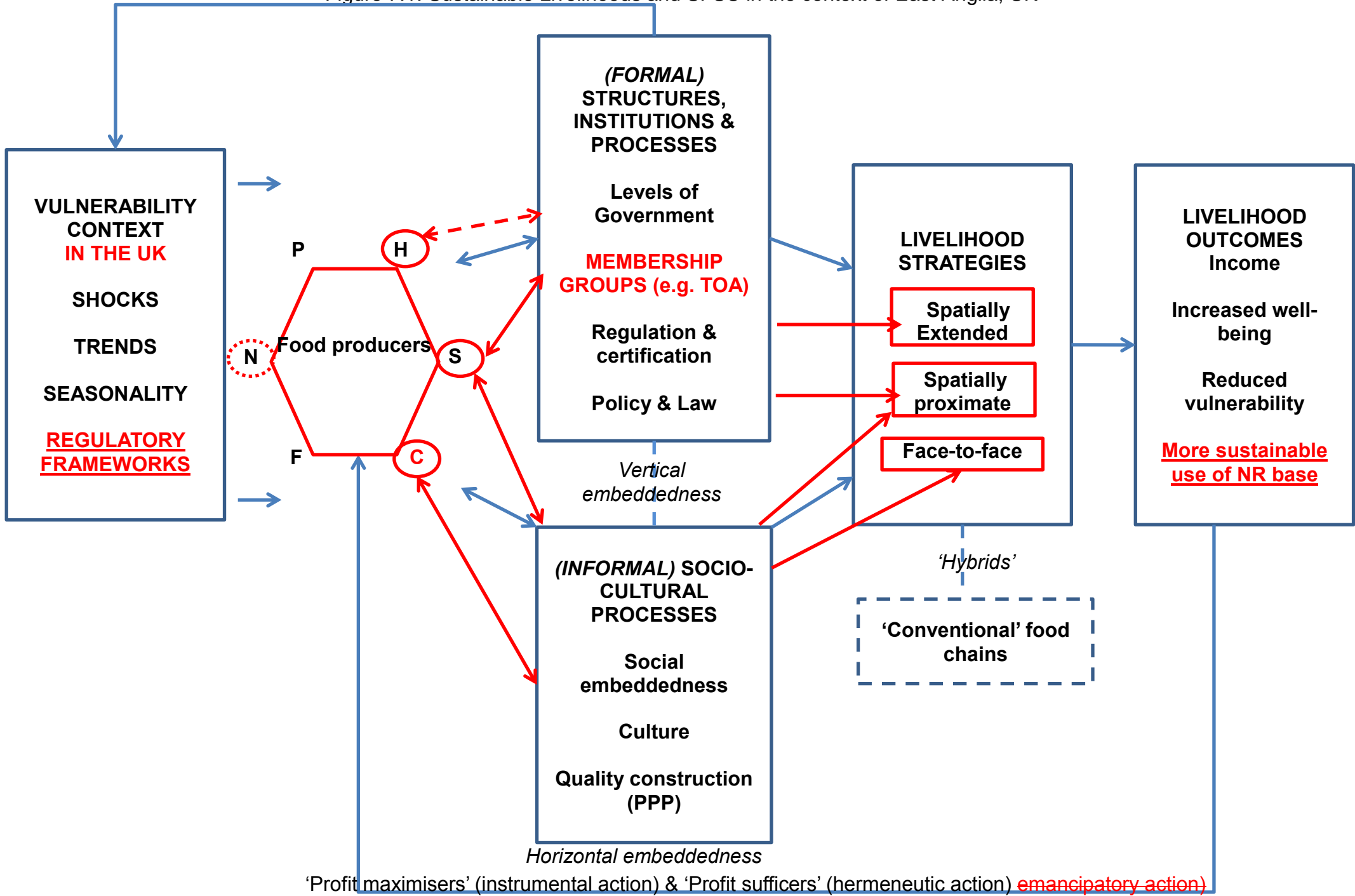
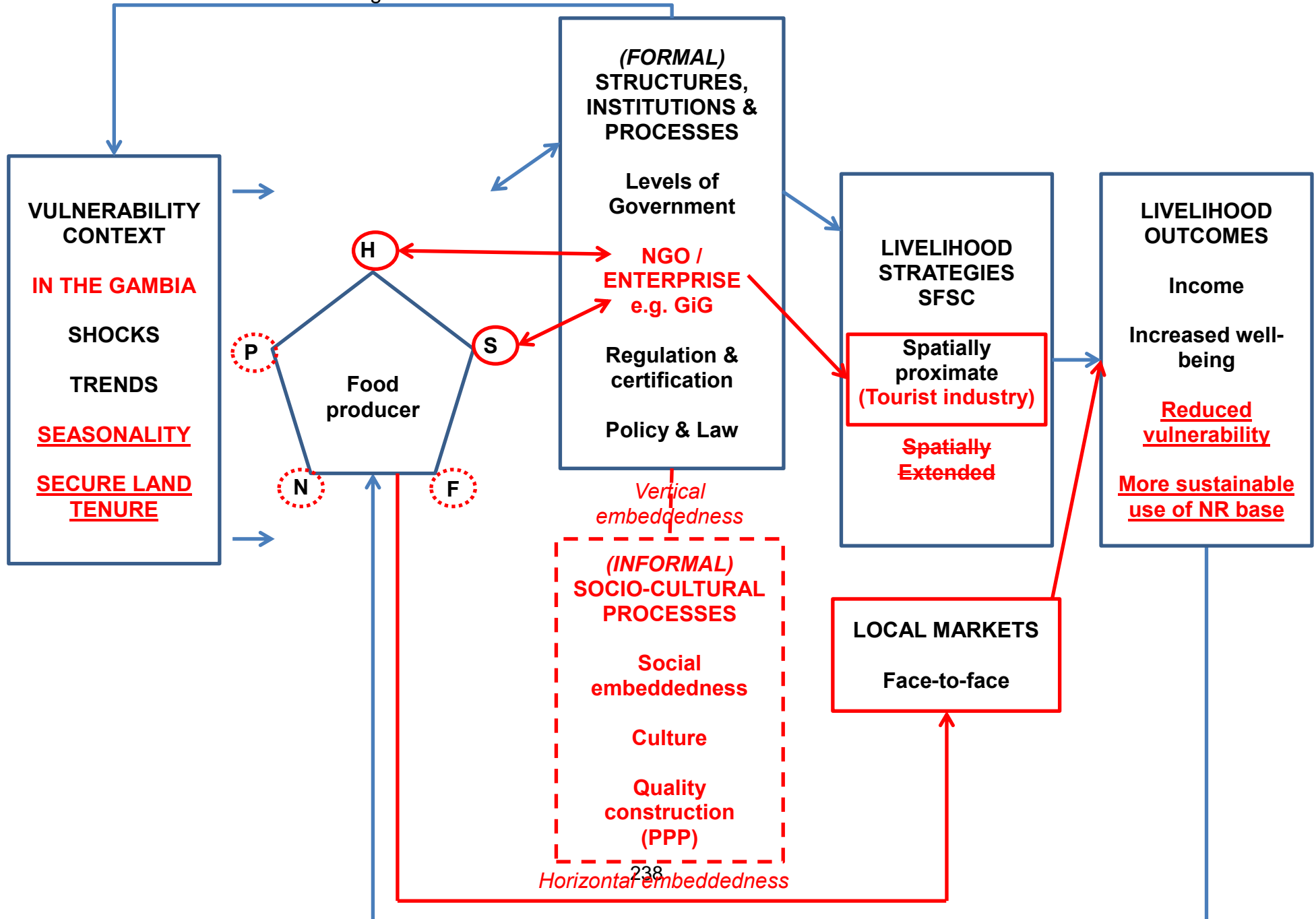


Figure 7.2: Sustainable Livelihoods and SFSC in The Gambia



'Profit maximisers' (instrumental action) & 'Profit sufficers' (hermeneutic action) emancipatory action)

7.2 Vulnerability context in the UK: Regulation and regulatory frameworks

Unlike the Gambia, where the focus primarily involved fresh produce supply chains, small-scale producers in the UK are involved in a far more diverse range of food products. These range from dairy and meat products, to the manufacturing of drinks and pastries. The UK food industry is heavily regulated by various procurement and governing bodies such as the Food Standards Agency whose responsibility it is to ensure that food is safely produced and fit for human consumption. This is arguably a necessity given the nature of recent ‘food shocks’ in the past few years and so regulation has a key role in facilitating healthy, safe, legal and genuine food systems.

However, a highly regulated food sector, or regulatory frameworks geared towards more ‘conventional’ food systems, is potentially a limiting factor for small-scale producers who are seeking to generate business and enter into a commercial marketplace through SFSC or other localised systems. Indeed, “for an individual farmer, understanding the regulations and needs of a new market can be overwhelming” (Glowacki-Dudka *et al.* 2012: 78), placing more ‘emergent’ or ‘newer’ food producers within such markets at a disadvantage to more ‘established’ or larger counterparts. This overwhelming experience was apparent with reference to a small-scale producer of meats who was relatively new to supplying through SFSC. When asked about the regulations they have to adhere to, replied with:

“That’s the rules. [The meat] has to be from source to finish. And so we then had to put a cutting room in which of course we hadn’t budgeted for, and my husband does that, he does a pig a week turning out pork pie mix and sausage meat, but we can’t sell raw sausage meat, we can only sell the sausage meat and sausages made by the butcher, because that’s another rule.”

(Producer G, Norfolk)

Likewise, Producer B is considering setting up their own cutting room but emphasised “it is all apparently complicated with the inspection and everything”. The main point regarding these responses is not necessarily the content, although there is reference to unforeseen expense by Producer G, but that enforced

regulations and rules have made it 'difficult' to retain control over some of the upstream supply chain processes by way of consuming their time and efforts. Similarly, Producer E, who produces condiments and is based in Cambridgeshire comments that regulations inevitably create for food enterprises or producers that are relatively new to the food sector. Although this is a more positive experience of the regulatory process compared to Producer G, Producer E cites similar issues:

"[Getting approval] took about 9 months, and that is the point at which I launched my product. You cannot launch before having those food safety tests done. I've seen people who make jams and things who don't have those things done, that's partially because jam is well known, as long as you make it with this that and the other, but I had nothing to go by with mine, and also I needed to know that the situation I was making it in was spotless for moulds and things. So I had a good report back from them, both on absence on moulds, bacteria and all those nasty things, and also longevity, so the stuff doesn't go off."

(Producer E, Cambridgeshire)

Regulation clearly extends beyond the initial phases of food production and is an on-going feature that businesses and enterprises have to consider and be aware of in the UK. However, this information becomes more embedded, perhaps even embodied, as food producers become more established and immersed within the sector. As Producer H notes:

"Oh yes, we have to be inspected by environmental health at [the Council] every eighteen months, and also we have to have a hygiene certificate because we run the business ourselves."

(Producer H, Essex)

This scenario relates to a producer of fruit juices who, unlike the previous two examples, has been involved in the food industry and SFSC for several years (since 2008). As such, they did not regard the topic of regulation in the same 'apathetic' way during interviewing. Whereas Producer B, G and E articulated the somewhat protracted and time intensive nature of adhering to food standards and regulations, Producer H has several years of experience in meeting and abiding by the necessary laws associated with food and drink production. This experience

and wider knowledge attained through several years within the food and drink industry arguably accounts for Producer H's more relaxed attitude to the regulatory processes that are involved in the production, distribution and selling of goods. This suggests that the more established, knowledgeable and familiar food producers become with the governing structures in which they operate, the 'easier' it becomes to focus on sustaining or creating SFSC through which products can be marketed and sold.

Producer J, who has been involved in fresh fruit production for more than two decades, elaborates on aspects of regulation, namely the auditing process that is part of being a 'quality assured' producer of fresh produce. Despite a labour intensive, time consuming part of on-farm production, the purpose of auditing is to ensure products entering (short) supply chains are transparent and traceable. As Producer J states:

“[We are quality assured and] basically we're audited every year, we have to meet certain protocols and that takes up a huge amount of my time, my secretaries time... it is all record keeping and making sure that everything is right. We have to record every single thing that we do from start to finish, and everything is traceable so that everything that leaves the farm we know almost who picked it. We know where it came from in the field so if there was ever an issue we can trace it right the way back.”

(Producer J, Essex)

Direct and proximate SFSC are the only means through which Producer J markets and sells their produce. The focus on traceability and reference to transparency within SFSC is pertinent as transparency implies accountability and such accountability creates trust between producers and consumers engaged in 'alternative' food relationships (Follett 2009: 42), as well as consumer confidence in the authenticity of food involved. Producer J ensures traceability through time consuming record keeping, but when asked if he believes this is something his customer's value, he goes on to say “No, I think I am wasting my time”. This suggests that traceability and accountability is less about generating trust and confidence amongst customers and consumers of the food, which serves to differentiate SFSC from other more 'conventional' supply chains, and more a case

of adhering to external measures should there be an issue surrounding food safety.

Producer H, although relatively well established in the industry having started production in 2004, echoes some of these sentiments associated with administration, record keeping and auditing procedures. When asked about if they have considered gaining any quality certification, such as organic, they cited the regulatory framework as the main barrier, not because they are ambivalent towards organic production per se. They say:

“You have to do all the paperwork and record keeping and everything in a certain way for every single crop, so it is just not viable. It is much better suited to people doing fewer things on a much larger scale, you know if you’re doing 100 acres of potatoes then yes, you’ve got the same paperwork for a quarter acre of potatoes... so that’s the organic. I’ve looked at LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) and things but again the problem with them is often the size that you are and the cost and the cost-benefit... [but] we try to do everything environmentally.”

(Producer H, Suffolk)

Regulation and frameworks as discussed with reference to the UK are somewhat alien to small-scale horticultural producers in a Gambian context, at least with fresh produce supply chains and some ambient goods such as juice and eggs (that GiG occasionally supply). The only auditing that takes place (that was noted through primary fieldwork) is through quality grading either by GiG at their base in Fajara, or at the farmgate. However, this is more about product quality as opposed to meeting specific production or procurement regulations (see Chapter 6). This highlights the importance of providing food enterprises, especially those who are ‘new’ to the sector, with the relevant knowledge and skills to efficiently meet any regulations imposed by external *formal* structures. Indeed, it is this lack of knowledge and understanding that may prevent food producers from accessing markets and utilising SFSC as a means to create and sustain access. Regulatory frameworks in a UK context are therefore a latent contributor to vulnerability as it can limit or inhibit the livelihood strategies of food producers. However, this is more relevant to ‘newer’ food producers who are unfamiliar to regulatory systems.

For more 'established' producers, regulations can conversely offer a sense of security and protection once knowledge about them is gained.

7.3 Vulnerability context in The Gambia: seasonality

Seasonality was part of the vulnerability context within the DFID SLF. This is an especially important point in The Gambia and with GiG's SFSC because climate and weather play an important role in determining the quality of harvests. Indeed, the production level in 2007 was particularly poor because of inadequate rainfall during the cropping season. Poor production levels caused income loss for many farmers, especially smallholders (FAO 2008: 1). Moreover, tourism is also highly seasonal. As noted in Chapter 6, The Gambia is generally marketed as a European 'winter sun' destination with the number of holidaymakers peaking between November-April. This means that food producers have at best a six month window to supply the lucrative tourist industry and to capitalise on increased demands for their harvests. However, Mitchell and Faal (2007) suggest that the remainder of the year - the 'summer hole' - where tourism is quieter, is becoming less of a problem. They argue that owing to relatively affordable year round flights from major European cities (such as London) and the emergence of new markets, the influx of holidaymakers is becoming more stable and characterised less by peaks in the winter and troughs in the summer (Mithcell and Faal 2007: 451).

Yet while these seasonal tourism trends may be changing, the primary data collected during fieldwork with producers and GiG suggests that demand in the summer months is low, and production capabilities (owing to the rains and cultivation of rice by women) is also reduced. This means that GiG tend to work closely with a smaller, core group of food producers to supply the tourist industry in the summer months and expand their remit when demand increases in the winter. As such, the seasonal aspect to both the market to which GiG supply (tourism) as well as the established seasonal variations in production, means that seasonality is an important characteristic of the vulnerability context in which producers in The Gambia are situated.

7.4 Vulnerability and (in)secure land tenure

One of the most important factors affecting vulnerability in The Gambia relates to land. In terms of assets, land can be regarded as part of natural or physical capital depending on the nature of the research question. In this instance land is first and foremost a physical asset required to earn a livelihood. One of the main issues regarding land is that it is a precious asset on which all food producers depend. However, it is also an asset that is vulnerable to being 'taken' away. This is due to the increasing phenomenon known as 'land grabbing', a situation that may arise where there is no legal or formal recognised land owner and where larger usually foreign agri-businesses, acquire a share of land in a country through brokering deals with Government. Indeed, the practice of 'land grabbing' is common throughout much of Africa. From 2008-09, deals between private firms, agri-businesses and governments amassed to the apportioning of 60 million hectares of agricultural land globally, of which around two thirds took place on the African continent (BBC News 2012).

Under a land system like the one in place in rural Gambia, where land is rarely officially or legally 'owned' but rather held through long-standing verbal agreements with village Alkalos (chiefs), producers are constantly exposed to the latent threat of being displaced by the formal, Westernised destabilising forces of globalisation. There is little chance of small-scale producers preventing large, often foreign businesses or their own Government from acquiring land ownership should the will and terms of conditions be met between interested investing parties. Indeed, the former GiG demonstration farm located at Yundum in West Coast Region (close to the airport) was acquired by the Government with very little notice and with no dispute procedure. This forced the relocation of the GiG demonstration farm and entire production support network several miles south to the remote and less accessible rural village of Sifoe.

Of the producers that were visited and interviewed in depth in The Gambia, the size of land they typically have access to ranges from 1.5-2.5 hectare. In all cases the land was claimed to be 'owned' or as belonging to them, but there was no official supporting documentation to substantiate their claim. This is not unusual in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it highlights how more powerful actors can quite easily

appropriate ownership or lay claim to rural or peripheral lands. Moreover, in two cases, producers work the land for another landowner (one for a friend's uncle and another for a Saudi Arabian businessman) and so are vulnerable to changes that are beyond their control.

In terms of small-scale agricultural production systems, land, and especially access to land, underpins subsequent livelihood strategies, and so this form of physical capital is arguably better understood as a pre-requisite. This applies to any context where livelihoods rely on land for food production, but the issue is far more pertinent in a global South context where 'land grabbing' is an increasing issue and where traditional systems of land ownership and access are vulnerable to exploitation from more powerful actors. This also undermines the natural capital of producers who directly utilise the resources such as water for irrigation and soil that are provided by access to fertile land. As such, land security is a particularly important component of the vulnerability context of food producers.

7.5 Capital assets: physical and financial capital

Physical capital is a limiting factor in The Gambia more so than the UK, as small-scale food producers typically lack the physical infrastructure to assist them with their production capabilities and routes to market. This is why in Figure 7.2 the 'P' (physical capital asset) is circled tentatively in red. Moreover, rural Gambian producers lack the financial assets such as access to micro-finance and credit to (re)invest in their physical assets. Very little evidence of external financial assistance emerged during the main fieldwork period in The Gambia (other than the two 'in house' women's community garden financial co-operatives). However, a key informant at GiG in a follow up interview in 2013 commented that Reliance Financial Services, a micro-finance institution operating since 2007 in The Gambia, is now offering low interest rate loans to assist horticultural producers in making the transition from subsistence to more commercial farming. The impact of this initiative is currently undocumented which is why Figure 7.2 tentatively highlights financial capital in red because access to and availability of this micro-finance is unknown.

This situation is in contrast to the UK where access to credit and loans is far 'easier', and where investing in physical assets is common practice. Indeed, improving physical assets, such as storage, allows a greater degree of control over upstream supply chain processes. As such, producers are able to sustain a cold supply chain from 'farm to fork. This is captured in the following comment by Producer J:

"We do everything ourselves. Pick, pack, cold store... we keep the cold chain right the way through. We might start field packing soon, at the moment we just do shed packing but we are doing more and more PYO, so we'll start to do [field packing]."

(Producer J, Essex)

This is why the financial and physical assets have not been highlighted in Figure 7.1 with reference to the UK. Moreover, as noted in Chapter 6, the physical context creates a barrier to SFSC in The Gambia when compared to the UK. Indeed, the broader infrastructural efficiency and connectivity in developing countries, such as road networks and ferry crossings, makes transporting perishable food products even relatively short distances notoriously difficult (Freidberg and Goldstein 2011).

7.6 Absence of natural capital

One of the five capital assets that have had little mention throughout the thesis concerns natural capital and the role this plays in the livelihood strategies of food producers in the global North and global South. Unlike other capital assets such as social and human capital, which have emerged as significant themes in terms of SFSC, the notion of natural capital received much less attention amongst participants. The concept of natural capital has been alluded to in Chapter 2 as part of a discussion about 'strong' and 'weak' sustainability. In terms of results and findings, natural capital has only been referred to in relation to land tenure by participants, and this is only within a global South context.

Practices that are associated with environmental sustainability and resilience, such as operating organically or agroecologically amongst very few of the participants suggest that aspects surrounding natural capital may be 'lower down the pecking order' when it comes to producing food that is ultimately about generating a livelihood. As such, Carney's (1998: 9) comment about short-term survival rather than longer-term sustainable management of natural capital being a priority appears to hold some accuracy in the context of SFSC. This is why in the livelihood outcomes section 'sustainable use of natural resource base' has been highlighted in both the UK and The Gambian frameworks (Figure 7.1 and 7.2), it is not definitive or entirely clear from the evidence how natural resource bases at the household level are safeguarded amongst producers.

Of greater significance within this research is the way food is marketed, where it is sold and at what price, as well as whether it meets certain quality standards of the customers that are purchasing the food. There is less emphasis on the ways producers in both the UK and The Gambia practice environmentally sustainable agriculture. Indeed, it is not possible to claim that natural capital is an 'absent' asset or a low priority amongst producers, as the focus of this research and data collection tended to coalesce around social embeddedness, marketing strategies and the ways that 'value-laden' information is communicated from the point of production to consumption (Renting *et al.* 2003). It is therefore possible that natural capital as an asset received less discussion amongst the majority of participants within this research owing to the methodology and direction that semi-structured interviewing took.

However, "long-term sustainability requires society to invest in restoring natural capital to increase the supply of ecosystem goods and services and to maintain biodiversity that is vital to ecosystem functionality" (Blignaut *et al.* 2013: 94). This is an area that future agri-food research connected with SFSC therefore needs to address more explicitly.

7.7 The intangibles: social capital and human capital

The importance of these forms of capital was evident as part of a review of the livelihoods literature (Chapter 3). The empirical findings from this research reinforce the importance of these two assets in the context of SFSC. Indeed, these two capital assets are directly inter-related when the role of *formal* structures such as GiG and TOA are examined, as well as from an *informal* socio-cultural perspective. Beginning from a Gambian perspective (Figure 7.3), the Production Managers (PM), who are employed by GiG to provide on-farm support, production advice and guidance to rural producers, are integral to creating and enhancing social and human capital. In an interview with the PM for NBR, the nature and scope of their work was made clear:

“I help farmers to produce quality and quantity for GiG by training them, giving advice and support. I now work directly with twelve [food producers] throughout the year, but indirectly, I don’t know.”

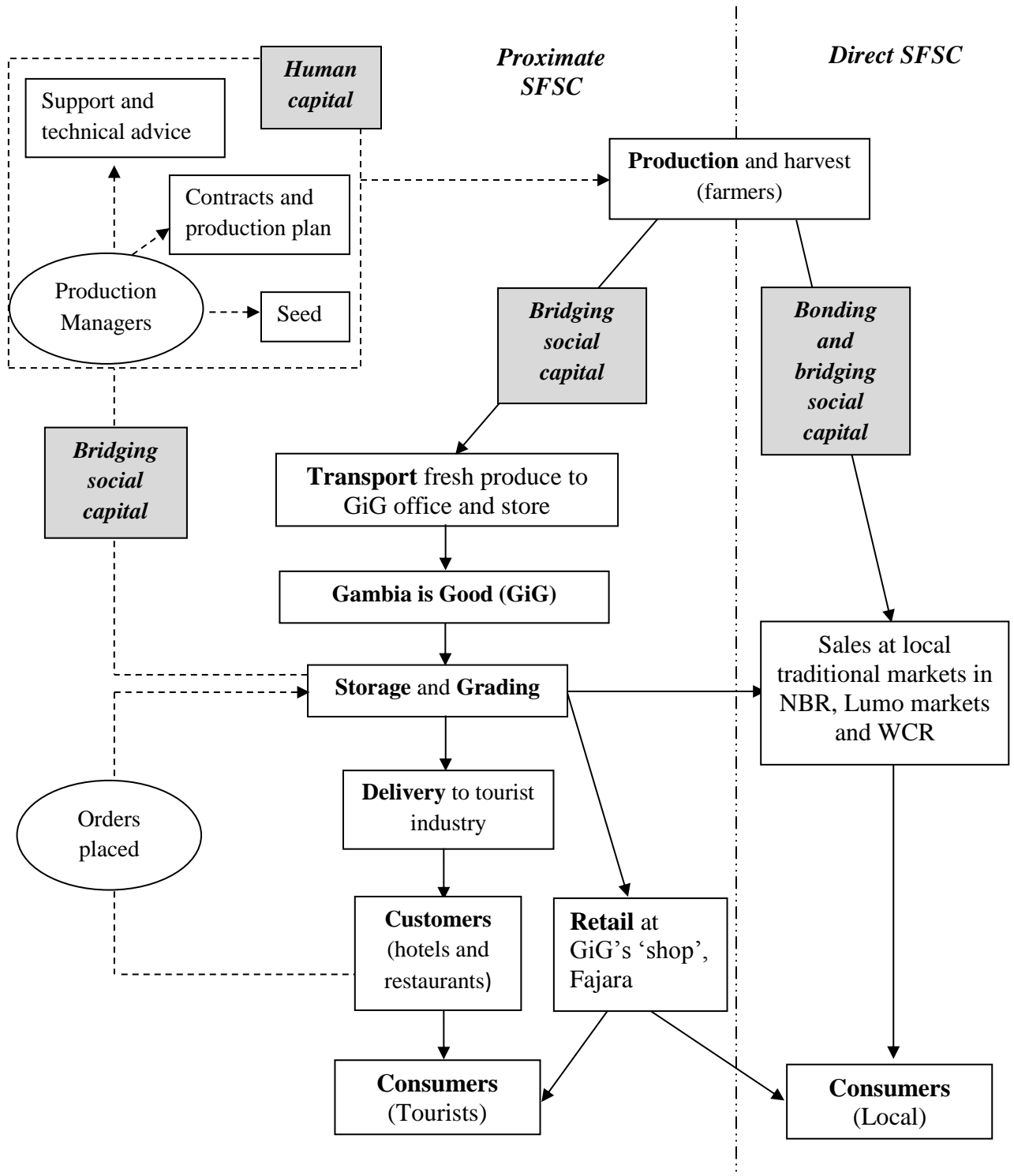
The social and human capital initiated by the PM is drawn upon by producers to market food through SFSC, both via GiG and more traditional, informal marketplaces in nearby villages and towns. As suggested by the PM’s quote above, this knowledge is not confined to the twelve producers with whom he works with, as knowledge is mediated through pre-existing networks amongst producers and within their communities. For example, the PM explained that one of the twelve farmers had recently offered technical advice and pesticides to a woman farmer who was having a problem growing onions. This example highlights how knowledge and best practice can quickly disperse once a *formal* support mechanism is in place to catalyse the diffusion of intangible assets. Moreover, this is evidence of the inter-connected nature of social and human capital as discussed in Chapter 3 (Coleman 1988)

Although the issues about selling consistently to GiG have been discussed, without the PM and involvement of GiG, the producers would have a smaller support network and one less potential supply chain available, meaning that production would remain largely subsistent and reliant on volatile local, traditional markets that are prone to saturation due to the the same types of produce being grown throughout the year. Were there to be no PM, the only markets available

would be direct local markets, these supply chains are characterised by face-to-face relations between the producers and consumers at local, traditional markets in the NBR, along the Senegalese border (Lumo markets) and in WCR. However, as Figure 7.3 shows²⁴, the presence of a PM enables producers to not only enhance their knowledge and skillset, but also to incorporate *proximate* SFSC into their livelihood strategies. This type of SFSC exists where producers use GiG as a means to market and distribute produce as there is no producer-consumer contact as would be the case in local marketplaces where producers sell direct to the local rural population (consumers).

²⁴ This diagram was presented in the previous chapter, but without the application of capital assets

Figure 7.3: An overview of proximate and direct SFSC in the Gambia amongst producers involved with GiG, and the role of social and human capital.



Key:
 ←----- Flow of information, knowledge and exchange
 ←----- Flow of food
 ----- Line to separate proximate and direct SFSC space

The PM is vital in enhancing the human capital of producers through their expertise and transfer of knowledge, but also because they provide a 'bridge' to GiG and ultimately the customers located in the higher value tourist industry. As shown in the upper half of Figure 7.3, the PM thus propagates not only human capital that can be used as part of existing direct SFSC strategies, but they add a further layer of bridging social capital that producers can draw upon to market their produce. Bridging social capital can therefore be regarded as an important asset when small-scale producers seek to sell and distribute produce through proximate SFSC as facilitated by GiG. The vertical qualities – connecting different hierarchies together - of bridging social capital, however, are limited and lacking. This is because, as noted in Chapter 6, GiG do not always fulfil the contracts of producers and so the distribution of power remains somewhat imbalanced. Producers are subsequently largely disconnected from, and some even apathetic towards, the tourist industry and GiG itself. This is why vertical embeddedness in Figure 7.2 is highlighted in red because it is arguably not present or at best fragile in this context. Moreover, owing to the lack of social embeddedness in The Gambia, this is why the processes such as quality construction are encompassed in a tentative and permeable red casing as opposed to a solid one (Figure 3.5 and Figure 7.1).

However, the bridging social capital evident within GiG's supply chains is why Figure 7.2 has strong (red) linkages between social and human capital and the *formal* transforming, structures and processes section. It is here (as opposed to *informal* structures) where GiG is situated within the broader livelihoods framework. Crucially, this *formal* space is where food producers derive their production knowledge, capability and tourist industry market access (even if this is not always guaranteed). This is why the re-drawn framework in Figure 7.2 connects the *formal* structures and processes section with spatially proximate SFSC in the livelihood strategies section.

The local, face-to-face markets bypass this *formal* structure as GiG (or other formal governance mechanisms associated with private industry or the state) are not responsible for these direct, local market connections. Rather, producers seek these out for themselves. As noted in Chapter 6, the local markets are often a 'fall back' livelihood strategy when GiG are unable to take produce, most notably

during times of low demand or where the quality is deemed too poor for retail in the tourist industry. This 'fall back' strategy is arguably an outcome of a lack of vertical embeddedness between food producers, GiG, the tourist industry and indeed other (absent) supporting organisations. This may account for why linking social capital, which as discussed in chapter 3, resonates with vertical embeddedness, is conspicuous by its absence in this particular context.

7.8 Human capital in the UK

The way food producers acquire skills and knowledge to produce and market food in the UK differs slightly when compared to The Gambia. There is more variation about how human capital is acquired, although the role of *formal* structures such as TOA plays an important role for some food producers, especially those who may be new to the food sector or who are looking to innovate. This is captured by Producer S who argues that TOA has been an invaluable source of networking and shared learning:

“I find the advice and training that they [TOA] do very useful and the contacts that you set up through that has been really good. Just talking to other farmers, other farm shop managers has been great. Getting the contacts and the discussions that go on and the group knowledge that you gain just from being able to talk to other people who are trying to do similar things is really helpful...They do a Feast East event which is their trade event where you can go to find new suppliers, which is good as you just end up talking to everybody there. But also they do just training events, all sorts of different things. Marketing events I've been to...It is business training and just going to those with people who are doing similar things and talking about what you're up to and what you're going to do is really useful.

(Producer S, Suffolk)

Although the nature of the learning and sharing taking place in this scenario is different to The Gambia, the key point is that the *formal* structure of TOA similar to GiG's PM, is the source of knowledge exchange and catalyst for developing networks. It is for this reason why the UK framework in Figure 7.1 shows a red arrow that links *formal* transforming structures and processes and the capital asset

of human capital. Moreover, in the UK, other food producers cited a more tacit knowledge around food production and SFSC. For example, Producer J's comment about how they acquire skills and knowledge to produce, process and market food suggests that rather than seeking out *formal* assistance, learning is an ongoing process that happens through 'doing' (Carolan 2011). They say:

"You just learn. You read, you learn and you get advice, and I've learnt a hell of a lot more since I started than what I knew when I started it. That's the best way to learn, on your feet really."

(Producer J, Essex)

The same kind of embodied processes are not confined to the UK, or even to food production, but this comment suggests that human capital is also created and sustained outside of the *formal* spaces of training workshops or trade events, for example.

7.9 Applying bridging social capital to proximate SFSC in a UK context

As with The Gambia, the important role of social and human capital for SFSC in a UK context is evident. As Figure 7.4 shows, the proximate and direct SFSC that food producers and enterprises use depend heavily upon social capital. This is not to say that other forms of capital are not necessary, because as discussed previously, the physical and natural capital associated with land and infrastructure, and access to funds and credit (financial capital), all have an important role in food producers' livelihood strategies. However, social capital concerns the relationships that are needed to facilitate food systems, these relationships are dynamic and a set of bonds that can determine the nature of SFSC and the 'journey' that food makes to consumers.

In the same way that GiG, and the PM in particular, facilitate bridging social capital in The Gambia, TOA facilitate bridging social capital in the UK. This is in part due to producers being members of TOA, which gives them access to a wealth of information and potential customers. Indeed, TOA facilitate and instigate SFSC by being the 'bridge' across different people, groups or businesses, due to their

extensive, freely available directory of members, including producers, processors, distributors and retailers. This is made available through a circulated catalogue and the TOA website. A member of staff based at TOA explains both the purpose of this directory and how it is circulated throughout the region:

“[We] keep an up-to-date database with all the producers information on it and also our website is updated daily and then we produce trade buyers guide, which is an 84 page full colour guide, and you can get hold of the information by category and it gets mailed out to the trade buyers across the UK and basically promotes the food that is made here by the members. We’ve currently got about 300 members.”

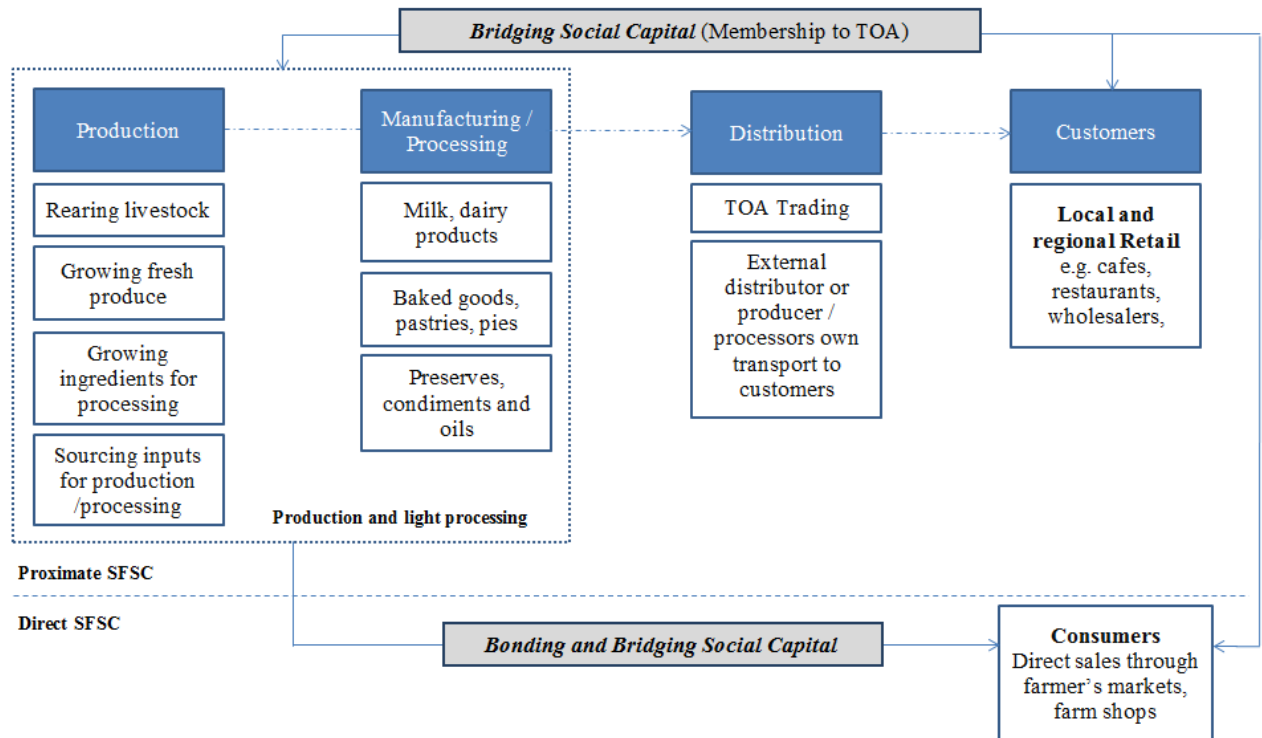
(TOA staff)

Although information about food products and spaces in East Anglia receives national coverage, typically benefiting larger members such as Aspalls and Adnams, it is also a useful tool and network for smaller members. Indeed, for many of the smaller scale enterprises that comprise the majority of TOA’s membership, the directory is used to identify either suppliers or customers who are located regionally or locally. For example, as Producer G alludes to, TOA membership is a form of bridging social capital (and source of human capital):

“They [TOA] email out any information which ranges from shows that are going on, to Joe Bloggs is selling his freezer. So there is quite a lot of information that I probably wouldn’t get. It is quite a positive funnel of local food information which I think is always quite handy to sort of know. So in terms of that, that on its own is a positive, plus then you’ve got the brochures of members, so if I was looking for a refrigeration unit for example you’d look in there and possibly get a preferential rate with them. Going back to what I’ve said, it is a network of people who you can trust and it is all like-minded businesses, like-minded size and sort of common goal isn’t it?”

(Producer G, Suffolk)

Figure 7.4: The role of social capital for TOA members



Source: Author

Producer G's reference to trust and a 'common goal' is significant as trust and solidarity are central aspects to social capital. It can determine whether relationships between people or organisations develop from passive, benign relationships into more meaningful, productive ties. Moreover, as displayed in the upper section of Figure 7.4, bridging social capital strongly applies to the creation of proximate SFSC (Renting *et al.* 2003).

7.10 Bonding social capital and direct SFSC in the UK

As the lower half of Figure 7.4 shows, direct SFSC utilise both bonding and bridging social capital as producers can draw upon both familiar (horizontal, bonding) and unfamiliar (vertical, bridging) networks to facilitate these types of food chains. Producer P cites pre-existing relationships made through informal, often opportunistic, contact with customers, such as locally-based retailers or consumers, as their main supply chain channels. Such relationships that have led

to direct SFSC have not been made through TOA, irrespective of their trust in the organisation and its membership base. They say:

“I chat to others and talk to others, but it’s mostly through contacts we’ve made by doing farmers’ markets than contacts I’ve made through TOA. So the fact that I am networking or chatting with those people has nothing to do with TOA. They are not responsible for those relationships.”

(Producer P)

The direct relationships that translate to face-to-face SFSC is evidence of how bonding social capital is drawn upon to propagate direct SFSC; face-to-face relationships and supply chains that do not rely on an intermediary to either distribute or authenticate products. Moreover, Producer P’s reference to the contacts made at farmers’ markets resonates with the work of Chiffolleau (2009) who found that these types of spaces (as opposed to *formal* spaces and structures such as TOA) are rich in social connections and exchange. This highlights how the *informal* structures and processes – the horizontal, social embeddedness – is drawn upon to create SFSC livelihood strategies amongst small-scale food producers in the UK. This is in contrast to The Gambia where there is far more reliance on *formal* structures such as GiG to foster SFSC livelihood strategies and social and human capital. This does not mean that *formal* structures in the UK are not used to seek out livelihood strategies through social capital because as Producer B elaborates, bridging social capital in the form of becoming a TOA member has had an impact on their livelihoods. They say:

“We’ve just started doing this in the last 12 months. We are selling at the moment to friends and family but as soon as you’ve gone I’m going to take a sample of frozen chicken over to [a village store 18 miles away] who got the contact through Tastes of Anglia because they are unhappy with their current supplier of chicken.”

(Producer B, Suffolk)

Producer B was previously only drawing upon their bonding social capital exclusively as these relationships were within well-defined horizontal groups, which in this case, consisted of family and friends as a means to sell food products and sustain the business of rearing and selling small quantities of meat. However,

since becoming a member of a regional food network and having a continuous presence in the TOA directory, Producer B has been able to utilise bridging social capital to generate another direct SFSC with a customer outside of their familiar horizontal group (a nearby village store) that were previously unknown to them, at least in a personal capacity. This scenario has resulted in an enhanced set of livelihood strategies as the potential for supply chains has increased due to the layers of bonding and bridging social capital. They were capitalising on both horizontal processes associated with *informal* socio-cultural processes, and through vertical processes that occur between this and the *formal* space occupied by TOA. This is why in Figure 7.1 social capital as an asset in a UK context is connected via a new red arrow to both the *formal* and *informal* structures and processes, whereas in The Gambia it is far more confined to the *formal* spaces, organised by GiG. This is also why vertical embeddedness in the UK remains stronger or more evident when compared to The Gambia.

7.11 Horizontal and vertical embeddedness

To summarise the preceding discussion, Table 7.1 captures how different layers relate to the two types of SFSC. In The Gambia these layers of capital are created and sustained through *formal* structures and processes (GiG) whereas in the UK both horizontal (*informal*) and vertical (*informal/formal*) embeddedness takes place. These findings are significant because it indicates the layers of social capital and relationships required for different types of SFSC to be realised, and how they are connected to the *formal* and *informal* structures and processes in which they are immersed. However, there is little evidence to suggest that producers in The Gambia are able to draw upon linking forms of social capital. For example, vertical connections between different hierarchies and power structures that extend *beyond* the scale of GiG²⁵. In the UK, this is less of an issue, but the difficulties surrounding regulations and the regulatory frameworks suggests that

²⁵ An interview with the Deputy Director General of the Gambian Department of Agriculture (DOA) in November 2011 reinforces this point. The DOA claimed that reducing food imports to The Gambia was a top governmental priority, with assisting rural smallholders to improve their quantity and quality a long term strategy. However, there was no evidence that GiG or the DOA had formed (or intended to form) any *link*, partnership or strategic plan to achieve what are arguably very similar goals. This highlights the lack of vertical embeddedness and linking social capital not just at the micro-macro scale, but also within the macro scale itself.

there is scope for 'stronger' linking social capital, which is essential in creating vertical embeddedness. The current situation suggests that in both contexts, the micro scale is in some way disconnected to the more formal, macro scale political environment.

Table 7.1: Summary of the key aspects to social capital and application to SFSC

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(Source: Adapted from Kay 2006)

7.12 A sixth asset in the UK: cultural capital

Informal socio-cultural processes such as social embeddedness enable both proximate and face-to-face SFSC livelihood strategies to emerge and be sustained. *Formal* institutions and processes allow for spatially extended versions to be created, and some proximate SFSC (as seen with TOA Trading, for example). Spatially extended SFSC in The Gambia are not viable under a strategic model like GiG, and so are omitted as viable livelihood strategies in this context. This is because there is a lack of broader institutional support (vertical embeddedness) that is needed to enable small-scale food producers to engage in extra-local markets. Moreover, The Gambia does not produce any distinctive 'speciality' products that could foster strong PPP linkages with consumers, as seen with *rooibos* tea in South Africa, for example (Binns *et al.* 2007). It is at this juncture where the notion of cultural capital needs explaining and developing from the original discussion in Chapter 5.

In terms of developing SFSC and differentiating them from other food commodity chains, place identity plays a greater role in the UK context (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000). This enables 'bio-geographies of distinction' (Smith *et al.* 2008: 272) to be carved out, particularly when the ethical and or ecological credentials of food products and processes are packaged as part of marketing strategies. The same connections around identity, heritage, provenance and ecology are not as easily made at the regional level in The Gambia, and this may account for the name 'Gambia is Good', which has national connotations, despite GiG's scope being limited to just two of six administrative regions in the country.

Furthermore, food producers and institutions such as GiG in the global South are unable to utilise cultural capital in the same way that food producers can in the UK or other parts of the global North, especially within regions where there is 'more developed' food relocalisation. This is because there are less established or distinctive food geographies and links between products and place, especially with fresh produce, which is a widely available basic commodity throughout much of the global South. This means that socio-cultural processes such as provenance, as constructed in a UK context, which add value cannot be as readily commoditised in the same way in The Gambia. This is because the linkages between heritage, tradition, production process and place are either absent or have not had sufficient time to be consolidated and associated with one another, and as such, to be valorised by wholesale customers and consumers. In addition, consumer demand is different, as in The Gambia, the ability to pay for place-based 'quality' foods is far more limited compared with more affluent countries such as the UK. It is therefore a lack of commoditisation of cultural capital in The Gambia that accounts for the different type of horizontal embeddedness when compared to the UK.

This largely explains why the coastal tourism industry in The Gambia makes food purchasing decisions based almost exclusively on 'value-for-money' (economic factors), as opposed to 'values-for-money' (socio-cultural, ecological and ethical factors). This is also a reflection of the type of tourism promoted, which is largely based on competitively priced all-inclusive package holidays geared towards European tourists (see section 6.7). Food with provenance is not as valued and does not command a niche space or premium because the cultural and contextual

conditions do not enable this in the same way as seen through proximate and extended SFSC in the UK. Food producers who communicate 'quality', provenance, tradition and social embeddedness throughout these types of SFSC are therefore adopting a livelihood strategy unique to their spatio-temporal geography. They are *capitalising* on using these linkages to their advantage, and as such, this can be regarded as a form of cultural capital.

This is why it has been added into the re-drawn framework for the UK as a sixth asset in Figure 7.1 and why it is absent in The Gambian framework (Figure 7.2). As such, the 'retro-innovations' and 'bio-local/regional connections' (Smith *et al.* 2008: 270) that food producers construct can be regarded as a form of cultural capital. As has been argued, commoditising these spatio-temporal connections – essentially the 'value-laden information' (Renting *et al.* 2003) - is more difficult in 'less developed' or less relocalised places. However, it must be noted that these assertions are relative and dependent on the scale of comparison. For example, in comparison to many southern European countries such as Italy, Spain and France, the UK can be regarded as having a less established local, speciality food heritage, with fewer 'traditional', quality food products available for consumption. This is reflected in the spatial distribution of PDO/PGI schemes, which are far more prevalent in southern Europe²⁶. However, at the global scale, the UK has more *commoditised* local, place-based foods that enable producers to add value when compared to The Gambia.

7.13 Livelihood outcomes

The final point about livelihood outcomes has already been discussed in Chapter 5 and 6, but it is worth emphasising the point about profit sufficers and maximisers once again. In the UK, there is a combination of profit sufficers and maximisers, driven and characterised by a combination of instrumental, growth oriented goals and practices, and also lifestyle, hermeneutic actions. In The Gambia, however, the producers were driven strongly by instrumental, income generating goals. This is unsurprising given the relative levels of earning and poverty in The Gambia

²⁶ For example, the UK has a total of 57 PDO/PGI/TSG certified products. In comparison, Italy has 260, France 208, Spain 170, Portugal 123 and Greece 100 (Rippon 2013).

when compared to the UK. However, there was some evidence that producers in The Gambia were also engaged in food production (and not SFSC per se) for hermeneutic, lifestyle reasons.

However, a key finding in relation to both the UK and The Gambia is that there was no evidence to suggest that small-scale food producers interviewed were engaged in the SFSC livelihood strategies that they were because of emancipatory actions, acting in opposition or in resistance to broader socio-economic and political processes (Bebbington 1999), or challenging the structures under which one makes a living (Scoones 2009: 178). Indeed, producers displayed no 'oppositional' tendencies and were operating within the political-economic context in which they were situated. This is an important point because as with the North American literature on AFN in particular, the people involved in SFSC are often framed as active in (re)shaping and (re)claiming food systems from the grasps of 'conventional' agriculture and wider globalising processes.

However, the evidence from in-depth research with small-scale food producers who are engaged in SFSC for their livelihood strategies suggests that they do not readily identify with a politicised, more 'radical' agenda associated with oppositional action. This has implications about the relevance that *some* SFSC may have in terms of reshaping agri-food landscapes and re-centring or decentralising power, as not all food producers are necessarily driven by the emancipatory goals and actions associated with (defensive) localism (Winter 2003) and food justice (Smith and Jehlička 2013). This is why the UK framework in Figure 7.1 makes reference to profit maximisers and profit sufficers and why emancipatory action is omitted. For the Gambian version in Figure 7.2, profit maximiser tendencies are evident, as the farmers GiG work with are all attempting to access new markets and make the transition from subsistence to more commercial production. Profit sufficers is highlighted in Figure 7.2 and emancipatory action omitted owing to the lack of evidence to support these types of 'structurally oppositional' producers. This is not to say that some food producers in both contexts are not driven by emancipatory action or values, but that these themes and discourses are lacking from these empirical data and so require more research focused specifically on this line of enquiry.

7.14 Summary

The themes and concepts explored in this chapter have been centred around the two re-drawn frameworks (Figure 7.1 for the UK and Figure 7.2 for The Gambia) to illustrate how in each context, various components of the original framework presented in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.5) function differently after the theory is applied. The vulnerability context was first discussed, and within a UK context, regulatory frameworks have been added into this section. This is because regulations often inhibit the ability of food producers to engage in SFSC activities and livelihood strategies effectively, especially those who are 'new' to the sector. In The Gambia, however, seasonality, tourism and secure land tenure are far more pressing aspects that determine the extent of vulnerability for food producers.

The physical and financial capital of food producers in The Gambia is far more limited than in the UK, where investments into on-farm processing to retain added value is possible and increasingly common. Limited access to credit and the ability to re-invest into physical assets in The Gambia presents this value-adding, while the broader infrastructural networks, as with other developing countries such as Kenya (Frediberg and Goldstein 2011), and Zambia (Abrahams 2009), also serve as a barrier to SFSC. However, with natural capital there are contextual similarities across the UK and The Gambia. Indeed, the environmental impact of SFSC is largely unclear within the UK and The Gambia. This does not mean that ecological integrity is not a consideration for the producers interviewed. For many it was something they were fully aware about, but the evidence to suggest natural capital, and thus 'strong sustainability' (Ekins *et al.* 2003) is happening, requires further research. This applies to both contexts.

The intangible assets of social and human capital are also where there is cross-cultural similarity, although the ways that each of these assets are drawn upon and utilised differs. However, in The Gambia, linking social capital is largely absent, and as such, there is a lack of vertical embeddedness (Sonnino and Marsden 2006). Producers remain largely disconnected from GiG and indeed the broader macro, political economic framework in which they are located. In the UK, however, bridging and bonding social capital are drawn upon, although there is more diversity in how these assets are enhanced. Indeed, producers in the UK

use both *formal* and *informal* structures and processes as a means to expand these intangible assets. The socio-cultural, horizontal processes that are lacking in The Gambia enable UK food producers to market their products through SFSC.

This is also related to the sixth asset of cultural capital that applies specifically in the UK context. Cultural capital is connected to processes of horizontal embeddedness. Indeed, producers who communicate the linkages between PPP are adopting livelihood strategies unique to their spatio-temporal geography, and in the UK (and particularly regions like Suffolk) there are stronger relationships and ties between food and place. Producers use these spatio-temporal and PPP linkages to their advantage, and as such, the usable, commoditised outcome of this can be regarded as a form of cultural capital.

Finally, the different *types* of producers in each context were compared. The conceptual labels of profit sufficer and maximiser (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999) are applicable to the UK context. In The Gambia, there is only tentative evidence to suggest that there are 'lifestyle' producers associated with hermeneutic action. However, food producers who are seeking to engage in more commercial production and high value markets (tourist industry) are predominantly profit maximisers. There is, however, very little evidence to suggest that in either context food producers are driven by emancipatory action or values (Scoones 2009).

This suggests that, contrary to some of the literature around AFN, food sovereignty and CFN, SFSC are not always underpinned or driven by politicised, activist agendas that aim to destabilise broader, agri-food structures. Rather, they create space for producers to enact instrumental and hermeneutic values and may therefore be regarded as 'quiet' forms of sustainability as opposed to more 'radical' forms (Smith and Jehlička 2013). The thesis now turns to the final conclusion chapter to draw together the key findings and discuss the main implications of this research.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This final concluding chapter draws together the key material that has emerged from this research. It is broadly structured into four sections that are reflective in terms of discussing the key findings and limitations, but also speculative in terms of pursuing the questions and ideas that have emerged for future research. In the first section, each chapter of the thesis is briefly recapped and then the four key findings are presented. Secondly, a critical and reflective discussion about the realisation of the aims and objectives is presented. Thirdly, the limitations of this research are critically discussed. This is largely based around possible alternative methodologies and other approaches that could have been implemented. Issues of scope, scale and representativeness are also critiqued to frame the research within wider debates about methodology and knowledge creation.

Finally, the various opportunities for future research that build upon the main findings are discussed. This is presented as five broad research agendas. The future research is primarily about applying and developing the conceptual frameworks that have emerged from Chapter 3 and Chapter 7.

8.2 Recapping the thesis

The findings of this research mean that multiple 'new' and innovative ideas, issues and points of discussion can be made in terms of advancing 'alternative' agri-food scholarship, as well as the practice and theory of sustainable livelihoods discourse. Chapter 1, the introduction to the research, outlined the main 'problems' with agri-food systems and the key issues that required attention. The aims and objectives of this research are founded upon the need to be comparative in terms of investigating and applying the core concepts within alternative agri-food studies. The cross-cultural, comparative objectives are therefore the first innovative aspect of this thesis. Chapter 4, the methodology, reinforces the

justification for this approach through the use of an interpretive philosophical epistemology, grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998, Charmaz 2006) and the application of various qualitative techniques, such as interviewing.

Chapter 2 contextualised agri-food debates and reviewed the key literature around AFN, local food and SFSC. This fed into the conceptually-oriented Chapter 3, which amalgamated previously disparate SFSC and sustainable livelihoods literature and introduced the conceptual framework (Figure 3.5) that served to guide subsequent data collection and analyses. Chapters 5 and 6 presented the primary evidence and empirical data analysis, with Chapter 5 relating to the data collected from East Anglia in the UK, and Chapter 6 data from The Gambia. Chapter 7 incorporated empirical qualitative material but is primarily conceptual, drawing together the key differences and similarities within the two results chapters and linking directly back to the theoretical material of Chapter 3.

A brief recap of each chapter shows how this research has made several timely empirical and theoretical contributions. This thesis has therefore created a strong conceptual platform from which a variety of future research agendas and ideas can be pursued. These future agendas are discussed later in the chapter after a more in depth discussion about the implications of the four key findings and evaluation of the research aims and objectives.

8.3 Key findings and implications

There are four key findings that have emerged from this research. Each has implications for understanding various aspects of sustainable livelihoods and SFSC theory and practice.

i) *Formal and informal transforming structures and processes in the SLF*

The first key finding to emerge from this research is review based rather than grounded in the empirical data. Following a theoretical exploration of the relationships between livelihoods and 'alternative' agri-food literature in Chapter 3, the SLF requires a slight alteration to be relevant in the context of SFSC. This

refers to the section of the SLF termed 'transforming structures and processes' situated between the capital assets that people, households or communities have access to, and the subsequent livelihoods strategies that they implement. In the 'original', and still widely used, version of the SLF (Figure 3.2) created by DFID (1999) this section groups together structures, institutions and processes e.g. law, governance, culture and the private sector. It is argued these all influence the types of assets people can access, and to what extent.

However, when applying transforming processes in the SLF to the context of SFSC the framework falls short. This is because SFSC are inherently dependent on *informal socio-cultural processes* such as embeddedness, 'relations of regard' and 'quality' construction. Grouping these processes with *formal* structures and institutional processes associated with law, policy and governance masks their importance in terms of influencing livelihood strategies. Moreover, deconstructing this aspect of the SLF into *formal* and *informal* processes enables both horizontal embeddedness (informal connections) and vertical embeddedness (informal-formal connections) to be clearly identified and situated. Indeed, broader discussions about how SFSC as livelihood strategies are initiated and mediated at micro-macro scales can be more fully explored as a result of the deconstruction of the 'transforming structures and processes' into two distinctive *formal* and *informal* conceptual spaces. This finding has applicability and relevance for future livelihoods and SFSC scholarship and debate.

ii) Horizontal and vertical embeddedness and intangible capital assets

The second finding is largely an outcome of the first one. This is because only through deconstructing the SLF into *formal* transformative spaces and *informal* socio-cultural spaces and processes have horizontal and vertical embeddedness been able to be fully located, investigated and critiqued.

As discussed in Chapter 7, these inter-connections between intangible capital assets and embeddedness are evident in *both* The Gambia and the UK, although the ways they relate between one another differ. In The Gambia, the *formal* space of GiG is responsible for enhancing human capital and the bridging social capital

that serves to connect producers to the coastal tourism industry. However, owing to 'weaker' social embeddedness, and lack of linking social capital, producers often 'fall back' to local markets and can only draw upon bonding social capital. This is not helped by the seasonal nature of food production and tourism in The Gambia. Yet the lack of both types of embeddedness exposes vulnerability, which is internalised at the production end of supply chains. This prevents small-scale producers from making the longer-term transition from subsistence to more commercial production. This is why in Chapter 7 Figure 7.2 shows the *informal* spaces where horizontal embeddedness, social embeddedness and 'relations of regard' are mediated as being largely absent (Sage 2003), and why the vertical relationships within GiG and beyond to the broader macro-economic governance mechanisms and structure of The Gambia is tenuous.

In the UK, however, the same layers of bridging and bonding social capital are drawn upon, although producers draw upon both *formal* and *informal* structures and processes as a means to expand their social and human capital and access markets. As such, the presence of socio-cultural processes of social embeddedness, 'relations of regard' (Sage 2003) and quality construction (PPP linkages) enable UK food producers to more readily market their products through SFSC. Moreover, in the UK context there is greater evidence of vertical embeddedness given that organisations like TOA (and other institutions) have a more active and engaged role in the livelihood strategies of small-scale food producers. However, the issue around regulatory frameworks as discussed in Chapter 7 is testament that there is room to develop linking social capital. This is needed to foster stronger vertical embeddedness across multiple macro-micro scales to (re)create enabling institutions and policies that streamline regulation and certification processes to the advantage of SFSC and small-scale food producers.

iii) Cultural capital, spatial-temporality of food relocalisation and quality construction

The third key finding relates to the notion of cultural capital as originally introduced in Chapter 5 and revisited in Chapter 7. In the context of SFSC and small-scale

producers, sustainable livelihoods are ultimately about capitalising on the various PPP linkages that underpin quality construction. This is how differentiation takes place (Ilbery *et al.* 2005) and thus how small-scale producers can forge a niche space in competitive markets. As has been demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 7, these linkages arise and are made possible through latent spatial and historical synergies, and these are stronger in areas of more developed food relocalisation (Ricketts-Hein *et al.* 2006). Indeed, food producers situated in places of 'more developed' food relocalisation, such as the UK (particularly Suffolk in terms of this research) when compared to The Gambia, can capitalise on PPP linkages through branding, marketing and/or certification or quality standards. The reason this is cultural capital is because, as noted in Chapter 7, cultural capital is the *aptitude* or *inclination* of a group or society to behave in a certain way. It describes the *potential* of a group or society (Cochrane 2006: 319). This 'potential' and 'aptitude' reinforces the latent nature of cultural capital, which only becomes a form of usable capital when 'tapped' into. This requires skills (human capital) and entrepreneurial, savvy marketing tendencies. Producers in the UK also have greater access to other assets and resources that facilitate this 'tapping in' and capitalisation process. This includes physical and financial assets that enable them to retain more control over the supply chain and capture added value through on-farm processing.

This comparative research has therefore revealed the importance of cultural capital, which as captured in Figure 7.1, is another layer to processes of horizontal embeddedness throughout food chains. The Gambia has not had the same temporal (agri)cultural developments or transitions that enable PPP associations to be more readily established and valorised in the same way as occurs in the global North. Moreover, infrastructural constraints means the type of demand from the Gambian tourist industry (customers) places greater emphasis on reliability and freshness more so than on food products with especial geographical or artisanal characteristics. The nature of demand reflects a more 'pragmatic cultural capital' compared with SFSC in more developed nations such as the UK, where reliability and freshness are the norm and 'pre-given' amongst retailers and consumers. In The Gambia, however, practical infrastructural and distributional

issues affect the *inclination* or *aptitude* – the cultural capital - of both the tourist industry and producers.

iv) Transferability of SFSC models from the global North to the global South

The final key point is more about the wider applicability and implications that the preceding findings have. In discussing notions of embeddedness, there is a need to question how transferable and relevant SFSC models conceived in the global North are in countries of the global South. This is even more pressing when the finding of cultural capital and spatial-temporality is considered. This is because SFSC models are arguably more 'effective' in terms of enhancing the livelihood strategies and outcomes of small-scale food producers in places characterised by 'more developed' food relocalisation, and where consumers seek and can interpret the subsequent 'quality' cues that emerge from PPP linkages. However, as noted in Chapters 6 and 7, the spatial proximity SFSC model that GiG follow is founded upon comparatively 'weak' social embeddedness between producers and the tourist industry. Value-laden information (Renting *et al.* 2003) and PPP linkages and marketing strategies for the sale of fresh produce are invisible.

This means that the strategy is inappropriate to this particular context in terms of having an impact on rural livelihoods in the long term. It is important to re-state here that GiG was originally conceived as a partnership between Haygrove, a UK based horticultural company, and Concern Universal, an international NGO with Irish roots over a decade ago. It is therefore understandable why the GiG model displays the fundamental characteristics of 'alternative', local and SFSC discourses, as constructed and implemented in the global North.

Its utility in a West African context, however, is far from guaranteed and needs revisiting. As discussed in the concluding section of Chapter 6, GiG could consider pursuing a more pragmatic model that makes use of now widely available mobile communications technology to connect producers directly with the key stakeholders in the tourist industry, as well as operate on a more co-operative basis to better meet fluctuating levels of demand. This would help to share the risks and vulnerabilities and improve resilience as and when shocks or adverse

changes inevitably arise. Furthermore, notions of SFSC, social proximity (Aubry and Kebir 2013) and horizontal and vertical embeddedness need critically re-evaluating in the context of The Gambia, and within broader contexts of the African continent and global South. Moreover, these terms need critically appraising when applied in regions that do not align with the same spatial-temporal (agri)cultural geographies and trajectories of North America and Western Europe.

A final point relates to the need for on-going critical thinking. As with the problematic nature of 'alternative' food in the global South (Abrahams 2007), SFSC also needs to be understood not as a relatively 'benign' concept, which was ironically the original attraction for its application in this research (see Chapter 2), but equally as a loaded term with limitations and issues as seen with AFN, for example (Whatmore *et al.* 2003). The thesis now turns to the second section of this chapter, evaluating the aims and objectives of the research.

8.4 Revisiting the aims and objectives

This research was inspired by various questions and ideas related to the fields of AFN and SFSC in the global North *and* South, including the role such food systems have in the livelihood strategies of subsistence or small-scale food producers. The comparative, cross-cultural aspect, whereby the global North and global South have been compared and contrasted in tandem rather than in isolation provided a further innovative angle, as by taking this approach, the role of SFSC *in context* has been explored. This approach thus enabled both the context specific and cross-cultural elements of SFSC to be understood and to better comprehend the various barriers, circumstances and processes that affect small-scale food producers' livelihoods in the global North and global South. As such, the research was driven and guided by an overriding aim and three incrementally focused objectives. The extent to which the research aims and objectives were achieved is presented in Table 8.1 and then each aim and objective is discussed to explain how and why they are met.

Table 8.1: Evaluation of the achievement of the aims and objectives

Aim/ objective number	Full description of aim/objective	Achieved ?
Aim	Investigate the role of SFSC in enhancing the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in the global North and global South.	Achieved
Objective 1	Contextualise the need for the research by critically examining the relationships between sustainable livelihoods and SFSC in contrasting contexts of food production, and develop a practice based conceptual framework to inform methodological enquiry.	Achieved
Objective 2	Explore SFSC practices in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North) and how actors perceive and practice sustainability through SFSC.	Achieved
Objective 3	Critically evaluate the role of context and how SFSC contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North), and the wider implications of a cross-cultural, comparative approach to SFSC.	Achieved

Source: Author

Aim:

Investigate the role of SFSC in enhancing the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in the global North and South.

The research aim was not so much a question or specific ‘problem’, but provided insights into the nature of SFSC in contrasting contexts of food production, and how they can contribute to the livelihood strategies of small-scale producers. Using qualitative methods and approaches, primary research was successfully conducted with small-scale food producers in rural regions of the global North (UK) and global South (Gambia). Moreover, multiple innovative and novel contributions have been made throughout the thesis owing to the exploratory nature of this aim. As has been alluded to in the previous section, the aim has been achieved due to the four innovative key findings that have emerged. This relates to the *informal* and *formal* aspects of the conceptual framework, horizontal and vertical embeddedness, cultural capital and relative applicability of SFSC to the global South.

Objective 1:

Contextualise the need for the research by critically examining the relationships between sustainable livelihoods and SFSC in contrasting contexts of food production, and develop a practice based conceptual framework to inform methodological enquiry.

Chapter 2, the literature review, contextualised the key themes in the research and Chapter 3 outlined the relationships between the two key concepts of sustainable livelihoods and SFSC. This fed into the conceptual framework. This framework is both conceptual and practise-based, as it was used as a platform on which to base the grounded methodology. Qualitative methods were selected in line with the inductive grounded theory approach to data collection (Strauss and Corbin 19987), as this enabled key themes to emerge from the research participants and contexts where the research took place. The results are thus grounded in the data, evidence informed, and the material from Chapter 3 is revisited in Chapter 7.

Objective 2

Explore SFSC practices in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North) and how actors perceive and practise sustainability through SFSC.

Primary qualitative data collection enabled an in-depth exploration of the practices of small scale food producers in The Gambia and the UK, and how this enhanced their livelihoods. The role of organisations such as GiG and TOA has also been demonstrated through the re-drawn conceptual frameworks in Chapter 7 and the layered nature of social capital in particular. A focus on supply chain dynamics, relationships and the practices adopted by food producers became the main focus of the research, and this was in the context of sustainable livelihoods as opposed to sustainability per se. However, although this objective makes reference to sustainability, the objective can still be regarded as achieved, given the focus on *sustainable* livelihoods. Indeed, grounding notions of sustainability within the SLF arguably provided the research with a clearer, more manageable focus.

Objective 3

Critically evaluate the role of context and how SFSC contribute to the sustainable livelihoods of small-scale food producers in The Gambia (global South) and the UK (global North), and the wider implications of a cross-cultural, comparative approach to SFSC

This objective has been fulfilled in Chapters 5-8 and particularly Chapter 7, as this discussion re-visited the earlier theoretical material from Chapters 2 and 3. Indeed, two of the key findings about the applicability of SFSC models in the global South and the strength of horizontal and vertical forms of embeddedness in certain places directly relates back to this objective. This third objective is thus the most important in terms of situating the research findings within the broader fields of SFSC and sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, it has enabled several innovative contributions to be drawn out and for implications to be properly considered.

8.5 Limitations of the research

As with any research project, there are inevitable issues surrounding the validity, representativeness and reliability of results. To understand research limitations, the methodological foundations on which the research was developed need to be critiqued. As Chapter 4 outlined, this research adopted four methodological components as a means to fulfil the research questions, aims and objectives. These four components were:

- i) Grounded theory
- ii) Interpretivism
- iii) Qualitative approach and implementation of qualitative techniques (primarily interviews)
- iv) Case studies

These four components ensured that the research retained an exploratory focus, as defined in the initial aim. The benefits to this are that the results are grounded within the case study data collected, with no pre-conceived judgements or hypotheses incorporated that could potentially obfuscate or inhibit the full richness of the results. However, the qualitative nature of the research meant that much of

the data was subjectively coded and interpreted, raising issues about researcher positionality and whether the approach is replicable for other researchers in other contexts. This is a common criticism of qualitative enquiry, the limitations of which have been extensively written about in anthropological and human geography literature (Skelton 2001).

Moreover, there is potential for the type of research presented here to adopt an in-depth, ethnographic methodology. Indeed, spending an extended period of time immersed in the social and political worlds of participants would enable a deeper knowledge about cultural codes and norms to be gained, and to understand the 'every-day' realities that people face and how they are negotiated. This would be an effective approach in The Gambia given the 'culturally unfamiliar' nature of the research field, especially when in rural areas. Moreover, ethnographic fieldwork over several months (or even years) affords greater time to reflect on the research process as it unfolds, and to develop a wider network of key gatekeepers and participants. Similarly, and in the UK especially, adopting a longitudinal approach to fieldwork that involved multiple visits and discussions would have helped develop greater depth and understanding about each case, and to have on-going dialogue about the topics and issues at hand.

The nature of the case studies is also significant determinant as to the types of results and data generated. The Gambia and the UK were selected as case studies, not only because they met the criteria associated with SFSC, small-scale food production and representing the global North and global South, but also because of logistics and convenience. Other countries can and could have been used, but given the logistical convenience of operating in the contexts of rural Gambia and England, these locales were selected. Different results would almost certainly have emerged in other contexts, although the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3 means that any future research situated at the interface between SFSC and livelihoods has a universal point, or even *points*, of conceptual entry.

8.6 Future research agendas

This thesis has identified five broad areas for future research. These are now discussed in no particular order of importance.

1) Research with tourists/consumers in The Gambia

The next 'logical' step to progress research with GiG in terms of their supply chain dynamics is to gain a perspective first hand from the tourists who consume fresh produce within the hotels and restaurants. This was beyond the scope of this research, but it would add another vital layer to the rich empirical material already collected. Moreover, understanding how 'relations of regard' and social embeddedness are currently mediated between producers and consumers/tourists could directly inform solutions and recommendations about how these processes of horizontal embeddedness could be strengthened. This is important because understanding how social proximity relations between producers and consumers (and indeed industry stakeholders) might be 'shortened' to develop 'stronger' SFSC and enhanced livelihoods is needed (Aubry and Kebir 2013). In addition, the potential for traditional Gambian culinary dishes could be explored. This could investigate, for example, if there is demand and a market for these types of foods as opposed to just producing horticultural goods.

2) 'Reconnection' in The Gambia (and other global South countries)

A second potential research agenda is to explore the concept of 'reconnection', as articulated by Kneafsey *et al.* (2008). This is because as noted in Chapter 7, tentative evidence emerged to suggest that some food producers have become engaged in small-scale agricultural activities and SFSC with GiG *deliberately*. Clearly some of this was for instrumental, profit maximisation reasons, but there was evidence some producers had counter-urbanised and returned to, or become newly engaged in, farming practices. For example, one producer (Producer M, a male Gambian farming since 2008) talked of 'getting out of the truck driving business', suggesting an escapism or *retreat* to the more peaceful and satisfying rural landscape in NBR where he grew up. Another producer (Producer K, a male

Gambian farming since 2004) graduated from a year long course with the NATC, NBR and returned to his home village to grow horticultural produce.

As noted, these could be further substantiated to better understand the reasons driving a 'return' to the rural areas and land based enterprises, especially given the backdrop of mass urbanisation in the global South.

3) Explore the motivations of food producers and the relationships between instrumental, hermeneutic and emancipatory action and values

Linked to the previous comment is a need to more comprehensively understand the *types* of people who 'do' SFSC and produce the food circulating in them. This can apply to either the global North or global South, but investigating the inevitable 'trade-offs' between profit maximisation and profit sufficiency actions and values would be a useful layer to develop knowledge in this area. In particular, investigating the reasons *why* people become involved in SFSC and how is needed to more fully consider the 'who' of SFSC at the micro, local scale. Moreover, research of this nature would assist in understanding the geographical and demographic patterns about the people and places responsible for initiating and sustaining 'localised' food systems. This would better substantiate the instrumental, hermeneutic and emancipatory terms applied in this research.

4) The role of online spaces in re-embedding SFSC

While the role of the internet and online spaces have only been very briefly alluded to and touched upon throughout this thesis, the core concepts lend themselves to exploring online, virtual environments as much as material, 'real' environments. Firstly, processes of social embeddedness and shortened social proximity relations can and are taking place in an online capacity (Bos and Owen, forthcoming). Indeed, entrepreneurial, skilled food producers are increasingly utilising interactive social media environments and websites to connect with consumers. The key question raised here is how 'strong' or 'genuine' is trust and the social proximity relations that take place online in comparison to the tactile,

material spaces and connections that producers and consumers forge at farmers' markets, CSA and farm shops, for example? Given that society is increasingly converging on 'digital' and online spaces to share, disseminate and learn, this particular agenda is a timely point of departure to explore notions of horizontal – and indeed vertical – embeddedness 'beyond' the material realm.

Secondly, as alluded to previously, the role of the mobile (smart)phone for largely disempowered, disconnected or marginalised small-scale food producers requires exploration. Indeed, the 'real-time' nature that this technology affords, even in remote rural locations throughout the developed and developing world, offers potential for producers, consumers and intermediaries to have continuous dialogue and be in a stronger position to react to market fluctuations and demand. As the 2011 UK Government Foresight report asks: "[h]ow much can agricultural education, extension, farmer mobilisation and empowerment be improved by the new opportunities afforded by mobile phone and web-based technologies?" (Foresight Report 2011: 92). This agenda would thus develop some of the key findings about fostering closer, direct relations between producers and consumers.

5) Measuring vertical embeddedness, linking social capital and cultural capital

This final research agenda refers to some of the key components in the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.5, Figure 7.1 and 7.2). Firstly, the notion of vertical embeddedness needs greater attention, as this has a crucial role in terms of holding other components within the livelihoods framework together. In addition, as has been argued, linking social capital is an asset that plays a role in developing trans-hierarchical connections and linkages that are needed to support food producers' livelihoods, especially those who are 'newer' to the industry.

Given the centrality of linking capital, formulating some composite measure to gauge how and where it is strong and connecting multiple *formal* stakeholders and institutions, would add a further layer to this research. This would enable claims about vertical embeddedness being tied to food relocalisation and cultural capital made in this chapter to be grounded in more evidence. Indeed, this understanding

about vertical embeddedness is important if SFSC are to be a long-term, contextually appropriate feature of agri-food landscapes throughout the world.

Furthermore, it must also be noted that this research and these future research agendas are based upon on specific types of foods with particular characteristics. Indeed, data collected from The Gambia relate exclusively to fresh produce supply chains, and the majority of participants in the UK were also engaged in some form of fruit and/or vegetable production. This means that the SFSC explored in this research facilitate *perishable* foods, which present their own marketing and logistical issues for small-scale producers that are absent amongst other products with longer shelf lives. As such, any future research agenda needs to consider the factors and circumstances that are conducive for the effective flow of perishable food products through SFSC.

Finally, it is important to consider recent theoretical developments within agri-food debates and how they affect future research ideas. For example, incorporating notions of food sovereignty into future research agendas will arguably enable a more politicised, transformative and participatory set of agendas to materialise. Moreover, this type of critical, trans-disciplinary approach associated with food sovereignty allows for a clearer focus on issues surrounding social justice, CFN and community organisation, which are becoming an increasingly prominent feature of contemporary agri-food discourse and practice across the globe (Levkoe 2011, Renting *et al.* 2012, Shawki 2012, Albrecht 2013, Sage 2014). In shifting the conceptual basis from 'alternative' and 'short' more towards these issues around rights, civil society, governance and justice, the value of research as a transformative instrument for resilience becomes ever more apparent (Holt-Giménez *et al.* 2011).

8.7 Final remarks

This research has been a journey, not solely about unearthing new knowledge and ideas, but a personal journey as a researcher and what it means to do 'good' research. It has become clear how valuable and important stakeholder *relationships* are in achieving and delivering quality research. Indeed, on-going,

constructive dialogue with gatekeepers and participants throughout the planning, data collection, analysis and dissemination phases is important in remaining focused and creating spaces for broader impact. While this research was designed and delivered with these points in mind, the relatively high turnover of staff within GiG and uncertainties this brought amongst the group disrupted the continuity of this 'lower-priority' research project compared with the other everyday responsibilities most of the GiG staff had. Moreover, and with particular reference to TOA, the somewhat unforeseen large-scale re-structuring of the organisation during critical stages of data collection meant that maintaining dialogue and institutional 'buy-in' from influential staff members was challenging. This was also a major factor as to why a UK focus group and more TOA-oriented interviews failed to materialise. However, some of the key events described here were beyond the control of the researcher, but the significance of maintaining professional relationships and attaining gatekeeper interest and commitment from the 'beginning' right through to the 'end' of research projects has been emphasised.

Finally, in situating the research at the SFSC-livelihoods interface, rich, innovative material has emerged and both exciting and timely research agendas have been presented. The key now is to fully reflect on the main findings, and to develop trans-disciplinary focused research agendas. Indeed, it is multi-stakeholder, collaborative research that enables different layers and levels of expertise to work together in the quest to enact positive change and achieve more sustainable, just outcomes. It is this trans-disciplinarity that mirrors the ways linking capital and vertical embeddedness are mediated in the context of agri-food systems, and so it makes perfect sense to strive for future research practices that also operate in this way. In doing so, SFSC can be critically explored from a range of disciplines and perspectives. This means that the ways SFSC enhance the livelihoods of people who are reliant upon them can be better understood.

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Appendices

Appendix 1a: Informed Consent Form – GiG Key Informants

Coventry University

Faculty of Business, Environment and Society
United Kingdom

CV1 5FB

Name of Student:

Luke Owen

Name of University Supervisor:

Dr. Moya Kneafsey

Course Title:

PhD

Title of Research Project:

Exploring and contrasting the role of direct food production and consumption initiatives in sustaining livelihoods in the UK and The Gambia

What is the purpose of the research?

- This research seeks to understand GiG and how it contributes to achieving sustainable livelihoods in The Gambia.

What will participation involve?

- **Interviews** and **conversations** with Luke Owen about GiG, your involvement with the project, the impacts of GiG and plans for the future.
- **Focus group** (discussing the above topics in a group).
- **Mapping** activities, such as mapping the journey of GiG produce.
- Luke Owen will ask you for permission to record interviews, take photographs and notes.

What will happen to my data?

- Data will be used for Luke Owen's PhD research.

- Your real name will not be used, but the names of organisations will not be made anonymous. This is to ensure that the research can have a positive impact.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

- Luke Owen will be happy to answer your questions (contact details below).
- If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or feel you have been placed at risk you can contact Dr. Moya Kneafsey, the project supervisor.

Consent

- I confirm that I understand the above information. The nature, demands and risks of the project have been explained to me.
- I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty and without having to give any reason.

Participant's signature _____

Date

Researcher's signature _____

Date

Luke Owen

Email: **owen15@uni.coventry.ac.uk**

Department of Geography, Environment and Disaster Management, Coventry University, Priory Street, UK, CV1 5FB Tel: 024 7688 8855

Appendix 1b Informed Consent Form – GiG Producers

Coventry University

Faculty of Business, Environment and Society
United Kingdom

CV1 5FB

Name of Student: Luke Owen
Name of University Supervisor: Dr. Moya Kneafsey
Course Title: PhD
Title of Research Project: *Exploring and contrasting the role of direct food production and consumption initiatives in sustaining livelihoods in the UK and The Gambia*

What is the purpose of the research?

- This research seeks to understand how GiG contributes to achieving sustainable livelihoods in The Gambia.

What will participation involve?

- **Interviews** and conversations with Luke Owen about your farm and community, your involvement with GiG and the impacts of GiG.
- **Focus group** (discussing the above topics in a group)
- Interactive activities such as:
 - **Mapping** where produce is sold.
 - **Ranking exercises**, where you list something by how important it is to you. For example, ranking the importance of certain produce over others.
- Luke Owen will ask you for permission to record interviews, take photographs and notes.

What will happen to my data?

- Data will be used for Luke Owen's PhD research.

- Your real name will not be used, but the names of organisations will be.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

- Luke Owen (contact details below).
- Dr. Moya Kneafsey of Coventry University is the project supervisor.

Consent

- I confirm that I understand the above information. The nature, demands and risks of the project have been explained to me.
- I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty and without having to give any reason.

Participants signature _____

Date

Researcher's signature _____

Date

Luke Owen

Email: **owen15@uni.coventry.ac.uk**

Department of Geography, Environment and Disaster Management, Coventry University, Priory Street, UK, CV1 5FB Tel: 024 7688 8855

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet - Gambia

Information about the project

This research seeks to investigate how a direct food production and consumption project contributes to sustainable livelihoods in both the UK and The Gambia. In The Gambia, this is with particular reference to the Gambia is Good (GiG) project.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been selected due to the nature of your work and/or involvement within Concern Universal and/or Gambia is Good (GiG).

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is voluntary.

What do I have to do?

I am keen to ask questions and learn more about the nature of your work and involvement with Concern Universal and/or GiG. I only ask that you respond to my questions and, if you are willing, to take part in interactive group exercises such as mapping the journey of GiG produce, for example. If you are unwilling to participate, this will be respected.

What are the risks associated with this project?

No risk, discomfort or harm is foreseeable by taking part in this project.

What are the benefits of taking part?

You will be contributing to the development of GiG and research in the fields of sustainability, agriculture and food. It is an opportunity to express opinions and thoughts about GiG as well as some of the issues you face.

Withdrawal options

You can withdraw at any time, without reason, by contacting me (see below for details).

Data protection & confidentiality

Any personal or confidential information is solely for the purpose of this project and will remain secure at all times. If you wish to remain anonymous, or withdraw your participation, this will be respected.

What if things go wrong? Who to complain to

Any concerns should be raised with the researcher, Luke Owen. This project is being supervised by Dr. Moya Kneafsey of Coventry University, and any issues that require her input will be acknowledged.

What will happen with the results of the study?

Extracts and notes from recorded interviews may be published in the thesis and/or other academic works. Results will be made available to GiG management as this research intends to assist the ongoing development and aims of GiG.

Who has reviewed this study?

Coventry University's Ethics panel have agreed and approved this project.

**Researcher contact details
contact details**

Luke Owen (Research Student)
Studies)
Coventry University, Priory Street, CV1 5FB, UK
Priory Street, CV1 5FB
Email: owenl5@uni.coventry.ac.uk
apy034@coventry.ac.uk
Tel: 02476 888855

Director of Studies

Moya Kneafsey (Director of
Coventry University,
Email:
Tel: 02476 887703

Appendix 3a: Gambia Interview schedule - Producers

Background and context

- What is a typical day like?
- How did you get involved with GiG?
- Why did you become involved in GiG?
- How long have you been part of GiG?

- What do you grow / sell? seasonal?
- Where do you sell?
- Standards / quality criteria?
- What do you like about being a member of GiG?

Networks and communication

- Do you know where produce goes from farm?
- Do you communicate / meet with other farms? If so, how, and how regularly?
- Who do you contact / where do you go if you have any problems?
- Contact with GiG staff?

Livelihoods

- How is GiG more sustainable than farming in a traditional sense?
- What was it like before?
- Training?
- Specialist equipment, materials?
- Income from GiG – detail, regular?

- What are the most important things to you on your farm?
- Land – ownership, access

The future

- How long will you be a GiG farmer?
- What are the main issues? How is the environment changing?
- What changes are needed to improve?

Appendix 3b: Interview schedule: Organisational interview (Gambia)

GiG context

- What is GiG? Structure, partners
- Number of producers
- Scale and scope
- Aims and objectives – values? Achieved/achieving?
- GiG set up on existing 'model'? European?

Functioning

- How do producers become enrolled? Criteria? Benefits?
- Communication / networks sustained? Phones
- Pricing strategy

- Role of GiG farm – impacts?
- Type of produce – seasonal?
- Farming techniques, methods, equipment – specialist?
- Distribution – how, when, where

Livelihoods

- How has GiG improved livelihoods? Where?
- Seasonal variations?
- Sustainable?
- How are producers trained and informed?
- Detail on income generated
- Rural development?
- Safety net if failed/poor yield?

Quality and standards

- Standards? Quality criteria?
- Who decides?
- Certification?
- Storage and wastage

Barriers and the future

- Main issues to success?
- Drawbacks?
- Trade-offs (selecting producers, funding)
- GiG shelf life?
- Future plans
- Main concerns going forward?
- Replicable model? Develop links to Senegal

Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form – Tastes of Anglia

Coventry University

Faculty of Business, Environment and Society
United Kingdom

CV1 5FB

Name of Student: Luke Owen

Name of University Supervisor: Dr. Moya Kneafsey

Title of Research Project: *Exploring and contrasting the role of direct food
production and consumption*

*initiatives in sustaining livelihoods in the UK and The
Gambia*

What is the purpose of the research?

- This PhD research seeks to understand local and regional food systems, and the role of Tastes of Anglia (TOA) and how it contributes to achieving sustainable livelihoods in the region.

Participation in the research

(Please tick)

- I agree to being involved with semi-structured interviews and conversations with Luke Owen about TOA, my involvement, the impacts of TOA and plans for the future.....
- I agree to taking part in a focus group (discussing the above topics in a group).....
- I give permission to Luke Owen to digitally record interviews.....
- I give permission for Luke Owen to take notes.....
- I give permission for Luke Owen to take photographs.....

What will happen to my data?

- Data will be used for Luke Owen’s PhD research.
- Your real name will not be used, but the names of organisations such as Tastes of Anglia will not be made anonymous. This is to ensure that the research can have a positive impact.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

- Luke Owen will be happy to answer your questions (contact details below).
- If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or feel you have been placed at risk you can contact Dr. Moya Kneafsey, the project supervisor (details on Participant Information Sheet).

Consent

- I confirm that I understand the above information. The nature, demands and risks of the project have been explained to me.
- I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation without penalty and without having to give any reason.

Participant’s signature _____

Date

Researcher’s signature ___ Luke Owen _ _____

Date

Luke Owen

Email: **owenl5@uni.coventry.ac.uk**

Department of Geography, Environment and Disaster Management, Coventry University, Priory Street, UK, CV1 5FB Tel: 024 7688 8855

Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet - UK

Information about the project

This PhD research seeks to investigate how a direct food production and consumption project contributes to sustainable livelihoods in both the UK and The Gambia. In the UK, this is with particular reference to Tastes of Anglia (TOA).

Why have I been chosen?

You have been selected due to the nature of your work and/or involvement within TOA.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is voluntary.

What do I have to do?

I am keen to ask questions and learn more about the nature of your work and involvement with TOA. I only ask that you respond to my questions and, if you are willing, to take part in group discussions should the opportunity arise. If you are unwilling to participate in anything, this will be respected.

What are the risks associated with this project?

No risk, discomfort or harm is foreseeable by taking part in this research project.

What are the benefits of taking part?

You will be contributing to the development of TOA and research in the fields of sustainability, agriculture and food. It is an opportunity to express opinions and thoughts about TOA as well as some of the issues you face.

Withdrawal options

You can withdraw your participation, including after you have taken part in the research, up to 1st August 2013, as this is when the project will be submitted as a written thesis. You can withdraw without reason by contacting Luke Owen (see contact details below).

Data protection & confidentiality

Any personal or confidential information is solely for the purpose of this project. Your identity will remain anonymous in the PhD thesis and/or any academic works.

What if things go wrong? Who to complain to

If you have any concerns, feel you have been placed at risk, or wish to raise a complaint, you can contact Dr. Moya Kneafsey, the project supervisor (see contact details below).

What will happen with the results of the study?

Data such as extracts and notes from recorded interviews may be published in the PhD thesis and/or used in other academic works. Digital data will be encrypted and, along with any notebooks, stored in a locked drawer for a maximum of 3 years. Results will be made available to TOA management as this research intends to assist the ongoing development and aims of TOA.

Who has reviewed this study?

Coventry University's Ethics panel have agreed and approved this project.

Researcher contact details

Luke Owen (Research Student)
Coventry University, Priory Street, CV1 5FB
Email: owenl5@uni.coventry.ac.uk
Tel: 02476 888855

Director of Studies contact

Moya Kneafsey (supervisor)
Coventry University, Priory Street,
Email: apy034@coventry.ac.uk
Tel: 02476 887703

Appendix 6a: Interview schedule for organisational stakeholders (TOA)

What is TOA (TOA – a project centred on helping farmers by generating a market for their produce)?

What is the structural make-up of TOA? Who are/have been/will be the key partners?

How many farms and farmers are involved with TOA?

What is TOA's scale, scope in East Anglia? 'Who' is TOA from a producer aspect? How 'far' is TOA's reach in the region?

Who is involved in TOA (both co-ordinators, actors, NGOs, partners and producers, Government) and what is your involvement in the project?

What are the aims of TOA? Have/are the aims been/being met?

What are TOA's plans? shelf life? In what ways is it sustainable?

In what ways is TOA providing improved livelihoods for farmers in comparison to previous/other farming methods and systems?

Why does TOA operate the way that it does?

- How do new farmers become 'enrolled' in TOA? Criteria?
- How are they persuaded, trained, kept informed?

How and why can TOA be seen as a sustainable (model) for food production and distribution?

What are the farming practices that are used by TOA farmers? Are there any specialist materials and equipment needed?

What are the benefits of joining TOA?

What are the main issues in maintaining TOA?

Are there any drawbacks or disadvantages about TOA? Why is this?

What are the prospects/replicability of the TOA model in other locations? Is it transferable?

What are the future plans for TOA, and what are the main concerns for the future?

Appendix 6b: Interview Schedule for producers in the UK

How did you get involved with TOA?

Why did you become involved in TOA?

What was it like before you became involved with TOA?

How long have you been part of TOA and in what capacity?

What do you grow / sell? Are there changes throughout the season?

Are there any quality standards that you have to meet?

What do you like about being a farmer/supplier to TOA?

Do you know where your produce goes from the farm?

Do you network/communicate with other farms? If so, how, and how regularly?

How is TOA promoting a more sustainable form of food production-consumption?

Are there any specialist materials or equipment that you need?

What are the most important things to you on your farm?

Does being a member of TOA provide you with enough markets for a regular income? Or do you also supply elsewhere? Remit? Regularity?

Who do you contact / where do you go if you have any problems?

What more could be done by TOA and other organisations to assist you?