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Gendered geographies of food security in Blantyre, Malawi

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses the need for a deeper understanding of how gender roles and identities shape household access to food in African cities. The case study of Blantyre, Malawi, is similar to other medium-sized cities in southern Africa where the colonial legacies of structural poverty shape contemporary food insecurity, intra-household gender relations, and urban development. Five conceptual threads run throughout the dissertation and draw together the overarching theoretical and empirical contributions of the research. The first conceptual thread is that urban food insecurity in Blantyre is characterised by a growing level of precarity and vulnerability. Informal, seasonal, and inconsistent incomes often fail to provide reliable access to food, resulting in scarcity at daily, monthly, or seasonal intervals. Secondly, this precarity has a gendered impact on household food security. Women command lower incomes than men, but many also have access to resources such as customary farmland. The geographical focus of the research highlights the effects of gendered mobilities on accessing these resources and on accessing food. The third thread focuses on theoretical problems of African urbanism, particularly regarding the interconnectedness of urban and rural households and the blurred distinction between urban and rural spaces. Access to rural resources, including physical access and hence mobility, is crucial for many low-income households to be food secure. The fourth thread draws attention to political economic issues of local governance, urban planning, and Malawi's production-oriented food security strategy. Recent policies have undermined urban food security and low-income urban households have insufficient political influence over policies that directly shape their livelihoods. The final thread traces the colonial legacies embedded in this political economy, with

particular attention paid to the effects of the geographical legacies of colonialism on Blantyre's built environment. A feminist postcolonial epistemology guided the planning, execution, and analysis of the qualitative methods that empirically ground this dissertation. The result is a layered and richly contextualised demonstration of the centrality of gender and power relations at multiple scales in shaping household food security in Blantyre. The dissertation makes a vital contribution to understanding the urban context of food security, changing gender roles, and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Malawi; urban; food security; poverty; gender and development; postcolonialism; Blantyre; Africa

Dedication

To Nuno, for all of your patience, support, understanding, and love.

To Malawi, for always making me feel welcome and inspired.

Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

ADMARC   AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING CORPORATION

AFSUN   AFRICAN FOOD SECURITY - URBAN NETWORK

AIDS   ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

AISP   AGRICULTURAL INPUT SUBSIDY PROGRAMME

BCA   BLANTYRE CITY ASSEMBLY

BMF   BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

CBCC   COMMUNITY BASED CHILDCARE CENTRE

CBD   CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

CBO   COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATION

CSC   CENTRE FOR SOCIAL CONCERN

DPP   DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S PARTY

DWS(M)   DAVID WHITEHEAD & SONS (MAPETO)

FISP   FARM INPUT SUBSIDY PROGRAMME

GVH   GROUP VILLAGE HEAD(WO)MAN

HDDS   HOUSEHOLD DIETARY DIVERSITY SCORE

HFIAP   HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY ACCESS PREVALENCE

HIV   HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

IHS   INTEGRATED HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

LGA   LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

LPI   LIVED POVERTY INDEX

MCB   MAIZE CONTROL BOARD

MCP   MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY

MHC   MALAWI HOUSING CORPORATION

MNSO	Malawi National Statistics Office
MP	Member of Parliament
MWK	Malawi Kwacha
NEP	National Environmental Policy
NFA	Ndirande Farmers Association
NFR	Ndirande Forest Reserve
NFSP	Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWGTP	National Working Group on Trade Policy
PHL	Press Holdings Limited
PP	People's Party
PTC	People's Trading Company
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TA	Traditional Authority
THA	Traditional Housing Area
UDF	United Democratic Front
USD	United States Dollar
WWA	Waterworks Act

Chapter 1: The gendered challenges of food security in Blantyre

1.1. Introduction

Food security is integral to a myriad of poverty-related issues, which appear differently depending on the scale, context, and epistemological underpinnings of analysis (Watts & Bohle, 1993; Koc, Sumner, & Winson, 2012). Studies of agriculture and trade address questions about food supply and availability (Weis, 2007; Clapp & Cohen, 2009), while nutritionists and health researchers address the health effects of consumption of different foods (Ruel & Garrett, 2004; Gillespie, 2006). This dissertation is primarily concerned with the question of how people *access* food in Blantyre, reflecting the core concern for an emerging sub-field of urban food security research in southern Africa (Frayne *et al.,* 2010; Crush & Frayne, 2011a; Tawodzera, 2011; Battersby, 2012). The focus on access rather than production emerges from the urban scale of the analysis, where food is widely *available* because of the productivity of agriculture in and around the city and the trade networks that help feed the city (Drakakis-Smith, 1991; Atkinson, 1995; Smith, 1998; Maxwell, 1999). Despite the availability of food in Blantyre, it is a place that from its inception has held widely diverse pockets of poverty and wealth (Iliffe, 1987; Power, 1995; McCracken, 1998). These fundamental social divisions, forged through colonialism, continue to produce vulnerability for most low-income households.

In response to their structural poverty, urban residents have developed ways to reduce their vulnerability by producing food, accessing it through social networks, and maintaining strong social, political, and economic links with rural communities (Frayne,

2005, 2010; Lynch, 2005; Mougeot, 2005). A broad perspective on urban food access, encompassing economics, politics, and culture, naturally raises questions about how urban food security is gendered, both in terms of women and men's differential access to food and the influence of gender roles on household food security (Flynn, 2005). Men and women have different livelihood opportunities and command access to different resources. The centrality of gender in shaping food entitlements is well established (Vaughan, 1987; Carney & Watts, 1990, 1991; Bezner Kerr, 2005), and yet there has been insufficient research into the role of gendered entitlements in shaping access to food in contemporary African cities. This gap in the literature is related to the lack of qualitative research on the diverse urban spaces in Africa (Simone, 2004a, 2004b; Murray & Myers, 2006; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Gendered food entitlements are highly contingent on dynamic factors such as cultural gender norms, changing priorities of governments, and the livelihood resources available in a given place and time, such that advancing research on gender and urban food security entails a broadly-based inquiry on even a narrow case study such as Blantyre.

The chapters in this dissertation demonstrate that urban food security is highly gendered and that a gendered lens of analysis is useful for exposing the link between power and hunger at multiple scales. Building on the hypothesis that urban food security is gendered entailed several layers of investigation into the historical geography of Blantyre, the political economy of urbanisation in Malawi, and the cultural currents shaping urban gender roles and identities. It also entailed the development of a grounded understanding of how households access food in Blantyre. The research questions guiding this study therefore fall under three overarching objectives:

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1. Mapping of everyday food geographies

Where is food available? How do people access food? What are
the gender differences in access to food?

2. Identifying household food security strategies

What livelihood strategies do men and women employ to achieve
food security? What are the gender differences in access to
resources that support these livelihoods?

*3. Linking daily life to the politics of food security and urban
space*

How can the urban poor influence the policies that directly affect
their food security? What effect do existing policies at the
national level regarding food security and local governance have
on urban food security at the household level?

These questions emanate from the need for further understanding of the context of

poverty in Blantyre in order to begin synthesising new knowledge about its spaces of

vulnerability to food insecurity.

Five closely related conceptual threads run throughout the chapters in this

dissertation. The first conceptual thread is that urban livelihoods are increasingly

precarious. As in most of southern Africa, structural adjustment reforms in Malawi

beginning in the 1980s reduced the stability, compensation, and availability of urban

employment (Drakakis-Smith, 1994; Chirwa & Chilowa, 1999). These reforms also

affected urban households' purchasing power as they led to sharp currency devaluation

and increasingly unstable food prices (Jayne & Rubey, 1993; Chilowa, 1998; Jayne, Sitko,

Ricker-Gilbert, & Mangisoni, 2010). Austerity measures meant that households were

increasingly responsible for their own welfare, exacerbating the consequences of normal

events such as unemployment or the death of an income earner in the household

(Maxwell, 1999). As a consequence of this heightened vulnerability, households with

access to multiple livelihood opportunities are best positioned to adapt to increasingly adverse economic conditions (Jones & Nelson, 1999; Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002; Stevens, Coupe, & Mitlin, 2006). This narrative thread rests on entitlement theory (Sen, 1981) as the basis for conceptualising poverty and hunger in terms of assets, vulnerability, and rights rather than food availability *per se*. Entitlements to land, labour, and socially mediated exchanges of food usually explain why a low-income household is food secure.

The second conceptual thread is that the growing precarity of urban livelihoods has a gendered impact on household food security. Despite the popular rhetoric of gender change that emerged in my interviews (which in Chapter 3 I identify as *gender*), men bear little of the burden of domestic responsibilities, an important disparity that constrains the time that women can dedicate to earning money and producing food (Moser, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Blackdon & Woden, 2006; Chant, 2010b). One way in which time poverty impacts women's access to food is through their mobility (Tanzarn, 2008; Porter *et al.,* 2010; Uteng, 2011). Emerging literature on mobilities in cities of the Global South has demonstrated that gender shapes mobility, which in turn shapes access to resources and livelihood opportunities differently for men and women (Cresswell & Uteng, 2008). Greater mobility leads to more options for buying food at rural markets or urban markets farther from home that offer better quality food at lower prices. It also provides more opportunities for livelihood activities such as farming on rural customary land and engaging in trade between rural and urban spaces. Household gender roles shape how household budgeting decisions are made, how food is distributed within the household, and which livelihood strategies a household pursues (Agarwal, 1997; Haddad, Hoddinott, & Alderman, 1997). The focus on gender throughout the dissertation helps to draw

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attention to the numerous ways in which how people imagine and enact their gender roles shapes food security, sometimes mitigating the effects of low incomes and in other cases creating food insecurity for some household members in spite of adequate income.

The third thread hones the concept of "urban" in relation to the idea of "urban food security." Blantyre presents a particular urban case study distinct from the megacities that are often used to characterise urban Africa (Enwezor *et al.,* 2002; UNHABITAT, 2010b). Its population is relatively small (around 700,000 people), the vast majority of Malawians are rural (85%), and most of the space within the city is informally developed or protected nature reserve. Similar to other cities in sub-Saharan Africa (Bah *et al.,* 2003; Tacoli, 2007; Lerner & Eakin, 2011), the urban/rural dualism is untenable for much of my analysis and the concept of *urban food security* is only useful for heuristic purposes and comparison with other cities of the Global South. Most people who live in town are socially, economically, culturally, and politically tied to their rural areas in very tangible ways (Satterwaithe & Tacoli, 2002; Lynch, 2005) and access to rural resources often explains why low-income urban households are food secure. While previous research has shown rural to urban food transfers to be crucial for urban food security (Flynn, 2005; Frayne, 2010), my analysis emphasises urban residents physically leaving the city to buy and grow food. It intertwines with the previous thread about gender by again raising the importance of mobility for urban food security. The distinction between rural and urban is further blurred because of the presence of typically "rural" institutions in town. The continued *de facto* legitimacy of traditional authorities in town despite their extra-legal status is one example (Chome & McCall, 2005; Cammack, Kanyongolo, & O'Neil, 2009). Traditional authorities in town play a major role in

allocating urban farmland and fertiliser coupons and in managing markets in areas under their jurisdiction.

The effects of overlapping and often contradictory traditional and formal governing institutions form the basis of the fourth narrative thread. Maxwell (1999) argued that the political economy of urban food security in sub-Saharan Africa was characterised by its 'political invisibility' because food security was usually addressed by national governments and focused on production, while urban issues were usually the purview of local governments and reduced to technocratic problems of roads, pipes, and buildings. Key examples related to the regulation of street vending, market management, and urban agriculture emerged in my research and demonstrated that urban residents in Malawi have inadequate influence over the political decisions that directly shape their food security. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Government stalled the devolution process outlined in the 1994 constitution when they postponed local elections indefinitely in 2005 (Cammack, 2012; Wroe, 2012).[1] Tambulasi (2010: 334) argued that the movement to decentralise as part of the democratisation movement across sub-Saharan Africa miscalculated the extent to which "'democratic' political elites would automatically support and sustain the local governance institutions." The lack of democracy in the formal institutions has lent a practical impetus for people to develop and protect their informal institutions, such as customary land within the city limits and the use of informal markets (Cammack & Kanyongolo, 2010; Cammack, 2011b). Several examples in the following chapters show the tension between the urban poor seeking opportunities to reduce their vulnerability to food insecurity and regulations imposed by

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[1] To date (March 2013), the People's Party (PP), which came to power in 2011 following the sudden death of President Bingu wa Mutharika, has continued to postpone local elections.

the City Assembly and the Government of Malawi. These tensions are often reducible to class-based contestations over the use of urban space. For the middle and upper class residents, the city should be conducive to attracting foreign investment and facilitating globally connected consumer lifestyles. For the poor, the desire to pursue entrepreneurial activities, to farm, and to have convenient, safe, and affordable food sources are matters of urgent concern.

The final conceptual thread draws on Blantyre's historical geography as a source of explanations for the roots of urban food security. Its socio-spatial class divisions, parallel economies, uneven infrastructure development, and gender inequality are largely legacies of colonialism and a postcolonial political culture. Like many cities in Africa, Blantyre was established to facilitate the expansion of the colonial economy (Ross, 1996; Myers, 2003, 2011; Falola & Salm, 2004). Indigenous Africans were excluded from residing in the city and their activities in town were highly circumscribed (McCracken, 1998). The few major industrial employers that provided company housing only employed men, exacerbating the vulnerability of African women in town (Vaughan, 1987; Power, 1995). The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) Government, which ruled as a one-party state from 1964 until 1993, mostly preserved the geographical patterns of circular migration, the expansion of informal settlements, and intense socio-economic inequality that had developed within the context of colonialism (Pennant, 1984). These geographies continue to be evident in the class-based tensions identified in the previous paragraph and the unresolved issue of the "right to the city" (Parnell & Pieterse, 2010) that reduces political will to invest in urban livelihood opportunities. Throughout the dissertation, I indicate this thread through the use of the term, *spaces of vulnerability,*

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which Watts and Bohle defined as (1993: 44) "the locally and historically specific configuration of poverty, hunger and famine." Reference to the spaces of vulnerability indicates the constellation of factors at multiple scales that converge to produce specific types of vulnerability for certain households. While the spaces of vulnerability are always shifting, they are always connected to the past and to other places, such that the analysis of even a single household entails reaching out to a diverse set of contextual factors operating at multiple scales.

1.2. Levels of food insecurity in Blantyre

Food security is a highly researched topic in development studies and there are many ways of framing the issue: as a question of food supply and production, a question of distribution and economic effectiveness, or as a question of human rights and social justice (Watts, 1983; Devereux & Maxwell, 2001; Ahmed *et al.,* 2007; Koc *et al.,* 2012). My use of the term emanates from the question of whether households and their individual members have reliable and sufficient access to food (from any locally relevant sources), and thus it entails a focus on entitlements, livelihoods, and intra-household distribution (Sen, 1981; Haddad *et al.,* 1997; Devereux 2001). Food insecurity in Blantyre today is most often felt at the household level in the form of vulnerability over the long term, which causes hunger under certain conditions (Crush & Frayne, 2011a, 2011b). This may be as a result of conjunctural events, such as the illness or death of an income earner, the loss of employment, or the loss of access to resources for food production (Misselhorn, 2005; Ansell *et al.,* 2009). In other cases, hunger is the result of cyclical patterns related to the agricultural calendar (which for urban consumers causes seasonal fluctuations in food prices), the shortage of cash at month-end, or for the most

economically insecure a daily cycle of begging for food or piecework. Ruel and Garrett

(2004) noted the "sparseness" of data on urban food security levels in the Global South,

but nonetheless they point to a recent study that found 76% of Malawi's urban population

to be energy deficient.[2] Notably, this rate of energy deficient population is higher than the

rural rate of 73% (Ruel & Garrett, 2004: 244). Food insecurity clearly exists in Blantyre,

and depending on how it is defined, what group is studied, and at what time of year, it

might even be the norm.

Table 1-1: Food secure and insecure households in Malawi, Blantyre City, urban Malawi, and rural Malawi (MNSO, 2012)

PLACE	HIGH FOOD SECURITY	MARGINAL FOOD SECURITY	LOW FOOD SECURITY	VERY LOW FOOD SECURITY
Malawi	57.6	2.1	7.9	32.5
Blantyre City	58.2	1.1	9.8	31.1
Urban	67.6	1.7	7.7	23.1
Rural	55.8	2.1	7.9	34.1

The third Integrated Household Survey (IHS) (Malawi National Statistics Office,

2012), conducted in 2010, found that households in Blantyre had a similar chance of

being food secure as households in Malawi as a whole, but much less likely than for the

aggregated urban population of Malawi (Table 1-1). Table 1-1 shows that more than half

of households (58.2%) in Blantyre City were highly food secure,[3] which was close to the

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[2] Ruel and Garrett (2004) refer to a study conducted by Smith and Aduayom (2003) that calculated the percentage of energy deficient population according to the number of people residing in households deemed to be energy deficient because they consumed fewer calories than deemed necessary according to the WHO. See the annex of their paper for further details.

[3] The third IHS report defined high food security as "households that did not experience any concern about accessing enough food and did not alter the quality, variety, and quantity or eating patterns;" marginal food security as: "households have concerns about adequacy of the food supply but the quantity, the quality, the variety and the eating patterns were not disrupted;" low food security as: "households might have been concerned about not having access to enough food, they reduced the quality and the variety of the food consumed but quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not disrupted." Finally, very low food security referred to cases in which: "households experienced multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. They report reduction in food quality, variety, quantity and frequency of

national average (57.6%) but well below the average for all urban areas (67.6%). For

urban and rural areas, a small minority of households occupied the moderate categories

(marginal and low food security) reflecting the deepening inequality in Malawi. Nearly

one third of households in Blantyre City (31.1%) had very low food security, which was

only slightly less than the national average (32.5%) but higher than the urban average

(23.1%). In apparent contradiction to the persistently high rates of households with very

low levels of food security, the third IHS also found that the "poverty rate"[4] in Blantyre

City had sharply declined, from 23.7% in the survey conducted in 2004-2005 to only

7.5% (MNSO, 2012: 206). The decline in Blantyre's poverty rate was even more

surprising considering that the national poverty rate had only declined from 52.4% to

50.7%. The wide disparity in poverty rates between Blantyre and the national statistic,

coupled with the nearly equivalent rates of food security at the two scales, demonstrates

the extent to which urban households that are not deemed to be "poor" in terms of their

consumption level nonetheless have very low levels of food security. These statistics

illustrate the need for my research to shed light on the ways in which income, food

security, and poverty are related yet distinct phenomena, a core topic in all of the

following chapters (see in particular Chapter 4).

The other important source of statistical data comes from the African Food

Security-Urban Network (AFSUN) baseline survey conducted in 2009 in low-income

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food consumed. Consumption by adults could have been restricted in order for small children to eat and could also depend on food assistance from relatives or friends" (MNSO, 2012: 187).

[4] The poverty rate is based on a consumption level estimated to reflect the cost of living. Specifically, in terms of per person per annum expenditure: "the population that has total consumption below MWK 37,002 is deemed poor and the population with total consumption less than MWK 22,956 is considered ultra-poor" (MNSO 2012: 204). At approximate 2010 exchange rate conversion (USD 1 = MWK 150), these consumption levels are the equivalent of USD 247 and USD 153 respectively.

neighbourhoods in eleven cities[5] in southern Africa. Based on the Household Food

Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP) scale, the survey found that 77% of households in

the sample were food insecure, and that well over half of all households (57%) were

severely food insecure (Crush & Frayne, 2011b). One of the most surprising findings was

that the surveyed households in Blantyre had a much lower rate of food insecurity than

other cities (51%) in spite of the relative weakness of Malawi's economy and far lower

levels of income in Blantyre (Crush & Frayne, 2011b). This finding can be partly

attributed to the selection of a low-income neighbourhood in a largely peri-urban part of

Blantyre where extensive agriculture takes place (Dodson *et al.,* 2012), but more

importantly, like the third IHS findings, it highlights the fact that food security is not

analogous to income level. The feminist postcolonial epistemology that I employ in this

dissertation provides the flexibility to grapple with the grounded reality behind these

statistics and focus on locally relevant factors that shape the spaces of vulnerability.

1.3. Poverty, space, and the evolution of food insecurity in Blantyre

Many of the locally relevant factors are embedded in the geography of the city

itself. Blantyre is a disjointed patchwork of densely crowded settlements, vast tracts of

undeveloped land, traditional villages, mountains, river valleys, commercial and

industrial areas, and low-density suburbs marking distinct kinds of spaces within the

municipal boundaries (Figure 1-1). Its population of 661,256 (MNSO, 2008) makes it the

second largest city in Malawi after the capital, Lilongwe, even though the entire urban

population of Malawi is only about 15% of the national population (MNSO, 2008).

Although Lilongwe (constructed in the 1970s to be the capital) has overtaken Blantyre in

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[5] The eleven cities surveyed were: Cape Town, Johannesburg, Msunduzi, Windhoek, Gaborone, Maseru, Manzini, Maputo, Harare, Lusaka, and Blantyre.

population, Blantyre has traditionally been Malawi's most important commercial centre and its geography showcases a long history of urbanism in Malawi. Blantyre Township was established in 1894 on the site occupied by the Blantyre Mission of the Church of Scotland and the African Lakes Company (Ross, 1996). As with other colonial urban settlements of the time, indigenous Africans were seen as primitive and unfit for "civilised" urban life; urban residency was restricted to European and Asian settlers (Iliffe, 1987; Power, 1995; Myers, 2003). The economic potential of the Nyasaland Protectorate as a centre for the ivory trade and plantation agriculture never materialised and as a result European settlement was sparse; by 1907 the European population of Blantyre was only 192 (McCracken, 1998). The original area of European settlement can be observed today in the low-density housing area of Sunnyside to the south west of the central business district; this area is now occupied by the city's economic and political elites (Figure 1-1).

Figure 1-1 Aerial view of central Blantyre showing the locations of the central business districts (CBD) of Blantyre and Limbe, former traditional housing areas (THA), and notable historic sites (base map Google Earth, adapted by the author)
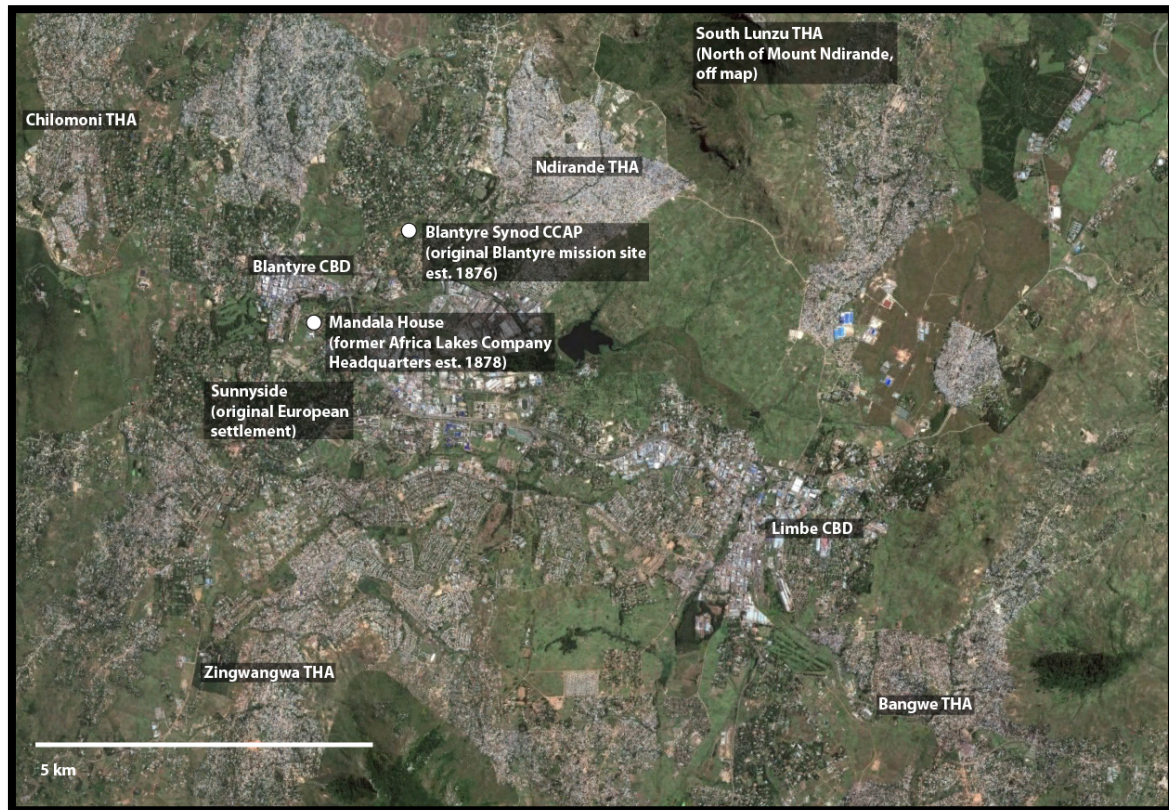
Most indigenous Africans[6] lived in fringe areas, which were described by Blantyre's Medical Officer in 1931 as "collections of badly built, unsanitary and densely packed huts of a temporary nature springing up around the margins of the Township" (Iliffe, 1987: 167). The areas of the city that today make up the most notorious slums originated as Native Lands during the colonial period. Native Lands were established throughout the Protectorate during the massive and rapid land alienation in the late nineteenth century. European settlers and corporations expropriated vast tracts of land,

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[6] It is important to note the complexity of "indigeneity" in the 19th Century in what became Nyasaland and eventually Malawi. Large-scale movements of people into the area, notably the Ngoni from South Africa, the Yao from the east coast, and the Lomwe from Mozambique, meant that there were complex power relationships among African groups (Vail & White, 1989). Despite these differences, the policies regarding urban residency at issue in this discussion refer to the aggregate groups of African, European, and Asian.

usually as speculators, creating squatters or tenants of the existing inhabitants (Pachai, 1973; Ng'ong'ola, 1990). Many of the structural[7] elements of impoverishment in southern Malawi today can be traced back to this period of economic and political subordination and geographical marginalisation of indigenous Africans. Conflict over who would control Africans' land and labour were the main source of tension during Malawi's colonial period, and these conflicts were particularly intense in the Shire Highlands where the plantation economy was concentrated (Vail, 1975; Fetter, 1982; McCracken, 1989, 1991). The underlying vulnerability due to weak entitlement bundles resulted in a devastating famine in 1949 when the maize crops failed, exposing the gendered differences in entitlements within the colonial political economy (Vaughan, 1987).

One might expect that land pressure would have pressed dispossessed rural populations to urbanise, but colonial Nyasaland experienced minimal industrial development until after World War Two (McCracken, 1988, 1998). Even then, employment was tenuous and in most cases poorly remunerated in Blantyre (Bettison, 1958). As a result, most would-be rural to urban migrants bypassed Blantyre for the farms and mines of South Africa and the Rhodesias (McCracken, 1998). The mass migration of workers out of Nyasaland was exacerbated by the dire lack of Government investment in Africans' social welfare, to the extent that Vail (1977: 382) characterised the colony in the 1930s as "the Empire's slum." Most Africans who engaged with the urban economy (mainly in subservient positions as domestic help and day labourers)

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[7] Iliffe's (1984: 246) distinction between structural and conjunctural forms of poverty is useful for connecting the colonial past to the current events, processes, and spaces of vulnerability that I document in this dissertation: structural poverty "is the long-term poverty of individuals due to their position in the socio-economic structure," and conjunctural poverty "is the temporary poverty of larger numbers caused by crisis."

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settled in peri-urban areas around the city and walked to work. A 1957 survey found that within a four-mile radius of Blantyre-Limbe,[8] 71% of adults had been born in or near the village where they lived (McCracken, 1998: 252). These people formed an integral part of the urban economy of Blantyre-Limbe, and yet their home lives were outside of the city boundaries and hence their welfare was not considered to be part of the mandate of the City Assembly. The limited efforts by Blantyre and Limbe Town Councils to plan locations for "native" settlements were not directed at Africans' welfare, but rather to address the "nuisance" of Africans in town (Iliffe, 1984: 261). This pattern of partial integration of Africans as labourers but not as residents continues to shape the politics of urban food security in Malawi.

The limited historical record of women's economic roles in Blantyre shows that women have long faced precarious economic conditions, particularly when they were independently responsible for their households (Bettison, 1964; Vaughan, 1987; Power, 1995). Beer brewing was an important livelihood strategy for women, although it has been a precarious strategy because its associations with vice and public disorder have positioned it at odds with Government regulations (Power, 1995). Bettison's (1964: 75) study of household economies in peri-urban Blantyre in the late 1950s found that more than half of adult women (62%) in the villages closest to the Township had brewed beer for sale within a year of the interview. This figure greatly exceeded the percentage that had engaged in trading (36%). The same study found that only 22% of women in the same zone had ever been in paid employment (Bettsion, 1964: 78), which was far lower than the proportion of adult men resident in the same sample of villages who were in paid

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[8] Limbe was established in 1907 six kilometres east of central Blantyre at the site of the Nyasaland Railway yards. It is now part of the City of Blantyre but retains a distinct downtown core.

employment (72%). Bettsion (1964: 77) noted that "paid employment for women is available as nursemaids or in tobacco factories in the town itself," but compared to the remuneration from beer brewing and trading, "paid employment can have few attractions" because of the low wages. These gendered patterns of inequality in the urban economy continue to be reproduced in Blantyre today, as I discuss in detail in Chapter 5.

The end of colonialism in itself did not erase the vast socio-spatial inequalities that were produced in the colonial era. The dearth of investment in the welfare of urban Africans, coupled with the sustained growth of the urban population,[9] precluded straightforward solutions to more equitable urban development in postcolonial Blantyre. The first President of Malawi, Kamuzu Banda, held power for thirty years in a repressive single-party political system (van Donge, 1995; Power, 2010). Banda had lived most of his life outside of Africa and his attitude toward the majority of Malawians was often consistent with racist settler attitudes (Lwanda, 1993; Jones & Manda, 2006). His economic development model was based on estate agriculture and hence rural transitory labour (Kydd & Christiansen, 1982; Harrigan, 2003), reserving urban life for a select group of educated, cosmopolitan elites. The urban-rural divide in Banda's vision of Malawi was clear when he said in 1988: "cities were meant for civilised persons, and in that regard people should be able to differentiate life in the city from that of the village by the way you look after the city. If you should be proud of the city don't bring village life into the city" (as quoted in Jimu, 2005: 44). This quotation unveils a conceptual binary that emanates from the colonial rhetoric of "civilised" city versus (presumably)

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[9] "In 1945 Blantyre, Limbe, and their peri-urban villages still had a population of only 9,773. In 1966 it was 109,461; in 1977, 219,011" (Iliffe, 1984: 275).

"uncivilised" village, and illustrates the continuity from colonial to postcolonial urban policies.

Banda's Malawi Congress Party (MCP) established the Traditional Housing Areas (THAs) in order to provide *affordable* housing to the burgeoning urban population in the post-colonial period (Pennant, 1984; Blantyre City Assembly, 2000). The Malawi Housing Corporation (MHC) was tasked with providing serviced sites (with roads, piped water, and pit latrines) for self-construction of homes, gradually converting the unplanned settlements to planned traditional areas (Chilowa, 1996). By the time management of THAs was transferred to City Assemblies in 1992, 82% of Blantyre's residents were still living in unplanned sections of the THAs (Chilowa, 1996: 8). A survey conducted in 1988-89 in THAs in Blantyre and Lilongwe found generally poor conditions and high rates of food insecurity, with households in the lowest income category spending more per month on food than they earned (Chilowa, 1991). Construction sites in the unplanned areas had been allocated by traditional authorities, and while they were "formally not recognised by the authorities," they were "informally acknowledged" (Chilowa, 1996: 8). The preservation of "traditional" leadership structures in cities has had a profound impact on the evolution of local governance in Malawi, which my analysis reveals has shaped urban food security in terms of where people access food, who can produce food in town, and where people can pursue their livelihood activities. The key features of the 1988-89 survey (Chilowa, 1991); low wages, lack of employment opportunities, seasonally volatile food prices, and high levels of inequity, continue to be characteristic of life in these unplanned settlements today.

The beginning of the multi-party era in 1994 was the second watershed moment in Malawi's history after independence in 1964. The United Democratic Front (UDF) won a majority of seats in Parliament in the first election, in which voters expressed regional allegiances and voters in the south favoured the UDF (Van Donge, 1995; Ferree & Horowitz, 2010). Bakhili Muluzi, the wealthiest man in Malawi at the time outside of the MCP patronage system (Lwanda, 2006), became the President of Malawi in 1994 and proceeded to privatise many state assets that had been controlled by the MCP. The "Muluzi era" was characterised by corruption, further decline in public services, and economic insecurity for the urban working class, even against the backdrop of advancements in formal recognition of human rights and civil liberties (Englund & Mapanje, 2002; Lwanda, 2006). The UDF Government radically reformed the institutions for local governance partly due to pressure from the donor community to democratise, but also to devolve the centralised power structure that buttressed the MCP's power base (Patel & Svasand, 2007). When Muluzi failed in his attempt to amend the constitution to allow himself to run for a third term, he hand-picked Bingu wa Mutharika as his successor. Soon after the election, Mutharika formed his own breakaway party, the DPP, which governed with a minority in Parliament until its majority victory in 2009. The early success of the Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme (AISP), which dramatically increased smallholder maize production, was largely responsible for this landslide victory (Mpesi & Muriaas, 2012; Cammack, 2012).

The Local Government Act came into effect in 1998 and redefined City Assemblies as made up of elected councillors as voting members, with Traditional Authorities (TA), Members of Parliament (MP) and up to five special interest

representatives as non-voting members (Cammack *et al.,* 2009). Local elections were held in 2000, but the DPP Government failed to call subsequent local elections after the City Assembly's term expired in 2005 (Cammack, 2012). A Chief Executive appointed by the DPP Government runs the City Assembly until the next local elections are held (*Confusion besieges,* 2012). In the context of failed formal governing institutions, traditional authorities have provided consistency in matters related to land titles, infrastructure, and social service provision (Chome & McCall, 2005; Cammack *et al.,* 2009). The ambiguity surrounding urban governing institutions precludes coordinated state action to address the problem of urban food insecurity, and yet the focus on people's daily lives that I bring forth in this dissertation shows that "traditional" governance and "informal" economic relations often provide reliable and accessible sources of food. In focusing on the structural issues, it is therefore important to note that many of the formal institutions necessary to promote local democracy, inclusivity, and the pro-poor policies that can alleviate the daily problems of the majority exist, but are rendered ineffective by political economic problems that extend deep into the past and far beyond Malawi's borders. Thus the focus of my analysis is less on proposing new policies to improve urban food security in Blantyre and more on explaining how people experience food insecurity in Blantyre and why urban poverty has persisted unabated over decades.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation provides a geographic analysis of the findings of my qualitative fieldwork, which draws on the viewpoints of residents, my observations of the city, and extensive secondary literature to trace the spaces of vulnerability in Blantyre. I explain my methods in detail in Chapter 2, along with the feminist postcolonial epistemology that

guided my methodology. A qualitative approach was best suited to understanding the day-to-day context of food provisioning and the subjective experiences of food insecurity, gender identities, and urban life. In order to meet my objective of producing a grounded understanding of food security in Blantyre, it was essential that I engaged with people to find out where they were accessing food and to assess the significance of those places from their perspectives. I used information gathered from observing places where people bought food (including interacting with vendors and customers), in-depth interviews, and participative diagramming to help construct analytical categories of places, foods, and gender roles that resonated with people's everyday experiences. In Chapter 2, I also describe the challenge of producing an analysis and a dissertation that accounts for my own positionality, as a white Canadian male with no first-hand experience of the type of poverty common in Blantyre.

In Chapter 3, I reflect on my positionality in order to draw conclusions about what the concept of gender means in the local context in relation to my pre-conceived understanding. The word "gender" took on a context-specific meaning in Blantyre that I had not necessarily intended, and acknowledgment of this unanticipated finding was a precondition to analysing what was likely going on within the households of participants. I introduce my use of *gender* (in italics) as a heuristic device that captures the understanding of "gender" as the reversal of gender roles associated with development and human rights. Thus "practising *gender*" referred to men cooking while women were moulding bricks, or some variation of that theme. This meaning was distinct from both my academic epistemology and my personal worldview, and the difference opened up a series of insights into how space, power, and gender are intertwined. The revelation about

the rhetorical meaning of *gender* sets the stage for my analysis in the latter half of the chapter, in which I discuss gender household roles and responsibilities. In spite of extensive discussions about the importance of practising *gender,* particularly in town where it signifies that one is urban and "civilised," there was little actual evidence that men and women were sharing responsibility for household chores. Men who claimed to be practising *gender* said they sometimes helped their wives, for example if the wife is sick the husband will cook that day, but the responsibility nonetheless lies with the wife.

The implications of gender roles for household food security becomes apparent in Chapter 4 when I discuss how households manage to plan and budget in highly precarious conditions. I introduce the chapter with a discussion of what people are eating in Blantyre, and I note that the concept of being food secure is inseparable from the state of having an adequate supply of maize within the home. As a consequence of this conceptualisation of food insecurity, *walkman* (small packages of maize meal purchased for daily consumption) is emblematic of the growing precarity of food consumption patterns. I draw from interviews and other sources to provide a framework for analysing the cost of food relative to incomes. These figures illustrate the profound challenge that most low-income households face in achieving food security in Blantyre, while they also struggle to pay for essential non-food items including shelter, water, school fees, transportation, and cooking fuel. Given the tight budgets for many households, *how* household members manage their money can make an appreciable difference in their food security. Household decision-making is highly gendered and Agarwal's (1997) concept of "bargaining" helps me to identify ways in which different approaches to household gender roles shape the effects of income level on food security status.

The first four chapters establish contextual meanings of gender and food security and demonstrate that many households face a high level of economic precarity that makes them highly vulnerable. Building on this foundation, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 draw in the politics of urban food security by examining employment, food distribution, and food production. Chapter 5 identifies some of the key problems of urban employment in Blantyre. The decline in formal employment opportunities related to structural adjustment reforms and Malawi's economic stagnation has made many urban households more vulnerable. Available employment in the formal sector tends to be temporary and poorly remunerated. Most people operate within the informal sector where luxuries such as sick days, retirement pensions, and maternity leave are unimaginable. I focus on informal enterprises to expose the geographical problem of mobility that limits the profitability of small enterprises, especially for women with little support for domestic responsibilities and little capital to invest in their businesses. In the final section of the chapter, I analyse the eviction of street vendors from the main commercial areas of Blantyre and Limbe under Operation *dongosolo* in light of the competition between the formal and informal sectors in Malawi's neo-patrimonial political culture (Lwanda, 2006). *Dongosolo* marked a significant turning point away from the integration of the different facets of the city and toward a return to the spatial separation of formal and informal economic activities. It is also important to note that *dongosolo* took place when there were no elected City Councillors in place, thus the City Assembly at that point in time was not accountable to the residents of Blantyre. It is through this troubling situation that I introduce the fourth conceptual thread linking poor governance to the perpetuation of urban food insecurity.

Chapter 6 takes shape in light of the governance problems introduced in Chapter 5, as I analyse Blantyre's fractured food landscape within a postcolonial framework that emphasises the origins of the different types of food sources. I identify eight types of food sources that occupy a spectrum of informality depending on who owns and oversees them. In devising a set of categories that goes beyond formal/informal duality, I seek to grapple with the diversity and functionality of the informal sector. I then discuss what food sources people identified in each of the participative mapping sessions. Of particular note was the popularity of rural informal markets. Despite the additional cost of time and money to get there, the food was much cheaper and the journey was worthwhile for many consumers. Mobility was crucial for accessing food, as it was for earning an income. Supermarkets were far less popular than in other southern African cities (Crush & Frayne, 2011b), which reflected the depth of socio-economic inequality in Malawi and the robustness of the various types of informal food sources in and around the city. The historical perspective in this chapter reveals a precedent in the colonial city that mirrors contemporary Blantyre: then as now, globally-oriented formal shops catered to the core urban elites while the indigenous African majority went to rural markets to buy their food. This background information helps to explain why food distribution is so politicised in Blantyre, which in turn helps to explain why investment in market infrastructure has been obstructed. The governance problem holding back progress on food distribution to serve the needs of the urban poor is similar to the political tension evident in the controversy surrounding *dongosolo*.

In Chapter 7 I look at household food production as an important food source for many urban households. It was not surprising that many households were engaged in the

cultivation of maize for several reasons, including: the difficulty and insecurity associated with relying solely on purchased food; the meaning of "food security" as having a good supply of maize within the household, and the frequent movement between urban and rural spaces. Most people have customary rights to land regulated through the traditional authorities. For those people whose customary land is in town or within a reasonable walking distance, close proximity to this land makes it feasible to cultivate maize. Not only does this reduce vulnerability by providing an additional source of food, it also frees up income to invest in other areas. Most of the cultural groups in southern Malawi practiced matrilineal inheritance, which meant that for several households women controlled access to land and oversaw household agriculture. The potential food security benefits of their land rights are often constrained by a shortage of household labour and money to purchase farm inputs such as fertiliser (Mkwambisi, Fraser, & Dougill, 2011). Fertiliser was highly politicised in Malawi by the Agricultural Inputs Subsidy Programme introduced by the DPP Government, which boosted aggregate maize production dramatically (Juma, 2011). From an urban perspective, several fundamental problems with the Programme were evident, including its emphasis on aggregate food supply rather than household food access, and the inconsistencies in the distribution of fertiliser subsidy coupons. Some people whose customary land was in town were receiving coupons, other households straddled urban and rural spaces in order to access coupons through their rural traditional leaders, whereas others were left out, having been told by their rural leaders that the Programme was not intended for urban farmers. The intricacies and inconsistencies of this system demonstrated that numerous factors shaped the food security status of a household, of which income was only one.

Chapter 7 concludes by exploring the case study of the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme, which allocated plots of farmland on public land in the Ndirande Forest Reserve to low-income residents of Ndirande. The Programme met a number of criteria for improving urban food security: it granted urban households access to natural resources that broadened their livelihood opportunities; it involved urban communities in environmental stewardship showing them to be partners in urban management, and it addressed the problem of gendered mobilities by allowing people to farm close to home. The Programme was cancelled in 2010 due to a dispute over water pollution, and the farmers expected a severe impact on their household food security. They had no means to influence the City Assembly's decision to cancel the Programme because there were no elected Councillors, and their Member of Parliament would not help them. The case study of the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme demonstrates the link that Maxwell (1999) observed between governance and urban food security. Political questions about who controls urban space and for what purpose are at the heart of why household food insecurity persists in Blantyre even as the country becomes more food secure in terms of aggregate supply. The answer to these questions ultimately comes down to the colonial legacy of how the city was initially imagined, the externally-oriented economy and society it was intended to serve, and the failure of postcolonial leaders to reconfigure the geographies of inequality in Blantyre.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I draw together the conceptual threads that run through the dissertation in order to reinforce my central argument that "food is the most important and frequently encountered material object that translates regulatory regimes and power relationships into lived experience" (Dunn, 2009: 208). Poverty and food insecurity in

Blantyre are deeply embedded in the city's geography and cannot be easily amended. Furthermore, gender constitutes a set of social relations that shapes food security, but it intersects with highly contextual factors that make it inherently difficult to generalise beyond any one case study. In Chapter 8 I also provide some commentary on the events that have followed my fieldwork period in 2010, including mass protests over human rights violations and rising cost of living. The sudden death of President Mutharika in April 2012 changed the course of Malawi's political evolution and raises new questions about the impacts of his successor's policies on food access for the urban poor. The economic instability in recent months has led to increased urban poverty (*Urban poverty,* 2013), with extremely high rates of food price inflation. The following chapters should be read in light of these rapidly evolving events, and in consideration of the facts that food is even *more* expensive in 2013 than it was in 2010 when I conducted my research, that local elections continue to be postponed, and external forces, including donor countries, global financial institutions, and the global business community continue to have more influence on policies than Malawi's poor. The multiple factors that have created spaces of vulnerability in Blantyre over generations continue to translate disempowerment, marginality, and disenfranchisement into hunger for many urban Malawians.

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the background, rationale, and structure of my dissertation. The significance of this research rests on the need for detailed information about how people are accessing food in Blantyre and on the need for a gender-focused approach to the study of urban poverty in southern Africa. The gendered lens captures the structural legacy of gender inequality in Blantyre, while shedding light

on intra-household power dynamics and the power dynamics inherent in my own positionality as fieldworker, analyst, and author of this research. At the finely grained level of individuals and households, the interplay between structures that forge gender inequality and people's reactions to and perspectives on these structures comes to the surface to reveal a nuanced reality where intersectionality is more relevant than embodied gender identities *per se.* The intersecting factors of gender, poverty, class, place of origin, household composition, and age are conditioned by historical processes recorded on the landscape and frequently experienced through hunger, or at least a realistic fear of hunger. Food insecurity is a symptom of profound disempowerment, and yet the study of urban food access entails understanding in ethnographic terms the mundane routines of buying, growing, cooking, and serving food. In the following chapter, I expand on how I approached the problem of learning how people access food from my limited positionality as an outsider and then translating this knowledge into a deeper set of insights into what it means to be vulnerable to food insecurity in Blantyre. The fusion of fieldwork with historically informed critical analysis is the bedrock of this dissertation, which I hope will make a worthwhile contribution to the understanding of urban poverty in southern Africa.

Chapter 2: Approach

2.1. Introduction

Mrs Chipeta[10] took an hour out of her day to answer our questions when we arrived at her house in the low-income neighbourhood of Ndirande one afternoon. She looked exhausted as she breast fed her baby and explained that she did not know when her husband would return as he was out looking for piecework (interview 14). She did not know how she, her husband, and their four children would eat that night; her husband might come home with food or he might come home drunk and hungry demanding food. She said they would like to move back to their village but they could not manage to wait for a year before their first harvest and besides, even the transportation to the village would be prohibitively expensive. A few weeks later and mere metres away we were in the compound of a jovial retired bureaucrat and his family conducting a participative diagramming session with a group of neighbours from far-flung corners of Malawi. We shared a laugh as one woman told us about the awkward manoeuvring on the overcrowded *Ilala* steamer transporting food from her home village in Likoma Island to the mainland. Between pensions, small businesses, urban gardening, and unskilled jobs, their households were able to get by and still have time to enjoy family and community life. They had no interest in moving home for retirement.

These two contrasting encounters illustrate the internal diversity even at the neighbourhood scale in Blantyre. The former was a poignant illustration of how bleak life

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[10] I used pseudonyms for all participants except where indicated. I attempted to preserve some of the characteristics of the original name, for example by using a name consistent with the original name's ethnic group or language.

can be in Ndirande and the latter showcased the strong sense of place that comes from belonging to a diverse but inclusive urban community. The variation within a single low-income neighbourhood in terms of how food insecurity is experienced could only be captured through a qualitative methodology designed to grapple with the messiness and contradictions of everyday life (Hay, 2010). Not only is the place itself rife with internal contradictions, but as the initiator of these meetings and a participant, I am "entangled in the research process in all sorts of ways" (Rose, 1997: 315). The epistemology that guides my research approach rests on a feminist postcolonial foundation that guides my research questions, choice of methods, how I have conducted my analysis and written this dissertation (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Moss, 2002; Raghuram & Madge, 2006).

Feminist postcolonial epistemology emphasises the partiality of knowledge from any one embodied position (Rose, 1993; Cope, 2002; Narayan, 2004). The axiomatic differences in standpoint are gender, race, and class; but Puwar (2003: 23) urged academic researchers to dig deeper when she wrote: "We need to consider our own positionalities in a much more difficult way than what has now become the customary laying out of the 'me' in the usual 'race', class and gender mantra." My multiple positionalities have shaped this dissertation in complex ways that go beyond the constructions and viewpoints rooted in gender, race, and class; or for that matter the insider/outsider dichotomy (England, 1994; Valentine, 2007). All of these categories of difference have different significance in different contexts. My gender is clearly indicated by the shape of my body and how I dress, and yet in many of my conversations in Malawi I was told that the fact that I had neither a wife nor a child meant that I was not fully a man (in the sense of the social category). Class was also highly contingent on

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context; whereas I was clearly more privileged than most (but notably not all) of the participants, I was asked on more than one occasion why I chose to dress so plainly when I could afford more attractive clothes. Finally, insofar as 'race' was inextricable from outsider status as a white man in Malawi, this too evolved over time, as people got to know me and I became increasingly conversant in local languages and on local issues. In the process of engaging with people and being involved in everyday life in Blantyre, I lost some of my pure "outsider" status (Andrews, 2007). My positionality, with all of its contingencies and complexities, is the inspiration for the reflexivity that guides much of this dissertation.

The significance of positionality for feminist postcolonial methodology is matched by the related concept that human beings construct knowledge within a social context, and that the process of knowledge creation is inherently political (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Haraway, 1988). Feminists have noted that men usually construct knowledge about women. Similarly, from a postcolonial perspective, colonisers have always constructed knowledge about subjugated people. A feminist postcolonial perspective therefore has at its core an interest in re-ordering the power relations in the research process - from the formulation of questions, to the interactions in "the field," to the writing up/in of the research (England, 2006; Robbins, 2006; Mansvelt & Berg, 2010). The related goals fall on a spectrum, from social researchers doing *less harm* in the extraction and construction of knowledge to the total control of the research process by participants and the application of research to political change (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Maguire, 1996; Moss, 2002; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). My approach falls

short of the ideals espoused by action researchers and activist feminist researchers,[11] but I was able to use their ideas as inspiration to design and execute my research in a way that integrated participants' perspectives into knowledge production (Kesby, 2007; Kindon *et al.,* 2007).

The legacy of colonialism in Malawi looms large in my analysis of urban food security, gender relations, and in my own experiences in conducting fieldwork. The postcolonial context creates the need for additional sensitivities in not re-producing disempowering discourses about the participants. The description I gave at the beginning of this chapter of Mrs Chipeta is a case in point. I described what I saw and what my research assistant told me she said (which was corroborated by the recorded transcript), but because of the legacy of women of colour being objectified by the male, colonial gaze, Puwar (2003) could accuse me of reproducing the "melodrama" of the subaltern female that fits so neatly into people's preconceptions of a woman in an urban slum in Africa. Why did I mention that she was breastfeeding? Perhaps because my research assistant commented after the interview on how thin Mrs Chipeta was, and how raw and sore her breasts appeared to be. I must be accountable to the reader by acknowledging this very loaded, yet very telling impressionistic imagery, in order to build my credibility as an honest, yet reflexive, researcher.

My use of feminist postcolonial epistemology is most evident in my recognition of these messy, contingent, and power-laden aspects of the research process and my sincere attempt to account for them in my presentation of evidence and my formulation of

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[11] Moss (2002: 13) described a tension between "political commitment and dilettantism" that probably excludes me from her idea of a model feminist.

conclusions. I am encouraged by the community of critical social researchers, and by statements such as the following:

> The field is an ambivalent place for feminist work: holding the potential for misrepresentation and the inappropriate performance of colonizing power relations, while at the same time presenting the possibility of meeting and opening a true dialogue with those so often marginalized and silenced by dominant discourses and representations (Sharp, 2005: 307).

I also feel encouragement from Andrews (2007: 507) when she wrote: "cross-cultural research is, at its heart, a deeply risky venture." Without risk there is no reward, and for every potential misstep there is the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the academic understanding of food security in the context of daily life in Blantyre. Transparency - particularly in regards to my reflexivity - is important for maintaining the integrity of my research and hence the "rigour" of my qualitative methodology (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). In the following sections I discuss my methods and how I aimed to achieve "rigour" through the layering of research activities that I then analysed in relation to one another. This allowed me to validate the findings from one set of activities using other types of data (for example: field notes, interview transcripts, participative maps, and newspaper articles). I also composed a preliminary findings report and had it translated into Chichewa. We then delivered the reports to the participants, discussed any new issues and in some cases confirmed confusing aspects of the transcripts. This provided an opportunity for participants to see the potential outcome of the project and acknowledged them as vital co-creators of knowledge.

2.2. Accessing the field

I visited Blantyre for the first time in 2007 while conducting research with orphans in institutional care. In addition to Mr Kanyimbo, my host who had accompanied

me to Blantyre from the northern town of Ekwendeni where I was staying, I was accompanied daily by a driver, two or three social workers from the Ministry of Social Welfare, and a representative of a local faith-based organisation. I was ill prepared to take control of this large group and, upon reflection, I realised I had transcended what was necessary for "collaboration" and allowed the situation to get out of my control. These lessons are of an order that can only be learned through experience, and they formed the basis for many of the decisions that I made in planning out my dissertation research. My credibility as a commentator on the daily lives of people in Malawi rests in part on my judgment based on previous research experience there and the lessons I learned about the contingencies, surprises, and daily ethical dilemmas inherent in qualitative research.

The "transition from a clear, concise research proposal to the often complicated, messy initiation of a project" (Billo & Hiemstra, 2012: 1) can be illustrated in the following narrative of how I decided to use multiple gatekeepers to meet participants. In September 2009, I had conducted a pilot study to establish research partnerships that would allow me to "access the field." I went to the City Assembly and met the newly appointed Director of Social Welfare. She said she was very interested in collaboration. Even though she knew that many families were going hungry, there was no capacity to conduct research on urban food security in Blantyre. When I returned in April 2010, I had high expectations of working closely with the Social Welfare Department to meet community leaders and approach prospective participants. I told the Director which wards I had selected for focused study and she introduced me to one of her field officers who worked in these areas. They then outlined how much I would pay for allowances per day - to them *and* the community leaders in the neighbourhoods. It was well beyond my

budget, so I thanked them for their time and left. My research assistants, Mr Gondwe and Ms Samati, and I knocked on doors of community centres, churches, and mosques; we chatted with market vendors and with people who approached us out of curiosity. The generosity of time, and in many cases hospitality, among the people who participated in my research and the ingenuity and dedication of my small research team made this dissertation possible.

I share these stories to help illustrate why my responsiveness to the changing research environment was integral to my staying true to my research objectives and research plan. In seeking to address broad objectives such as understanding how people access food on a daily basis, I tacitly acknowledged my ignorance of daily life in Blantyre rather than attempting to impose a grid of questions or methods suitable to an academic proposal but not easily amenable to real-world applications. My objectives thereby express my feminist postcolonial epistemology, through an explicit acknowledgement of the tension between the institutional constraints (most notably time and funding) and the ideal scenario of cooperative in-depth research.

Another strand of postcolonial epistemology is expressed in my resistance to assumptions as I entered the field. The colonial legacy of the city means a bifurcated landscape and a lack of information about the geographies of everyday life in the informal/poor/marginalised/majority spaces of most African cities (Robinson, 2006; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). The effects of these areas being "off the map" shaped my experience of spatially selecting urban wards that could represent Blantyre's internal diversity. I had consulted *Malawi: an atlas of social statistics* (Benson, 2002) and found that the city was divided into administrative wards. When I visited Malawi's National

Statistics Office (MNSO) in Zomba, I received detailed maps of my selected wards, assuming that these "official" maps would be sufficient to guide me through the wards. In reality, the maps were more often misleading than helpful. For example, when we tried to locate the low-income housing development at Angela Goveia, the map indicated that it was surrounded by a Forest Reserve. We covered several dead-end unsealed roads surrounded by fields and disparate houses before we realised that the Kanjedza Forest Reserve was in fact deforested. The subjective geographies of participants bore almost no resemblance to the MNSO maps. Significantly, sites such as informal markets that did not appear on these maps were crucial places for people to access food, while some formal shops featured on the official maps were absent from the participative maps of where people accessed food (see 2.3.3). The theoretical implications of this finding are discussed in the following chapters, but the salient point in terms of methodology is that an open-minded approach was necessary to respond to the shortcomings in the official maps. Soon after I conducted my fieldwork, Google Earth released satellite images of Blantyre at a close enough resolution to be useful for my analysis.

Figure 2-1: Aerial view of central Blantyre showing the location of wards selected for focused study and statistical information about selected wards (base map Google Earth, adapted by the author; statistical data source: Benson, 2002)
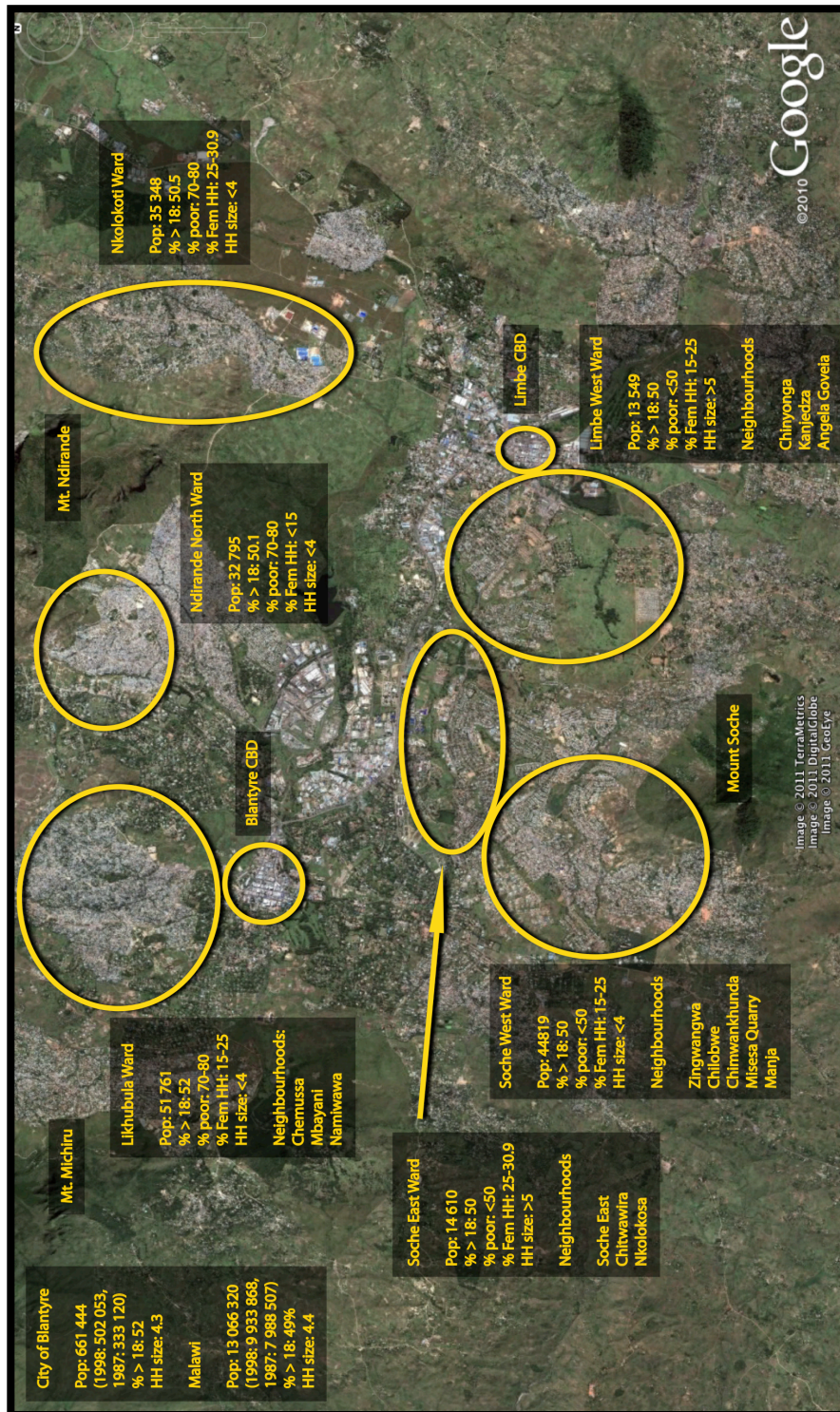
Figure 2-1 is a composite of satellite images from Google Earth that depict the central area of Blantyre. I have used it here to present some of the key features of the six wards I selected for in-depth investigation, which set the spatial parameters for my research activities. There was a lack of data disaggregated at the sub-municipal level from the Integrated Household Surveys (MNSO, 2005, 2010) and the 2008 census data (MNSO, 2008). *Malawi: an atlas of social statistics* (Benson, 2002) provided the most complete set of ward-level data and was the basis for my selection of six wards: Ndirande North, Soche East, Likhubula, Nkolokoti, Soche West and Limbe West (Figure 2-1). These wards encompassed middle and low-income households, formal and informal housing, and different rates of poverty and female-headed households. I sought to understand food security in a variety of settings within the city in order to speak more confidently about the relevance of my findings for the city as a whole. It allowed me to capture more diversity of experiences, and in several instances I found food insecurity in middle class neighbourhoods (for example, where widowhood and orphanhood left families with little income) and food security in low-income neighbourhoods (for example, where communal land tenure allowed households to farm in town).

Ndirande North Ward was the most densely populated of the wards I selected. It is adjacent to the Ndirande Forest Reserve on Mount Ndirande, which as I discuss in Chapter 7, has provided some households with the opportunity to cultivate maize. Ndirande is one of the poorest areas of Blantyre and it is notorious for high rates of crime and political unrest (Norwood, 1972; Vossen & Knapen, 2009; Cammack & Kanyongolo, 2010). Among the selected wards, it has a low proportion of households headed by females (less than 15%).

Nkolokoti is also adjacent to Ndirande Forest Reserve (on the east face of Mount Ndirande) and contains a mix of established residents with communal land rights, recent migrants, and middle class residents. Nkolokoti Ward has a high proportion of households headed by women (25-30.9%), and has a similar poverty rate to Ndirande North Ward (70-80%).

Limbe West Ward is internally diverse and includes a high proportion of formal settlements, including the upper middle class neighbourhood of Chinyonga, the middle class police-housing compound at Kanjedza, and the low-class pro-poor housing project at Angela Goveia.[12] Its poverty rate is less than half, and its proportion of households headed by women is relatively low (15-25%).

Soche West is also a very diverse ward, which includes squatter settlements, new middle class subdivisions, Mount Soche Forest Reserve, and the former THA of Zingwangwa. Despite places of extreme poverty such Quarry (home to many Burundian refugees) and Misesa Village (a squatter settlement on the slopes of Mount Soche), the overall poverty rate for the Ward was less than half of all households. It also has a relatively low proportion of female-headed households (15-25%).

Soche East Ward contains mostly established formal housing areas built in the original sites-and-service schemes of the 1960s and 1970s in neighbourhoods such as Nkolokosa, Naperi, and Chitawira (BCA, 2000). Whereas in the past low-income families were able to buy and rent their homes at subsidised rates, housing is so scarce today that the influx of middle class professionals has driven up the market prices and

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[12] UNHABITAT (2010a) provides a detailed description of the low-cost housing project in Angela Goveia (also spelled *Angelo Goveya*); 465 units were constructed through a partnership between the Centre for Community Organisation and Development (CCODE) and the Malawi Homeless People's Federation (MHPF).

created a barrier to new in-migrants. Soche East Ward has a poverty head count of less than half, but a relatively high rate of households headed by women (25-30.9%).

The sixth ward I selected was Likhubula Ward. It is north of Blantyre's central business district and contains great diversity in its built environments. The low-density suburb of Namiwawa (an established formerly European neighbourhood) stands out in relation to the crowded places like Mbayani and Chemussa. Likhubula Ward has a relatively high rate of poverty (70-80%) and a relatively moderate proportion of households headed by women (15-25%).

These six wards were the backbone of my research in that they allowed me to maintain some consistency in my selection of participants. For example, I aimed to interview an equal number of men and women in each ward, and a proportion of high- and low-income households and female- and male-headed households in each ward that roughly matched their prevalence in each ward according to *Malawi: an atlas of social statistics* (as indicated on Figure 2-1). Soon after I began my research, it was clear that the ward boundaries failed to capture the lived reality of neighbourhoods and urban communities. Being more familiar with the city today, I would take a more strategic approach to selecting neighbourhoods rather than wards. Nevertheless, this information was not available when I was planning the research and the availability of ward-level statistical data provides a compelling rationale for the spatial sample. These geographical parametres ultimately gave my sampling frame more coherence and allowed me to draw comparisons with households in different areas of the city. The specific ways in which the pre-selection of a spatial sample shaped how I accessed participants and conducted my research activities are discussed below.

2.3. Methods

The description offered here of the various methods I employed in my fieldwork includes two elements: what was designed to happen and what actually happened. On the whole, these are in line: I successfully exceeded the number of interviews I set out to conduct, I managed to conduct participative diagramming (with some tweaking of the original cartographic intentions) and I was fortunate to have interviewed several relevant key informants. Nonetheless, social research is inherently messy (Moss, 2002; Sharp, 2005; Billo & Hiemstra, 2012). In the case of my research, this messiness was amplified by the cross-cultural setting in which many participants were living in poverty (hooks, 2004; Andrews, 2007; Howitt & Stevens, 2010). The relationships between me and the other people directly involved in the fieldwork (participants, research assistants, gatekeepers) were furthermore conditioned by the postcolonial context of complex power dynamics that were constantly in flux according to the space and social context (Raghuram & Madge, 2006). The following subsections describe the execution of my various methods.

2.3.1. Observation of food access points

The main objective of observing food access points was to orient myself to Blantyre's food landscape, which was necessary in order to have a basic understanding of the places that would be the subjects of conversation in interviews and group discussions. I elevated the observational activity to the status of a method because of its potential for opening up new avenues for inquiry in other research activities and for closing the gap between myself and participants (for example, having rapport during in-depth interviews

based on places I had observed, and eliciting comparisons). These points are in addition to the utility of meeting potential participants and gathering descriptive data that helped me to evoke the places under analysis. Kearns (2010: 241) argued that observational methods have been taken for granted in geographical research, but that "with critical reflection . . . observations can be transformed into a self-conscious, effective, and ethically sound practice." The nature of my observational activities falls on the continuum of participant observation in the sense that I was witness to, and agent in, spontaneous events in everyday life. Nonetheless, to some degree my embodied presence influenced what I observed. I adjusted for the bias of my perception by using my research assistants' accounts of our daily observations as textual material for my analysis. They took notes after each observational excursion and this gave me a record of people, events, and details of discussions that I was not equipped to observe because of language barriers and other limitations rooted in my positionality. This complemented my own written accounts as they might have noticed things that I failed to capture in my notes.

We visited the central business districts of Blantyre and Limbe and the six wards pre-selected for concentrated investigation (Figure 2-1). I was able to gather qualitative data about how markets looked, how accessible they were and to whom, what types of foods were available and at what prices. I also observed the types of people shopping at each place and the people working there. Brief conversations with vendors and customers often provided invaluable information about the challenges people face in food procurement and in earning a living, and I used some of these interactions as illustrative anecdotes in the text.[13] It provided me with an opportunity to visit several types of food

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[13] I had several copies of an information and recruiting pamphlet to distribute during these observational activities (Appendix G).

trading places and compare them, which gave me an important set of reference points for questions during interviews and participative diagramming activities. For example, if there was a market near someone's home and they did not mention it during the participative diagramming session, I could probe into why they chose not to shop there.

Observation was an excellent initiation into the fieldwork but it was limited in several respects. I was keenly aware that my time and resource limitations did not permit me to engage in a fully "participant observation" exercise. Even though the exact definition of such a method is contested (Kearns, 2010), clearly a few afternoons of visiting each market would not suffice. An alternative approach would have been to focus on a select few representational markets and conduct participant observation. I argue that in using this activity as a springboard into other activities, and in designing each of my activities in relation to one another, my observation does not stand alone but it is an important element in the complete set of methods that constituted my fieldwork.

2.3.2. In-depth interviews

The observational activities provided me with a wealth of knowledge about the superficial features of food consumption in Blantyre, but they offered little insight into what went on within people's homes or how people experienced food security and insecurity. I designed the in-depth interviews with three objectives: to learn how households obtained their food, to understand the deployment and negotiation of gendered domestic roles within households, and to provide a forum for interviewees to express their opinions and feelings about the research topic. The overarching goal of conducting in-depth interviews was to make the knowledge created in my dissertation

resonate with the life experiences of a diverse cross-section of people in Blantyre.

Andrews (2007: 491) stated this goal elegantly when she wrote:

> This is the problem I have returned to, and will always return to, in my research. How does this individual with whom I am speaking reflect wider social and historical changes that form the context of his or her life? I am convinced that if I can listen closely enough, there is much to learn from every story that one might gather. For society really is comprised of human lives, and if we can begin to understand the framework that lends meaning to these lives, then we have taken the important first step to being able to access the wider framework of meaning that is the binding agent of a culture.

This excerpt resonates with the idea at the core of my dissertation that food entitlements are deeply embedded in the socio-spatial experiences of everyday life (Devereux, 2001; Flynn, 2005). Thus in order to understand the connections between gender, food, and place, I must look to human lives, and interviews can provide a window into people's experiences, thoughts, and reflections (McDowell, 2010).

I achieved a basic level of uniformity among the interviews by using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E). The guide provided some assurance of consistency even when I was not present during interviews, thus facilitating analysis through comparison of people's responses while also allowing space for people to expand on their answers. The richness of information obtained from the interview transcripts depended largely on the interviewee him or herself. They ranged widely in length, from forty minutes to almost three hours, with people sometimes expanding on different issues of particular interest to them. We conducted the interviews at a time and in a place convenient for the interviewee (e.g., home, work, community centre). We selected interviewees based on the spatial sample of six wards. I set out to interview three men and three women in each ward and in the end we conducted 36 interviews with 40

individuals[14] (20 men and 20 women). I did not record econometric data on each

household, as defining a household's socio-economic status separately from how the

household members see themselves would have gone against the grain of my feminist

postcolonial epistemology without serving an analytical purpose. Instead, I indicate when

quoting interviewees what type of economic circumstances their households were facing.

The selection of interview participants from a variety of formal and informal areas

allowed me to capture a variety of households in terms of socio-economic status, and yet

my findings highlight the complexity of categorising class or income levels, because of

the relationship between vulnerability, place, and poverty. Some low-income households

were relatively well off if they had access to non-monetary resources, while some middle

class households were living in desperation because of adverse conjunctural events.

Although one of the objectives of the interviews was to understand household

processes, I chose to interview individuals because of the objective of understanding the

significance of household gender roles superseded my interest in their function *per se*.

Valentine (1999) weighed the trade-offs between interviewing household members

simultaneously or separately and concluded that the main benefit of separate interviews

was that people could speak more freely. I was especially concerned with women having

the freedom to speak openly about unequal distribution of resources within the home and

my concern about patriarchy within the home was another important reason for

interviewing individuals (Agarwal, 1997; Kabeer, 2003). Not only would women be

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[14] In some cases there were two people present in an interview at the request of the interviewees. Sometimes the other person casually came and went during the interview. In two cases, another household member made a substantial contribution to the interview and I have indicated these on Appendix B. In the interview with Mr Kaunda (interview 30), his adult son was present. In the interview with Mr Zeleza (interview 32), his wife was present.

potentially silenced by the presence of their partners, but men would also speak more

freely about their attitudes toward women in the household with a male researcher and no

women present. Many of the men we interviewed noted that it was novel for them to be

asked about domestic issues, a point which confirmed that the conventional protocol is to

ask men about issues outside of the home and women about issues within the home

(Valentine, 1999). In some instances, men's lack of knowledge on these matters might

have reduced the informative value of the interview transcripts in terms of how their

households functioned, but their lack of knowledge in and of itself provided important

insights (see Chapter 3).

The interviews yielded transcripts that represented the views of respondents and

allowed me to conduct a textual analysis that led to many of my core findings. Several

factors made this an imperfect representation of the interviewees' viewpoints, hence the

need for multiple methods to corroborate, verify, and contextualise the interview

transcripts. The language barrier was an inevitable challenge. I relied heavily on my two

research assistants to interpret during the interviews and to translate the original

transcripts of interviews that were conducted in Chichewa or Chitumbuka.[15] I was present

for the majority of interviews (23) and I met all of the remaining interviewees to discuss

the project before and after the interviews. My research assistants' roles as interpreters

during interviews and on other occasions (when I met people during observations or key

informant interviews who did not speak English) were extremely important. Williamson

et al. (2011) emphasised the need for proper training of interpreters on the objectives of

the interview and the boundaries of ethical conduct. I accomplished this level of

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[15] Out of 36 interviews, 29 were conducted primarily in Chichewa, four were conducted primarily in
Chitumbuka, and three were conducted primarily in English.

assurance by maintaining a small team and by first conducting the observations as a team. I frequently discussed my research objectives with them and solicited their feedback, such that by the time we began the interviews they were fully aware of my goals and expectations. Furthermore, I provided feedback on the initial interview transcripts in order to improve subsequent interviews and subsequent translation work.

Another major hurdle for interviewing is in the embodied moment of the interview itself, which is not readily evident in the transcript and yet can dramatically shape the data that emerges (McDowell, 1992). In my original plan, a female research assistant would have conducted the interviews with women and a male assistant the interviews with men. I wanted to minimise the effect of discomfort for people to speak freely about gender issues to someone of the opposite gender and to minimise the power imbalance in the research setting (Moss, 2002; Kindon *et al.,* 2007). This system did not work well, as I had to attend the initial interviews with women to guide Ms Samati, and in the course of unplanned events sometimes it was logistically impossible to match the genders of the informants and the research assistants. Certain experiences showed me that this focus on gender difference was sometimes superficial, and not necessarily the best way to establish trust and rapport. In one instance, a female informant was from the same ethnic background as Mr Gondwe, and the ability to conduct the interview in their minority language of Chitumbuka was more important than matching their genders. In another case, Ms Samati was unable to attend a scheduled interview with a female informant so I asked Mr Gondwe to join me. As it happened, the woman we interviewed had extremely conservative views on women's attire and expressed these views strongly during the interview. Ms Samati frequently wore trousers, and I imagined that had she

conducted the interview wearing trousers the woman would have been offended, and thus uncomfortable. These examples highlight the multiple positionalities we take on in the field and the fact that while we can be prepared, unforeseen events are bound to occur. My job as a feminist qualitative researcher is to engage with these imperfections in my analysis rather than attempting to ignore their influence.

2.3.3. Participative diagramming

Participative diagramming evolved within my methodological "tool kit" as a way of dealing with the need for information about where people were accessing food and the various trade-offs (time, money, energy, distance) at play when people decide where to obtain food. I was inspired by studies that had used participatory visual methods to address the communication challenges I described in the previous section (Moser & McIlwane, 1999; Kesby, 2000a, 2000b; Young & Barrett, 2001; Kindon, 2003; van Blerk & Ansell, 2006a; Kindon *et al.,* 2007). Kesby's (2000a, 2000b) research on gender, sexuality, and HIV transmission in Zimbabwe relied heavily on participatory diagramming to overcome the "silences" around AIDS and the challenges of establishing dialogue across embodied, cultural, and linguistic differences. In another important example, Young and Barrett (2001) were able to reveal important details about the daily lives of street children in Kampala through mapping and photovoice. Using visual methodologies as part of a mixed set of qualitative methods, they argued that: "visual methods proved to be particularly important for developing gainful insight into the street child's urban environment from the child's perspective" (Young & Barrett, 2001: 142). I also wanted to gain insight into everyday life in Blantyre from the perspectives of people living there through the use of participative visual methods.

Visual methods have become especially prominent in participatory approaches to development research (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall, 2003; Kindon *et al.,* 2007; Fortmann, 2011). They can play a crucial role in facilitating the transfer of control over the research process to marginalised groups, and hence provide them with greater authorship in the construction of knowledge about their lives. Mapping exercises are growing in popularity among participatory action researchers because they can help to facilitate discussions about the contested meanings of places and the potential reconfiguration of spatial meanings for empowerment. St. Martin & Hall-Arber (2007) described the mapping exercises they undertook with fishing communities in New England, USA. They mapped the fishing grounds in terms of where different communities fished, articulating a spatial extension of the community territory to the offshore places. The construction of these maps entailed enlightening discussions about how socio-spatial meanings taken for granted within communities but rarely articulated or depicted differed from "state-sponsored boundings, privatisations, categorisations, and inscriptions" (St. Martin & Hall-Arber, 2007: 52). The process made the participants more aware of the competing claims and meanings attached to the spaces that supported their livelihoods. It also gave them a means of expressing, through cartographic depiction, their own perspectives on the spaces of the local fisheries resources. In outlining my use of this method, I chose to describe it as "participative" rather than "participatory" in order to denote that I did not apply the activity to a political goal or the improvement of food access *per se.*[16] There were some positive outcomes for the participants, such as the woman who told me that

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[16] Kesby outlined this distinction in a personal communication but I have not encountered this in the literature. Nevertheless, it helps to clarify my central aim of gathering spatial data in a way that would give participants some control over the process and allow them to speak freely about food security issues without *necessarily* aspiring to the consciousness-raising goals of some types of participatory research.

she was happy to learn about where to buy cheaper food, but there was no political action component built into the design.

The groups were made up of acquaintances brought together by various stakeholders in the different wards who were particularly interested in the research project. We conducted eight sessions: one in Ndirande, Likhubula, Soche East, and Limbe West and two each in Soche West (Misesa Village and Quarry) and Nkolokoti (Angoni Lonjezo CBO and the home of Mrs Malenga) (Appendix C). They ranged from four to eight participants per session. Most of the participants were female, although in three sessions (Misesa Village, Quarry, and Ndirande) men also participated.

In discussing his pilot study of participatory diagramming, Kesby (2000: 426) noted: "one of the great attractions of diagramming is that it is wide open to context and topic specific innovations by researchers and participants alike." The activities that took place in the field were quite different from what I had imagined. For example, I had imagined that the ward maps I obtained from the Malawi National Statistics Office (MNSO) would be the base maps for plotting where people were buying food. When I realised from the observational activities that these maps bore little resemblance to how places were actually connected and used, I opted to use a diagrammatic map (Figure 2-4) that I later transposed on to Google Earth satellite images of the space (see Chapter 6). The food categorisation exercise was another example of innovation in the field. In preparing for the sessions, my research assistants and I began composing a list of foods to ask where they would go to purchase each one. It quickly became obvious that we were creating a list based on our own experiences and food knowledges rather than asking people about what foods *they* consumed. I then decided to take advantage of the

opportunity to ask people what foods they considered to be "urban" or "rural," and what foods they considered to be suited to "men," women," or "children." We did this by providing sticky notes with the names of foods written on them and asking the group to affix them to poster-sized sheets of paper (Figure 2-3). The groups were asked to tell us of any foods that were not already included and then we added them on to new sticky notes, which we then used in subsequent sessions. These data depict locally relevant *meanings* associated with consumption of certain foods rather than objective knowledge about what people were actually consuming. The knowledge generated lent itself well to understanding people's perceptions of food insecurity, urban life, gender, and generational differences.

Figure 2-2: Food categorisation at Angoni Lonjezo Community Centre, Nkolokoti, July 2010 (photo: author)

Figure 2-3: Food categorisations (photo: author)

Figure 2-4: Example of a food "map" produced during participative mapping sessions (photo: author)
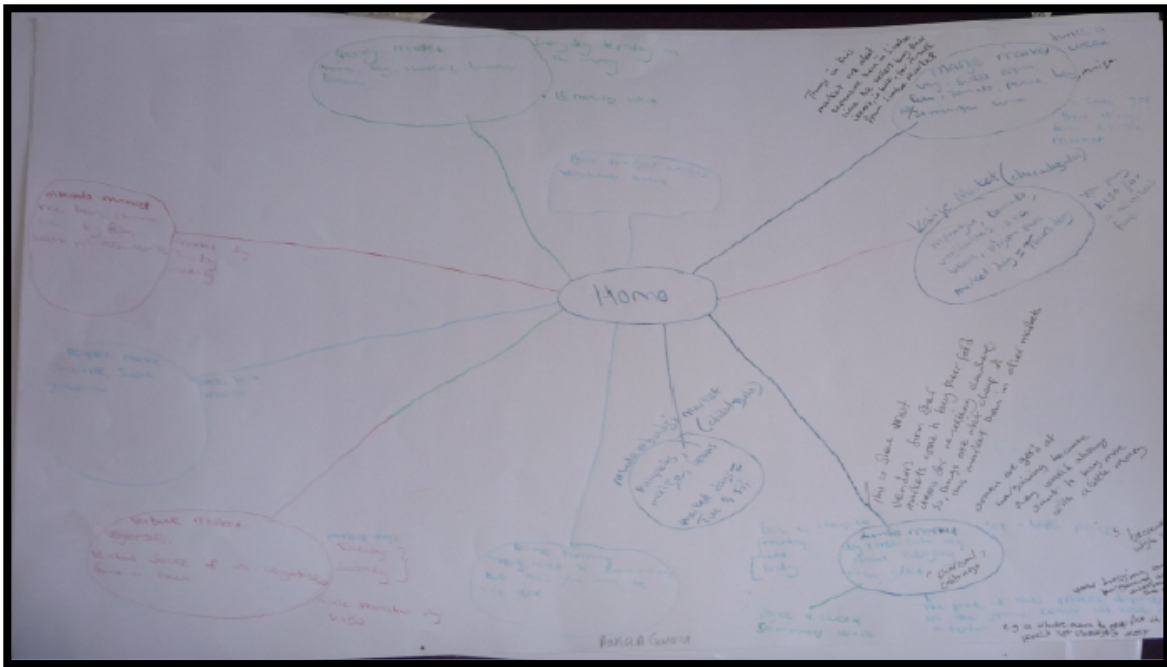
Cornwall (2003) warned against a tendency toward "aesthetic bias," which entails straightforward, simplified answers that can be insensitive to complex or sensitive issues.

She stressed that the production of a map or a diagram ought not to be the end point of the research, but rather the starting point of a fruitful discussion. Heeding this advice, I relied heavily on the conversations that took place during these activities for my analysis. Sometimes these were spontaneous discussions that emerged from people disagreeing about how to categorise a specific food. In other cases, it was the result of our probing their categorisations, or telling them what we had heard from other groups and asking for confirmation. During each of the sessions Ms Samati and Mr Gondwe divided up the tasks of facilitating and interpreting for me while taking notes. These notes provided an additional text for analysis. One noteworthy example that came from these discussions was the case of Mrs Malenga's daughter who worked in a tobacco processing plant and described in detail the lunch she received at work. Her experiences were an important element in my analysis of gender and employment issues discussed in Chapter 5.

2.3.4. Key informant interviews

I conducted a variety of other interviews with groups and individuals. I sought out interviews with bureaucrats at the Blantyre City Assembly (BCA) so that I could pose questions about policies and trends in urban food security. In other instances, I took advantage of serendipitous opportunities. Such was the case with the group interview with representatives of Ndirande Farmer's Association (NFA). I was unaware that this organisation existed before I started my fieldwork, and yet their story became an important case for understanding urban agriculture (see Chapter 7). I was also fortunate to have interviewed the Group Village Headwoman (GVH) of Kapeni Village (adjacent to Quarry in Soche West Ward and Angela Goveia in Limbe West Ward). Mr Mponda, who let me interview him and arranged a participative diagramming session at Misesa

Village, offered to arrange this meeting with the Group Village Headwoman. The interview provided me with insight into the function of "town chiefs" (Cammack *et al.,* 2009) that came to be an important concept in understanding how resources are governed in Blantyre. In addition, I conducted four group interviews with various community-based organisations engaged in poverty alleviation activities (Angoni Lonjezo CBO in Nkolokoti, Chifuniro CBCC and Nzothekandi Manja CBCC in Soche West Ward), and other individuals as outlined in Appendix D.

I did not record any of the group interviews because I lacked the resources to transcribe and translate them. I relied on my notes and the notes my research assistants took during and immediately after the interviews. I also took notes rather than recordings during individual key informant interviews in part because I wanted to encourage them to speak candidly and to build rapport by approaching the interviews as less formal. I acted as I deemed appropriate given the delicate political climate at the time of my fieldwork.

2.3.5. Newspaper analysis

I complemented the other four methods by conducting a textual analysis (Dittmer, 2010) of newspaper articles covering the eviction of street vendors in 2006 under Operation *dongosolo* (see Chapter 5). This event fundamentally changed the way urban public space could be accessed by the urban poor and signalled an important shift in urban policy from the UDF to the DPP Government. The event had not received adequate academic attention (except for an article written by Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009), particularly in how it related to the political economy of urban food security in Malawi. The newspaper archives in Malawi for 2006 are not digitised so I visited the library at the University of Malawi and accessed hard copies of more than 100 articles from a six-

month sample (March-August 2006) of newspapers of the two major dailies (*The Daily Times* and *The Nation*). I then used these news items to reconstruct a narrative of events and to analyse the discourses surrounding the event, particularly in how it revealed the sharp class divide in Blantyre.

2.4. Writing up: inclusions and omissions

In a reflective chapter on representation, Myers (2010: 385) reminded us that: "representing the Others is personal, it is political, and the conundrums of the negotiation are all around us." I encountered countless conundrums in my effort to convert the texts, images, and memories from the field into a coherent and meaningful document. The writing process for me involved many drafts and hundreds of editorial decisions about what details to include and what details to omit. It often meant searching for historical and academic references to corroborate things people had told me. My experience matches Mansvelt & Berg's (2010: 341) concept of writing-*in* rather than writing-*up*: "writing-*in* is not a matter of 'telling'-it is about knowing the world in a certain way." I touched on this issue earlier when I called attention to the choice of details I included in my account of our interview with Mrs Chipeta. Even that short descriptive paragraph was rife with indications of my positionality, the politics of my academic argument, and the conundrum of balancing the need to convey the depth and urgency of her poverty without falling into a melodramatic mode.

With this complexity in mind, it is possible (and necessary) to write *something,* as imperfect as it must be. Collaborative work with participants in the writing stage would have helped to balance the power in representation, but this was impossible because of logistical and resource constraints. Raghuram and Madge's (2006: 279) concept of a

postcolonial process of theorisation is useful for me in thinking through how to

responsibly represent the research participants and the places where they live, while

generating meaningful insights that will resonate within the academic world:

> It is more fruitful to think of theorization as a process of
> abstraction by which details are simplified and links and
> relationships made more apparent, a kind of empirical
> disembedding, a move away from the complexity of the concrete,
> a shift from the particular to the general, a move away from a
> 'real' that is more complicated than we can possibly tell.

Following this approach to analysis, I can justify putting some distance between the

participants and me. In recognising that the "real" will always be more "complicated than

I can possibly tell," I am also recognising the limitations of what I could have possibly

known from five months of fieldwork. The explicit recognition of these constraints

liberates me to work with the material to the limits of its potential as a snapshot of a time

and a place with a high degree of relevance to other times and places.

In the analysis preceding the writing process, I uploaded my field notes[17] and in-

depth interview transcripts into NVIVO and coded them to create nodes (Appendix H).

The nodes helped show what ideas were actually recurring in different interviews and

discussions. For the participative mapping sessions, I transposed the maps of where

people bought their food onto composite satellite images taken from Google Earth that

represented the city. This gave me insight into the spatial patterns of food access. It was

not feasible to upload the photocopied newspaper articles to NVIVO (and unnecessary to

transcribe them) so I created a node for each article on NVIVO and then coded it as a

whole entity. These analytical activities with my fieldwork data helped me construct a

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[17] This document included notes composed by me, Mr Gondwe, and Ms Samati on observation,
participative diagramming, and key informant interviews in addition to my personal reflections and
observations in the field.

skeleton of my dissertation, which I subsequently reworked in several iterations to produce an internally coherent body of writing.

Weighed against my initial objectives, my methodology was less successful at grasping intra-household relations than I had envisioned. Valentine's (1999) summary of the trade-offs between individual and household interviews are borne out in my research, which has far more to say about how men and women *perceive* their roles than what they are actually doing. Given the opportunity to revise my methods I would have conducted separate household and individual interviews. Even a small sample of household interviews would have provided valuable insight into how household members interact with one another, and how this reflects intra-household power structures.

2.6. Conclusion

I designed my research methodology with the objectives of understanding how and where households accessed food in Blantyre, identifying the ways in which food security is gendered, and exploring the spaces of vulnerability in Blantyre from a postcolonial perspective. My use of a gendered lens of analysis and my emphasis on postcolonial urban geographies led me to adopt a feminist postcolonial epistemology that allowed me to foreground positionality, the context of everyday life, and the subjective meanings of food, household, gender, and place. My methodological programme was clearly outlined but not rigid, and as such I was equipped to respond to unforeseeable challenges and opportunities in the field as they arose. None of the challenges in Blantyre matched the challenge of writing the dissertation truthfully and effectively in a manner that could convey the lived experiences of diverse households, the thoughts and reflections of individual men and women, and the multiple layers of theoretical and

empirical background information coherently. The following chapter goes further in discussing the epistemological challenge of researching food through a gendered lens. The ostensibly straightforward concept of men and women, which permeates every person's life every day, led to a vast set of observations about urbanisation, development, food security, and semiotics that I had not fully anticipated. The complexity illustrates the extent to which "the conundrums of negotiation" (Myers, 2010: 385) apply to even the minute details of communication and interaction in cross-cultural feminist postcolonial research.

Chapter 3: *Gender*, household roles, and urban social change

> The nature of gender relations - relations of power between
> women and men - is not easy to grasp in its full complexity . . .
> The complexity arises not least from the fact that gender relations
> (like all social relations) embody both the material and the
> ideological. They are revealed not only in the division of labor
> and resources between women and men, but also in ideas and
> representations - the ascribing to women and men of different
> abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavior patterns,
> and so on. Gender relations are both constituted by and help
> constitute these practices and ideologies, in interaction with other
> structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste and race.
> (Agarwal, 1997: 1-2)

3.1. Bridging the epistemological gap: constructions of gender

Feminist theories have proven to be powerful tools for understanding food

security as both "material and ideological" (Agarwal, 1997: 1), giving rise to a political

agenda that seeks ideological changes at multiple scales that can reduce gender-based

vulnerabilities to food insecurity (Vaughan, 1987; Whitehead, 1990; Carney & Watts,

1990, 1991; Agarwal, 1997; Hovorka, 2006; Chant, 2010b). This political agenda is

rooted in the idea that gender is a social construction and hence gender roles and relations

can be re-imagined and re-constructed more fairly (Moser, 1993; Kabeer, 1994;

Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Jackson & Pearson, 1998; Parpart, Rai, & Studt, 2002). In

development practice, this line of thinking has led to the evolution of "gender and

development" (Connelly, Li, MacDonald, & Parpart, 2000) and the "mainstreaming" of

gender in development policy in order to advance the human rights and the socio-

economic equality of women and men (Kabeer, 2003). In terms of food security, the

improvement of women's entitlement bundles - within the context of their households,

communities, and countries, and as individuals - has been the key concern (Quisimbing *et*

al., 1995; Agarwal, Humphries, & Robeyns, 2005; Bezner Kerr, 2005; Hovorka, de Zeeuw, & Njenga 2009). The application of these broad-based political goals to the messy realities of human identities and relationships in diverse cultural, political, and environmental contexts continues to be an area where further research is needed (Momsen, 2010).

The choice to use feminist theory implies my normative position that social progress can be measured by the extent to which everyone has equal opportunities to participate in social, economic, and political life regardless of sex, gender, or sexuality (Moss, 2002; Olsen & Sayer, 2009). The conceptual de-construction of the household unit that ensued from feminist critiques of the unitary household model opened up a space for imagining better households built on mutual respect, fairness, and open communication (Agarwal, 1997; Haddad *et al.,* 1997; Carr, 2005). Of course, such *ideally* arranged households do not exist and to a large extent my reading of the household literature is rooted in my positionality as a man who has not experienced heterosexual marriage, parenthood, or poverty. The necessity of grappling with this reflexivity (Olsen & Sayer, 2009) further muddies the complexity of analysing my data through the multiple films of translation, research context, and the spatial and temporal distance between field and academy. Thus in setting out to understand "the ideas and representations" (Agarwal, 1997: 1) that partly constitute gender relations in Blantyre, I sacrificed the ability to comment in any quantifiable way on the actual practices of food provisioning. Nonetheless, the insights I gained into people's subjective experiences of food, gender, and urban space allowed me to delve into the discursive world of gender in Blantyre and draw insights into *why* people enact their household gender roles. This is an important

foundation for thinking through solutions to gender-based vulnerabilities to food insecurity because it entails acknowledging the personal and inter-personal dimensions of changing people's behaviour for developmental ends (Kabeer, 2003; Moser, 2005; Moser & Moser, 2005; Smythe, 2010).

The in-depth interview transcripts and notes from group interviews include conversations about the meaning of gender that allow me to draw critical insights into the significance of how my assumptions diverged from local understandings. This reflexive act helps to mitigate the effects of mis-assumptions about African domesticities that, as noted by several feminist scholars, have beset Western analyses of household food security in Africa (Vaughan, 1987; Whitehead, 1990; Moore & Vaughan, 1993; Bezner Kerr, 2005; Carr, 2005). Whitehead's (1990: 436) statement that: "many contemporary discussions of the food crisis in sub-Saharan Africa manifest a powerful and insidious ideological feminisation of food production for subsistence" underlined the fact that the link between gender and food security in sub-Saharan Africa had been based more on Western *assumptions* about African societies rather than a grounded understanding of what people were doing and why. Gender and urbanisation in postcolonial Malawi have received little scholarly attention,[18] presenting the need for in-depth examination of changes in gender ideologies with urbanisation in Malawi in order to base my analysis more squarely on the local reality. The complexity of speaking across an *ontological* divide must be made explicit in order to avoid what Cornwall (2003: 1338) referred to as "gender-*blinkeredness*" that involves simply "gathering and presenting sex-disaggregated

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[18] Vaughan (1987) and Power (1995) have made important contributions to knowledge about gender and urbanisation in colonial Malawi. Chipeta's (2007) study of gender and housing is one of the few examples of qualitative research on gender and urbanisation in twenty-first century Malawi.

data" without analysing what it says about power and intersectionality, or, on an ontological level, what alternative forms and representations of gender are possible.

In this chapter, I primarily discuss the division of household labour in the context of the ideas that participants put forth in their interviews about gender roles in urban Malawi, how they are changing, on what basis they exist, and what social changes could lead to improved food security. I use a semantic distinction between "gender," as it is used in academic theory (Kimmel, 2011), and *gender* as it is understood in the conversations with people in Blantyre. I realised early in my fieldwork that asking about gender in my interviews signalled a moral discussion about role reversals: for example, *should* men be washing, cooking, and carrying water, and *should* women be moulding bricks, wearing trousers, and managing companies? The distinction between the two meanings of "gender" reflects important power dynamics in the application of gender reforms in Malawi that help to explain the "slow progress" (Tiessen, 2008) for the advancement of women since the 1990s in spite of constitutional reforms that granted formal equality to women in most domains. The association of *gender* with urban life indicates the enduring relevance of spatial hierarchy wherein cities are associated with "modernity" and "development" (Iliffe, 1987; Ferguson, 1999; Myers, 1993, 2011). I bring to light the discursive overlapping of space, gender, and food in the second section when I analyse the results of the food categorisation exercises during participative mapping sessions. To the extent that *gender* is associated with urban life, it continues to be essentially exogenous and conceptual; this is borne out by the fact that in spite of much talking about *gender* in town there is little evidence of it taking place within urban households.

3.2. "*Gender* hates men:" paranoid men and patient women

I was surprised to find the blunt statement in one of the interview transcripts: "*gender* hates men." It first raised the question of how "gender" could be anthropomorphised. Secondly, and more crucially for the understanding of gender and food security, what characteristics would an anthropomorphic "gender" possess? The answer to these questions is only evident in light of the common use of the term *gender* in Malawi to refer to the inversion of conventional gender roles. Thus a man washing clothes and a woman moulding bricks could be said to be "practising *gender.*" As a noun, *gender* also connotes its own moral imperative as part of a set of externally originating values including democracy and human rights. Englund (2006) argued that these values remained narrowly defined and poorly integrated in Malawian society in the first decade of liberal democracy. The concept of freedom was introduced in Malawi as part of multipartyism, and yet according to Englund (2006: 6): "for all the evocations of participation and empowerment in the rhetoric of freedom, the rural and urban poor had few opportunities to participate in defining what freedom, human rights, and democracy might mean in a Malawian context." The definitions set by foreigners and national elites were then translated into Chichewa and disseminated through a civic education programme to an increasingly impoverished population. The disconnect between ideas and outcomes fits with a postcolonial reading of African development in the twenty-first century as essentially *neo*-colonial despite discourses of empowerment, democracy, and sovereignty (Ferguson, 2006). The battle over sexual minority rights in Malawi in 2010, similar to controversies in other sub-Saharan countries, showed that liberal democratic values could be portrayed as "foreign" when politically convenient (Cammack, 2012).

These trends help to explain people's attitudes about gender and why *gender* might "hate men." Whereas most Malawians can separate abstract problems such as human rights and democracy from their daily problems, *gender* is more fundamentally controversial because it challenges household power structures and is therefore intrinsic to how everyone conducts their daily lives.

When he said, "*gender* hates men," Mr Msiska, a twenty-year-old young man, was describing this threat to the household power structure. His full statement was (interview 20): "*Gender* favours women and not men. *Gender* hates men. When there is a good thing and that thing is meant for male and female, people usually bring the issue of *gender* to favour women." As an unmarried young man in a low-income household in Ndirande, Mr Msiska seems to see *gender* as further threatening his already limited economic opportunities. When Ms Samati, who conducted the interview, then asked him if he sees a big change in Malawi in terms of *gender*, he replied, "Yes, most women are doing carpentry, driving, and men cooking, taking care of children." This statement confirms his perception that women are taking on men's jobs, suggesting his sense of a direct threat to him as a young man who will have to compete with women for jobs when women are "favoured" because of *gender*. We encountered a female plumber during one of our visits to Nkolokoti and Mr Gondwe and I told her that we had heard many stories from men about the proliferation of female plumbers in Malawi. She told us that she was one of only four licensed female plumbers in Malawi and people are often surprised to hear what she does for a living. I can attest that I did not see a single female minibus driver, brick moulder, or carpenter while I was in Blantyre. It seems clear that this man's fear of women taking over male professions is highly exaggerated.

In another case of male hyperbole, *gender* was associated with being "tortured." Mr Nyirenda, a middle-aged divorced man whom we met selling bananas at Zingwangwa Market, said that women would become lazy through *gender* (interview 35): "You can have a wife but you could be doing the cooking and all kitchen work while she is just staying." When Mr Gondwe asked him about his friends' opinions of *gender*, he said: "They cannot accept to go into the kitchen to cook. They would think they are being tortured just like when they were bachelors. They say they married in order to have a helper and get rid of the agony of being a bachelor." This statement partly represents what men say to each other about *gender*, the "performative act" (Kaler, 2010: 25) of a man (perhaps emasculated by his bachelor status) telling another man (Mr Gondwe) about what other men *would* say about *gender*. Within these acknowledged parameters, the quotations point to the importance of context in defining gender roles, such that a man can cook when he is a bachelor, but that once he is married, his wife should be the one to perform this task. The "agony of being a bachelor" could be interpreted either as the embarrassment of doing a woman's job or the actual time and effort it takes to do the work. Both are valid interpretations, but in reflecting on his view that *gender* will make women lazy - that the husband will be cooking while his wife is "just staying" - the threat of a shared domestic workload seems to be at the forefront of what Mr Nyirenda considers threatening about *gender*.

Not all men expressed such extreme views of *gender,* but many who expressed liberal views simultaneously thought that there were limits on what women could do (a surprising number of references to grave digging as an absurd task for a woman to do), and that a man's domestic work would be on an exceptional basis, for example when his

wife is sick. Mr Mponda, a married man in the squatter settlement of Misesa Village, indicated that he and his wife shared work, but it was clear that *she* helped *him* in income-earning activities and *he* helped *her* in domestic chores when he said (interview 38): "my wife can help me push a rock . . . she is one of the people I know who does some of the men's jobs. Even myself, sometimes I cook but only when she is sick." There is a general hollowness to men's *gender* discourses that can be reduced to a patronising rather than a substantive reordering of gendered roles and responsibilities. Mr Moyo was proud to tell us that he practised *gender* by feeding the children when his wife was late coming home from work. Yet later in the interview, in response to the question of whether he ever discussed with his wife how food should be shared, he said (interview 11): "Yes, sometimes I do help in wisdom when I see that her wisdom is somehow little." The paternalism evident in this statement illustrates the gulf between practising *gender* and acknowledging that women and men are equally capable.

Generally, women (not surprisingly) spoke about *gender* in a positive light, especially in terms of how better cooperation between men and women could improve household food security. Few women pontificated on the meaning of *gender,* perhaps because they were more pressed for time (Cornwall, 2003), or because of how Ms Semati (who conducted the majority of interviews with women) probed the question differently from Mr Gondwe, but in the final analysis the transcripts show that most women wanted more support from their husbands with household chores. Mrs Chipeta defined *gender* along these lines when she replied to the question of what gender meant from her perspective (interview 14): "*Gender* is where a man can do chores. When maybe you are

sick, he can prepare *nsima*,[19] when maybe you are away a man can work very well."

Recalling that many men know how to cook from when they were bachelors, the fact that some men would insist that their wives cook even when they are sick suggests a form of abuse of women as servants. Clearly this rigidity of gender roles reduces household food security if a man cannot even cook something when his wife is rendered disabled, and it suggests the need for further research into the effects of women's long-term illness (especially in Malawi relating to HIV/AIDS) on how urban households function to achieve food security (Gillespie, 2003, 2006).

Mrs Malenga, an elderly woman in Nkolokoti who held conservative views on public morality, including a strong objection to women wearing trousers, supported the idea of *gender* in terms of cooperation and respect within the household. She said that *gender* has been misunderstood to the extent that the freedom to wear trousers is separate from intra-household gender relations (interview 26): "Yes, people misunderstand *gender*, my view is that *gender* is when both men and women work together. Those people who introduced *gender* did not know what it was as a result they misled a lot of people." From Mrs Malenga's perspective, the issue of freedom, in terms of personal expression in public, has detracted from the more important issue of whether or not men and women work together within the household. Her conservatism on the issue of trousers was common, especially among people of her generation, partly because Dr Banda had enforced strict regulations on gender-appropriate dress and hairstyles (Lwanda, 1993; Power, 2010). It was significant that Mrs Malenga separated her conservative views on comportment, which seemed to contradict *gender* as a right to personal expression, from

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[19] *Nsima* is a thick maize porridge eaten as a staple food in Malawi. See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

her views on gender roles within the households, which seemed to be more in line with the underlying value of gender equality in producing more cooperative and harmonious households.

Despite the widespread discussion of *gender,* gender roles and identities were usually fixed in place by ideologies rooted in concepts of nature, tradition, and religion. These conceptual moorings for the existence and perpetuation of gender roles are fundamentally the same as in Western society (Kimmel, 2011), highlighting the limitation of equating gender/*gender* with an indigenous/exogenous binary. The use of Christian or Islamic doctrine to justify resistance to the adoption of *gender* as a threat to tradition were, like all ideas, imported at some point in time. Men pontificated far more than women for or against *gender*. None of the women interviewed said that their roles and responsibilities were ordained by God, but several men cited religious teachings when offering explanations as to *why* women were responsible for various household tasks. For example, Sheik Kalambo said that in Islam (interview 5): "the Qur'an says women need to receive respect and they should also give respect to their men." This ethos of mutual respect is important to acknowledge, yet it is also important to note that he then affirmed the ideology of male supremacy when he added: "As men are the head of the family, they deserve the respect and when men are not there then automatically the woman is head and she deserves the respect." This view acknowledges women's capability to be leaders, while confirming that they are only meant to be leaders in the absence of a man. In another interview, Mr Tembo, a Catechist at a Catholic Church said (interview 16):

> You will see that cooking is a man's responsibility. The woman
> has just come to help the man in his duties, to help him. So the

owner of the cooking is the man since God first created the man
and after He saw that he has a lot of work to do it is when He
created the woman, to help Him.

In Mr Tembo's framework, a woman's contribution to the households is an act of service

to her husband. This is different from the "separate spheres" model that postulates men

and women have equal but separate roles (Haddad *et al.,* 1997). Rather, it highlights the

subordination of women within the household hierarchy using a religious justification

that is difficult to untangle from morality.

The slipperiness of the insider/outsider dichotomy is more pronounced when

analysing references to "tradition" as the basis for gender roles. The ethnic diversity in

Blantyre and the political influences on the construction of collective memories make the

topic of "traditional gender roles" extremely murky (Vail & White, 1989; Chirwa, 2007;

Kaler, 2010). The sample of interviewees included ethnic diversity drawn from fifteen

District origins in all three regions of Malawi (see Appendix B for details). As elsewhere

in sub-Saharan Africa, it seemed to be a common cultural practice that men traditionally

stay out of the kitchen (Hansen, 1999; Robson, 2006). Mr Banda, an elderly man in a

middle class neighbourhood, described it (in English) as a "taboo" for a man to be

involved in the kitchen work. He said (interview 31):

No, I don't do that [instruct my wife, daughters, or
granddaughters how to cook] as culturally and traditionally it is a
taboo. As a man I am not supposed to interfere. I leave them to do
it, because they are taught by their mother, my wife, how to
prepare, how to manage, serve."

The legitimate traditional status of this practice notwithstanding, Mr Chirwa implied that

some men use tradition as an excuse to perpetuate their advantageous position when he

said (interview 18): "There are two groups. Some do not allow themselves to do this

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(*gender*) at all. They do this maybe because of the tribes; they say, 'in our tribe we do not allow this. A woman's job is a woman's job and a man's job is a man's job.'" The use of tradition is highly contextual and constructed in oppositional terms between "us" and "them" (often racially based when I was present), "then" and "now," and "here" and "there." Several phrases began with "we in Malawi" or "you whites" to convey an African/Western binary, but it was equally prevalent in discussions of "those villagers" and "we in the city." Place is therefore a vital mode of intersectionality for explaining "traditional gender roles" at various scales.

3.3. "People in town are more civilised: they have knowledge of *gender*"

Gender was frequently both urban and Western, illustrating the continued relevance of Blantyre's historical development as a space for settlers from abroad and the salience of contemporary theorising of African cities as gateways between Africa and global flows of goods, capital, and ideas (Falola & Salm, 2004; Murray & Myers, 2006). Postcolonial urban theory highlights the continued role of the colonial era in animating social, political and economic relations in contemporary African cities (Myers, 2011; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Blantyre is typical of cities that were established at the vanguard of the colonial project in southern Africa to represent the political power of the metropole and to facilitate colonial economic activities (Myers, 2003). A key issue for urban food security today, which I discuss throughout my dissertation, is the geographical legacy of colonialism for the perpetuation of urban poverty. Africans were considered out of place in the cities and denied basic services such as water, sanitation, and marketing facilities (Iliffe 1987; Power, 1995; Rakodi, 1995). Subsequent chapters discuss the material legacies of colonialism on the urban food landscape, but in this section I focus

on how the postcolonial context animates an association of *gender* with urban life, and hence with a value system that evolved in a foreign socio-cultural context.

The link between practicing *gender* and European cultural influence came to light in the commentary from an elderly man, Mr Banda, who said he drew inspiration for how he treats his wife from a white family he used to work for when he was young. In discussing the origins of his liberal views on *gender* and human rights, he said (interview 31):

> When I was a young boy [in the 1940s], when I started work I was staying at my boss's at their boys' quarters[20] in Zomba and I used to see the way they were living and so I grew up slightly different from the way other people grew. They used to discuss with their wives while in the village, "whatever the man says is law." But the whites were flexible, they used to give freedom to their wives and their wives could decide that this is good. So while living in their quarters, I was studying the way they were living.

Mr Banda's comments are important for several reasons. First, they are a reminder of how recent the colonial period was historically (less than fifty years ago). The tendency for those of us born well after the end of colonialism to think of that period in abstract terms can elide this widespread lived experience. Secondly, the power dynamic between him and "the whites" is still evident in the way he described his experience in the "boy's quarters." His desire to emulate the "whites" was generated in the context of them holding a powerful, and thus for the young Mr Banda, admirable position. Third, the way he characterised the village wives as completely dominated by their husbands and the wives of the "boss" as having freedom seemed to evoke the ignorance of the villagers in relation to the enlightenment of the "whites," recreating a cliché dualistic binary that put

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[20] "Boy's quarters" is currently used to describe the small structures in the back of urban houses that are rented.

him in an awkward position as an "enlightened" urban African. This awkwardness is emblematic of the awkwardness of conceptualising African urbanism as seen through a postcolonial lens (Jamal & Weeks, 1993; Ferguson, 1999).

The postcolonial dynamic shaped how people talked to me, as a white, male, foreigner, about *gender*. Some informants took the opportunity to ask me questions about *gender*. One interview in particular, with an older man in Chitawira, Mr Kaunda, ended with a dialogue about gender equality in Canada that forced me to explain (and grapple with) some of my underlying assumptions about the value of gender equality within the household. The following excerpt is indicative of the course of the conversation (interview 30):

> Mr Kaunda: To those people who have known it [*gender*] for some time it can work but because here it is just coming, it will take some time. We should ask, "those who brought gender equality; where is it working better, without causing confrontation in the house?"

> Me: *It always causes confrontation. It is confusing. It will be different for someone of my age, to my parents and even different to my grandparents . . . It definitely causes a lot of confusion and confrontation and now in Canada divorce rate is 50% . . .*

> Mr Kaunda: What did they observe in order to bring about gender equality [why did they see the need to change gender roles]?

> Me: *It had a lot to do with human rights. It started when women started being so educated. There was a group of women who started looking at their roles and said we are not people. Legally, women were not people in Canada. They were just possessions. So they said this is isn't right, we should be able to own property, vote and they began to change people's attitudes.*

> Mr Kaunda: . . . maybe this gender equality thing will work only to the people who went to school, who understand it. Otherwise, villagers, no. They can't accept that I should be cooking food while the woman is staying. They will say we are not respecting the institution of the family.

> Me: *Maybe people just need to find the right balance. Women should be able to say no, for instance, to abuse.*
>
> Mr Kaunda: That's true . . .

This interaction was important for mutual understanding and I was pleased that he felt comfortable enough to challenge me. His comment that "it is just coming" contrasts with Mr Banda's recollection of learning about *gender* in the 1950s.

Mr Kaunda's conclusion that *gender* is appropriate for a certain class of people who have access to education, and that these are not "villagers" draws attention to the intersection of *gender* with education and urbanisation. In Malawi, as in most of sub-Saharan Africa, access to education is highly spatial with far higher net attendance ratio for secondary school in urban (29.2%) than rural (8.8%) areas (MNSO, 2010). The ratio for primary enrolment (95.4% in urban and 90.0% in rural areas) is more geographically even, although these figures obscure profound problems with the quality of primary education available in rural schools (Chimombo, 2005; Kendall, 2007). Mr Kaunda was among several informants who linked *gender* to urban life via access to education. Mrs Lamba, a widowed mother of eight whom we initially met selling vegetables at the roadside in Nkolokoti, expressed this association. When asked to compare gender roles and relations in the villages and in town, she replied (interview 21): "They differ; in the village you cannot find a man doing women's work while here in town men cook, wash, take care of children. People in town are more *civilised*; they have the knowledge of gender." Sheik Lubani in Chemussa expressed a similar idea when he said (interview 5): "Here in town there are so many ways people hear about *gender*, like in books, radio, so people hear more and understand issues of *gender*. Most people in the village are uneducated so for them to get a book and read they do not do that." The ontological status

of the *gender* he describes is not anthropomorphised, as with Mr Msiska, but rather analogous to an entity that is diffused throughout Malawi via the nodal points of the urban centres. Sheik Lubani's geographical imagery reinforces the external origin of *gender* and the proximity of urban areas to the global flows of ideas via their material access to information and education.

At the same time that the practice of *gender* in town signified the access to imported knowledge there, discussions about the lack of *gender* in rural communities suggested a pejorative depiction of village life. One woman told me she was practicing *gender* because her sons and husband would take care of the domestic work when she travelled throughout the country to support her trading business. Based on her frequent movement between rural and urban spaces, we asked her where she saw gender roles changing more, in rural or urban areas, to which she replied (interview 8): "I can see that here in town people are understanding *gender* but not in the rural areas. At home, in the village, how many men do cook? They say it is not in our tradition to cook. If they see you cooking, they will laugh at you." Mr Gondwe asked Mr Kadzamira, a young married man in his late twenties, the same question and he said: "There is no gender in the rural areas" (interview 27). When Mr Gondwe probed and asked why, Mr Kadzamira replied:

> Ignorance. Most of the people in the rural areas are not educated.
> They are stubborn. They follow ancestral traditions, old traditions.
> *Gender* has just come, it is new, and we don't even know where it
> came from. People know it now and hence it should come from
> here in town to the rural areas. If they (people) saw me cooking
> *nsima* in the rural areas, they would be surprised. They would
> think I have been made stupid by the love potion. *Gender* is so
> much here in town.

Mr Kadzamira's went on to say that his negative view of the rural areas is partly the result of his experience of losing his parents as a teenager and receiving no support from his

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rural relatives in Chiradzulu. The use of *gender* as evidence of rural ignorance suggests an adept adaptation to the discourses of development and globalisation, allowing Mr Kadzamira to "other" his rural relatives in a way that will resonate with other urban peers in his age group who were born in town. It is notable that this geography repeats that of Sheik Lubani in the sense that he portrayed it as originating in town, and as with Mr Kaunda, Mr Kadzamira presented it as a "new" phenomenon, suggesting that urban values and practices are more advanced than those of the rural areas.

Table 3-1: Urban and rural foods categorised by participative diagramming groups in Blantyre, June-August 2010.

RURAL	URBAN	BOTH URBAN AND RURAL	
Mushrooms – *bowa*	Mince meat (ground	Maize - *chimanga*	Tomato
Green bananas - *ntochi*	beef)	Porridge - *phala*	Muffin - *mandasi*
zaziwisi	Tin fish	Rice - *mpunga*	Coconut yams
Cassava flour - *kondoole*	Sausage	Soaked rice - *mpunga*	Sweet potato leaves -
Okra – *limanda, therere*	Meat balls	*woviika*	*kholowa*
Governor's plum –	Peanut butter	Sweet potato - *mbatata*	Oil - *mafuta*
nthudza	Garlic – *adyo*	Goat meat - *nyama ya*	Sugar cane - *mzimbe*
African bubblegum -	Green peppers	*mbuzi*	Cassava leaves -
matowo	Irish potatoes –	Fresh fish - *nsomba*	*chigwada*
Tamarind – *bwemba*	*mbatates*	Beef - *nyama ya*	Beverage made of millet
Monkey orange –	Carrots	*ng'ombe*	- *thodwa*
mateme	Apple (imported	Liver - *chiwindi*	Hyacinth bean -
Custard apple – *mpoza*	variety)	Anthill flies - *ngumbi*	*nkhungudzu*
Rice flour – *chigodo*	Bread	Milk - *mkaka*	Guava - *gwafa*
Finger millet – *mawele*	Spaghetti	Chicken - *nkhuku*	Fresh cassava -
Pearl millet – *mchawere*	Breakfast cereal	Dried fish - *nsomba*	*chinangwa chikukuta*
Field mice – *mbewa*	Coffee	*zouma* Offal	Apple (local variety) -
Locust – *dzombe*	Jungle Oats	Small dried fish - *utaka*	*masau*
Small birds - *mbalambe*	Jam	Roasted meat - *nyama*	Sweets
Caterpillar –	Cake	*yowotcha*	Leafy vegetables -
mphalabungu	Corn puffs – *jigisi,*	By-by fish - *makakana*	*masamba*
Flying ants - *mafulufute*	*kamba*	Eggs - *mazira*	Ripe bananas - *nthochi*
Locally produced nut	Margarine – *stork*	Pork - *nyama ya*	*zakupsa*
butter – *chiponde*	Biscuits – *bisikett*	*nkhumba*	Red peppers - *sabora*
Mashed beans - *chipere*	Doughnuts	Groundnuts - *mtedza*	Baobab - *malambe*
Cassava – *chinangwa*	Sobo (orange flavoured	Groundnut flour -	Sand - *dothi*
Smoked vegetables –	drink)	*nsinjiro*	Mango
mfutso	Samosas	Beans - *nyemba*	Dried cassava - *makaka*
Spanish needle –	Pizza	Soya	Onions - *anyezi*
chisoso	Custard powder	Pigeon peas - *nandolo*	Avocado pears -
Pumpkins – *maungu*	Soft drinks (fanta)	Amaranth - *bonongue*	*mapeyala*
Sorghum – *mapila*	Fruit juice	Green peas - *nsawawa*	Oranges - *lalanje*
	Chocolate	Pumpkins - *maungu*	Sugar
		Tea	Beer - *mowa*

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The perceived link between *gender,* urbanisation, food, and Westernisation emerged from my analysis of the results of the food categorisation exercises we conducted before each participative mapping session (Table 3-1 and Table 3-2). When we asked groups to tell us which foods were "urban," which were "rural," and which ones could be found anywhere, they overwhelmingly categorised European, processed, and imported foods as "urban;" wild, traditional, and insect-derived foods were categorised as "rural" (Table 3-1). Many people told us they bought food in rural markets or informal open-air markets in town, suggesting that few were consuming the more expensive "urban" foods such as breakfast cereal and pizza. These foods carry discursive signification of urban life, but they are indicative of a specific middle class and cosmopolitan urbanism that matches Mr Kaunda's "people who went to school" quotation above. The urban category also includes most of the prepared and processed foods, such as custard powder, margarine, and cake (Table 3-2). Most of the ingredients for these foods – including wheat flour for bread, pizza, and doughnuts – have to be imported and therefore require cash for purchase. The rural foods, by contrast, are produced locally and households can sometimes grow their own, barter, and purchase them more cheaply in season. Several of the rural foods are also wild foods, especially fruits, insects, mice, and birds, which people (especially children) can forage for as snacks. These associations resonate with the postcolonial reading of urbanism in that Blantyre residents apparently see urban life as aspirational rather than aligned with their lived experiences (Falola & Salm, 2004), perhaps in terms of "practising *gender*" as with consuming urban foods.

Table 3-2 Men's, women's and children's foods, categorised by participative diagramming groups in Blantyre, June-August 2010.

MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN (AGE 3-15)
Small dried fish – *utaka*	Groundnut flour – *nsinjiro*	Flying ants - *mafulufute*
Pork – *nyama ya nkhumba*	Locally produced nut butter – *chiponde*	Milk – *mkaka*
Mince meat (ground beef)	Mashed beans - *chipere*	Soya
Field mice – *mbewa*	Green bananas - *ntochi zaziwisi*	Groundnut flour – *nsinjiro*
Roasted meat (any kind of meat) - *nyama yowotcha*	Cassava leaves - *chigwada*	Ripe bananas - *ntochi zakupsa*
Liver – *chiwindi*	Spanish needle – *chisoso*	Smoked vegetables – *mfutso*
Cassava – *chinangwa*	Green peppers	Sweet potato – *mbatata*
Fresh cassava – *chinangwa chikukuta*	Mushrooms – *bowa*	Custard apple – *mpoza*
Carrots	Sweet potato leaves – *kholowa*	Monkey orange – *mateme*
Sugar cane – *mzimbe*	Pumpkins – *maungu*	Governor's plum – *nthudza*
Soaked rice – *mpunga woviika*	Amaranth - *bonongue*	Guava – *gwafa*
Beer – *mowa*	Hyacinth bean – *nkhungudzu*	Breakfast cereal
Jam	Okra – *limanda, therere*	Porridge – *phala*
	Baobab fruits – *malambe*	Jungle Oats
	Tamarind – *bwemba*	Apples (imported variety)
	Finger millet – *mawele*	Muffins – *mandasi*
	Pearl millet – *mchawere*	Jam
	Rice flour – *chigodo*	Cake
	Sand – *dothi*	Corn puffs – *jigisi, kamba*
		Margarine – *stork*
		Biscuits – *bisikett*
		Doughnuts
		Sobo
		Sweets
		Pizza
		Chocolate
		Custard powder

The urban/rural food categorisation also corresponded to a nature/society dichotomy in the sense that the "urban" foods were mostly manufactured (society) while many of the rural foods were wild (nature). This parallel duality is highly illustrative when juxtaposed with the gendered categorisations of food (Table 3-2), which reveals an alignment between women's foods and rural foods, but little parallel alignment of men's foods and urban foods. Out of 18 foods categorised as "women's foods," 11 were also categorised as "rural foods" and only green peppers (which are not widely consumed) were classified both as "urban" and "women's" food. The alignment of women's foods and rural foods evokes the long-standing association of women with nature in Western society (Rose, 1993; Blunt & Wills, 2000; Domosh & Seager, 2001). The discursive

twinning of women and nature signifies an objectifying view of women as subordinate to men in the same way that pristine places are subordinated to built environments (Cloke & Johnson, 2005). The idea that women are closer to nature positions "urban women" awkwardly in Malawi, especially when the interviews suggested to me that *gender* was much more about men adapting to urban life by cooking or taking care of children than women's emancipation from household responsibilities.

It bears noting that all groups associated the consumption of earth (*dothi*) with women. There is a long history of Western interest in this practice, known as geophagy (Vermeer, 1966; Lakudzala & Khonje, 2011) that clearly illustrates the paternalistic heritage of social science research. Practiced widely in sub-Saharan Africa and in the southern United States, geophagy was presented as evidence of women's irrationality and African American racial inferiority in the United States in the early twentieth century (*Eating dirt*, 1942). It is now widely recognised that the type of soil consumed is rich in minerals that are very healthy for expectant and breastfeeding women (Vermeer, 1966; Lakudzala & Khonje, 2011; Young, 2011). Despite the long-standing recognition of *dothi* and similar soils as sources of nutrition, a recently published survey of food consumption in global historical perspective continued to deride the practice as symptomatic of dietary deficiency rather than represent it as a food preference (Kiple, 2007). The author conceded that: "the practice can have a cultural basis, and one that purportedly diffused from Africa via the slave trade, at least in part because of a belief that certain earths have healing properties" (Kiple, 2007: 251). Rather than framing *dothi* as a food that rational people would consume, he continues to focus on the cultural peculiarity of the practice and the dubiousness of their "healing properties," which in tone is far more dismissive

than stating that they have nutritional value. I was ignorant of the widespread consumption of *dothi* in Malawi and would have expected it to be a rural practice, yet the one group to associate it with either rural or urban consumption associated it with urban.[21]

Men's foods and urban foods were not aligned, suggesting that the latent association of women with nature is not mirrored by an association between men and built environments. Only three foods fell into both of these categories and two of the men's foods were also classified as "rural." Urban space seems to be more strongly associated with exogeneity than masculinity *per se,* pointing to the overshadowing of gender difference by postcolonial differences of class, race, and geographic origin. Colonial society produced a much wider gap between racial groups than between genders in society as a whole (McCracken, 1989). While it is fruitless to quibble about which groups suffered harsher consequences under an oppressive system, the average "African" man had far less power in colonial Nyasaland than the average "European" woman. This dynamic helps to explain why an African male identity would not be neatly transposed on the idea of the city, as it would be in Western industrial cities (Domosh & Seager, 2001). Children's foods were the most aligned with urban foods, largely on the basis of the small manufactured snacks that children consume like puffs, sweets, and cake. Based on the comments above linking urbanisation with *gender* because it is a new idea, perhaps the association of children's foods and urban foods intimates the idea that the city is a place for new opportunities, especially for children (boys and girls) to receive a good education and possibly secure a better future for themselves.

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[21] My field notes do not document a discussion about this one instance of categorisation.

The ideas presented here are suggestive rather than conclusive. I cannot claim to know how people in Blantyre feel about urban life or *gender,* but my fieldwork in its groundedness has allowed me to paint a picture of a postcolonial urban social space with a complex socio-spatial identity that makes the reformation of gender roles extremely challenging. The acceptance of the idea of *gender* merely because it *seems* urban and Western is problematic unless it begins with the kind of dialogue I had with Mr Kaunda. The result can be a superficial adoption of *gender* that does little to substantially improve women's opportunities for independence, equality, dignity, and food security (Moser, 2005; Hovorka, 2006a, 2006b). The superficiality of *gender* relative to substantive social change in keeping with a feminist politics of equality reflects a mounting critique of gender mainstreaming as a purely bureaucratic project ill equipped to empower marginalised groups (Moser, 2005). The politics of discussing gender in my research in Blantyre are a microcosm of the much larger problem of fighting for gender justice on a global scale, with all of the inherent complexity of global politics and cultural diversity.

3.4. The contested domain of household labour

The popular idea in Blantyre that urban households are more forward thinking in their approach to gender issues is probably overstated. A comparative analysis of rural societies is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and in any case the cultural diversity of Malawi would make it impossible to generalise for "rural Malawi" and "urban Malawi." Northern Malawian societies tend to very patriarchal (Bezner Kerr, 2005), whereas matrilinearity in much of southern Malawi creates more nuanced forms of gender relations that intersect with age, marriage position, and birth order (Phiri, 1983; Peters, 1997; Peters & Kambewa, 2007) (see Chapter 7 for implications related to access to

farmland). Within the parameters of ethnographic data confined to the urban societies, my data allows me to critically assess what people said about the practise of *gender* in town against what they seemed to be actually doing. Similar to the overstated prevalence of women doing men's jobs noted above, incidences of men and women reporting men's involvement with housework usually referred to occasional or provisional involvement, for example when a woman is sick. Children appeared to be far more likely than husbands to take on domestic responsibilities. Urban men may indeed be more liberal than their rural counterparts, but from a critical perspective they are rarely practising *gender* in a substantive way.

In the interviews we asked men and women who normally performed various tasks in their households, such as cooking, buying, and allocating food. Comparing the responses to the question, "who buys food in your household?" the wife or mother was the most common response (about one third of interviews), but notably it was exclusively male interviewees who responded that the "husband and wife" both buy food (about a quarter of interview transcripts). This trend adheres to my expectation that men wanted me to think they were practising *gender* by sharing the responsibility for purchasing food. Another plausible explanation has to do with confusion between physically going to the market to buy food and providing the money to procure food. In the following excerpt, Mr Chirwa, an older married man in Ndirande, described his role as limited to providing money for food (interview 18): "When we are buying food it is my wife who buys since we as men just give money to the woman and it is the woman who plans to buy the food." Another elderly man, Mr Banda, in the formal housing area of Nkolokosa, made a similar comment (interview 31): "I give money to my wife and if my wife is not there I give it to

my granddaughters who are now at school. They cook food, vegetables for me. I don't go to the market." These men appeared not to take time out of their day to go and acquire food, but they did appear to see their roles as providers of money as part of the process of the household acquiring food. Some women also described this "breadwinner" arrangement of household gender roles. One extreme example of female dependence was Mrs Dambo, a young married woman (age 21) in Angela Goveia who said that her husband buys food, decides what food to buy, and makes other decisions in the home "since he is the head of the family" (interview 10). She also said that she does not eat lunch, but waits until the end of the day to eat dinner when her husband comes home from work.

Similar cases of women's economic dependence on their husbands highlighted the gender-based vulnerability for some women. Mrs Tengani lived in the police housing compound in Kanjedza (Limbe West Ward). When we asked her who buys food in her home, she replied (interview 9): "I do that upon my husband giving me money." We asked whether she contributed to the household food budget, to which she replied: "I just stay - I do not do anything. I cannot do business because of capital to start a business." Mrs Tengani seemed fortunate to have a husband with a steady income who was dedicated to his family. The contrasting scenario was with Mrs Chipeta (whose interview I described in Chapter 2), who stayed at home with four young children and often waited in vain for her husband to come home with money for her to buy food. She explained her situation in the following exchange (interview 14):

> Mr Gondwe: *When buying food, who makes the most decisions on what kind of food to buy?*
>
> Mrs Chipeta: That job belongs to me.

Mr Gondwe: *Does your husband just give you money?*

Mrs Chipeta: Sometimes he does give me, sometimes not.

Mr Gondwe: *When it is you who has earned the money, do you just buy without consulting him?*

Mrs Chipeta: I don't even consult that "I have earned some money, so what should I buy?" Because sometimes he is not around and so if I can wait for him it means the children and I would not eat.

She then explained that her husband was earning very little money and she could not complain to him about being hungry for fear of losing his small contribution. If she failed to provide him with dinner, he could find another wife and leave her solely responsible for their four children. Mrs Chipeta's fear of abandonment prevented her from raising the issue of food insecurity with her husband, which would be the first step towards collectively planning for food security on more than a day-to-day basis. This story stood out among my interviews as an extreme case of food insecurity exacerbated by a husband's neglect of his paternal responsibilities. Yet the literature on gender and development identifies similar problems for women worldwide (Moser, 1993; Kabeer, 2003; Chant, 2010b), suggesting that Mrs Chipeta's circumstances were indicative of other women in Blantyre who did not participate in my research or who did not feel comfortable enough to tell me and my research assistants about such problems.

The responsibility for cooking food was the most consistently gendered of domestic chores and in most households in Blantyre it is a highly time consuming enterprise. Most households in Blantyre rely on charcoal (52.8%) or wood (36.7%) as a cooking fuel and almost all urban households in Malawi that use solid fuel for cooking do so on an open fire or a stove without chimney or hood (98%) (MNSO, 2010). Collecting water is also time consuming as only about a third of urban households have water on

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premises (34.4%) and nearly one quarter (24.3%) spend more than 30 minutes (round-trip) to collect drinking water (MNSO, 2010). Mr Longwe stated succinctly the gendering of cooking when he said of his wife (interview 25): "She does everything [cooks and serves] because here in Malawi, the kitchen belongs to the woman." The only adult men who usually cooked were bachelors (interviews 6 and 35). These findings support the above discussion about gender roles being based in tradition, whereby even if few would articulate it as a "taboo" for men to be found in the kitchen as Mr Banda did, clearly it is a rare event for a married man to be found in the kitchen even in the ostensibly more progressive urban setting.

Some men said that they cook when necessary, although it is not their responsibility *per se.* In the following exchange with Mr Moyo, a young father in Angela Goveia (Limbe West Ward) with two young children, he espoused the principles of *gender* by claiming that he sometimes cooks. However, he continued to position his wife as primarily *responsible* for cooking (interview 11):

> Mr Gondwe: *Who cooks?*
>
> Mr Moyo: It is my wife who cooks.
>
> Mr Gondwe: *Not you?*
>
> Mr Moyo: I pitch in if I see that the children are alone at home because their mother is late from work. It is not always that she knocks off early. I know how to cook anything – 'gender equality.' When coming she finds that the children have already eaten. I wash even clothes, everything . . . if you stay with your wife peacefully there is no need to let people battle with hunger yet food is there . . . Humanly there is a need to help each other.

While his progressive attitude is laudable, he continues to see his contribution as helping his wife in her responsibility, whereas she is helping him to earn money by cleaning at a nearby office and earning some money.

The third domestic task I inquired about was food allocation. Agarwal (1997: 16) discussed food allocation in the wider context of bargaining over household resources, noting that justifications of different food allocations based on "perceived contributions" or "perceived needs" would often be biased in favour of males, thus creating intra-household inequality in food access. I was not able to draw reliable conclusions from the interview transcripts on how food was actually being allocated within households because of the limitations of the interview context (Valentine, 1999). The only person to clearly indicate an injustice of food allocation was Mrs Chipeta (interview 14), whose story I have referred to multiple times as a case of extremely oppressive circumstances.

Women were responsible for food allocation in all but five households in which the respondent said that no one allocates food [people just help themselves]. Notably, the households in which everyone helped themselves were middle class households that were not at all food insecure. This observation suggests the importance of food allocation as a coping strategy for food insecure households. Mr Longwe's extremely precarious financial situation is a focal point of the discussion in Chapter 4. In the context of this precarity, he said that his wife's role in allocating food was an important part of how they survive on little food (interview 25): *"my wife knows [how to allocate food] because the number of cups in a pot are well known. If the flour is less she knows that she needs to reduce the number of cups. So it means the amounts of nsima we eat also becomes less for everyone."* Mr Mponda's household was among the most severely food insecure I

encountered and he praised his wife for her ability to allocate food to allow the household to survive on very little (interview 38):

> If she cooks she gives the food to me and the children according
> to how she knows that this person can eat this amount of food.
> She is the one who knows, not me, I can fail. If she asks me to do
> it I can do it but not in the way she does. I can just heap all the
> *nsima* onto one plate and say let's communally eat while she
> knows this is for the father, for the elder children, for the second
> and last one.

The proportions of food Mrs Mponda allocated to each person was unclear in this quotation, but she would likely give a larger portion to her husband because of his perceived contribution to the household. Allocating food does not necessarily indicate that women are free to take a fair share for themselves. It does show that women continue to be responsible for core household duties, and that this responsibility is not only more arduous, but also more crucial for women in low-income households.

Domestic work is a high-stakes issue for low-income urban households. Gender is inextricable from issues of poverty largely because domestic labour takes up much of women's time, limiting their opportunities in education,[22] informal business, and formal employment (Moser, 1993; Blackden & Wolon, 2006). Women's time burden affects their whole households as it removes opportunities for improved household food security through women's engagement in business, agriculture, and waged employment (Chant,

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[22] The male literacy rate above the age of five is 69% while the female literacy rate is 59% (MNSO, 2008). The third IHS offers a summary of the trend from 1998 to 2012 whereby the male literacy rate was 62% in 1998, 76% in 2005, and 74% in 2012 while the female rate was 58% in 1998, 52% in 2005, and 74% in 2012 (MNSO, 2012). These oscillating figures demonstrate the limitations of available statistics on gender and literacy in Malawi. It is clear that in general, social, economic, and cultural considerations constrain girls' and womens' access to education in Malawi as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Abdi, Puplampu, & Dei, 2006).

2010; Momsen, 2010).[23] The burden of household labour on women, a perennial concern in Western feminisms, was partly resolved in the West through advancements in time-saving technologies, such that urbanisation, industrialisation, and technology have helped lighten the time and energy required to perform domestic chores (Blunt & Wills, 2000; Domosh & Seager, 2001). These advancements are anachronistic in contemporary urban Malawi where only 44% of households have electricity in their dwellings (MNSO, 2012) and daily tasks such as shopping, cooking, washing clothes, and drawing water can be extremely time consuming. For example, preparing the daily meals often involves visiting the maize miller, starting a fire, and obtaining water from a kiosk. This stark reality makes household roles and responsibilities critically important in the daily lives of poor women because essential tasks can take up all of a woman's time. Those with additional support from their children, husbands, or other relatives in their households can pursue other economic activities, such as informal business, farming, and community volunteering. The spatial analysis in the following chapters highlights how the increased mobility for women who are less burdened by domestic responsibilities can have an appreciable effect on food security, as it allows them to travel farther to access more affordable food (Chapter 6), pursue trading activities (Chapter 5), and farm in their rural villages (Chapter 7).

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that the gender lens of analysis entails examining far more challenging issues than a comparison of men and women or female-

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[23] The third IHS does not disaggregate by gender but rather by gender of the household head, making it difficult to find appropriate statistical data that illustrates these points for Malawi, particularly in terms of intra-household differences in incomes and food access.

and male-headed households can elucidate. The very meaning of gender is challenging to communicate within the research space because of the word "gender" in Blantyre refers to a specific way of seeing social progress and development, which is linked to democracy, freedom, and human rights. What sets gender apart within the development agenda for democratic social reforms is its relevance to daily activities within every household, such that one's actions are a political expression of adherence to or rejection of the moral message tied to the practise of *gender*. This morality is linked to urbanism by way of its foreignness and its perceived novelty, and yet it is more prevalent in discourses about urban life than in the lived reality of most urban residents. Insofar as "practising *gender*" is a political expression, it is an option that is overwhelmingly available to men who can express a progressive, urban ethos by "helping" their wives without substantially challenging the gendered hierarchy within their households. The material effect of the superficiality of *gender* in terms of household food security is tied into the time burden on women, who are often constrained in their efforts to generate income and optimise their food procurement activities. The extent to which individual activities aimed at improving household food security are constrained by the rigidity of gender roles and identities or superficial acceptance of *gender* as a substitution for real reforms, is central to the prospects for changing the longstanding urban poverty in Blantyre.

Chapter 4: Feeding a household on a precarious, insufficient, and inconsistent income

> But it would only be with the advent of postcolonial analysis that development would be seen through the eyes of local people making daily livelihood decisions in situations of conflict, hope, resistance, ambivalence despair and uncertainty, whether anyone concerned with development was noticing or not. Their situations are tricky and the choices they face are far harder than any hard figure of gross national product per capita can contain (Sylvester, 2011: 187-188).

4.1. Introduction

One of the major themes that emerged from discussions about the difference between urban and rural food security was that to live in town requires money; you have to pay for everything including housing, water, transportation and, of course, food. It was common to hear in interviews about how easily rural people could find food because they could farm, hunt, gather, and they had ample free time outside of the busy planting and harvest seasons. While clearly these narratives are informed by idyllic impressions of rural life, which contradict the pejorative statements about *gender* in rural areas, they reflect a longstanding conceptual difference between urban and rural poverty. Iliffe's (1987:164) historical perspective on urban poverty in colonial Africa is still relevant in Malawi today: "As new forms of poverty - proletarianisation, unemployment, prostitution, delinquency - supplemented older forms of incapacitation, servitude, and hunger, so towns pioneered the transition in the nature of poverty." Towns continue to "pioneer" new forms of poverty, and the face of urban poverty today is increasingly about *precarity* (Standing, 2012). Precarity takes shape at different scales of cyclical time; households

relying on daily piece work worry day-to-day about how to access food in a very immediate way, whereas households with a monthly income often worry toward month-end as the monthly staple food supply dwindles and the person cooking and serving food, usually a woman, adjusts the quality, quantity, and frequency of meals. The apparent access to food today can be misleading when a missed paycheque, sudden illness, or jump in food prices can trigger disaster.

To people in Malawi, a reliable household supply of maize signifies food security, even as more and more households struggle to buy maize in bulk. Relying on daily purchases exposes a household to volatile fluctuations in price, quality, and availability and creates a vulnerability to forces outside of one's control. Sylvester's (2011: 188) reference to "tricky" situations characterised by hard choices made on a daily basis provides the conceptual entry point for understanding how urban food security could *increase* even as Malawi was ostensibly "developing" in terms of economic expansion and a reduction in urban poverty rates (MNSO, 2012). Even while food production was at record levels and Malawi was receiving praise for its agricultural productivity (Masina, 2008a, 2008b; Juma, 2011), many urban households were struggling to achieve food security because of the scarcity of good paying jobs, the rising cost of non-food expenses (mainly housing and education), the volatility of food prices, and the difficulty in obtaining capital to start a business.

This chapter is about the precarity of food insecurity in Blantyre, which is epitomised by the popularity of *walkman*, or small amounts of maize to be consumed for a few days. In the first section, I provide background details about what people are eating and show that the *meaning* of food security is rooted in an adequate household supply of

maize. In the second section, I discuss the price of food relative to incomes to demonstrate that many households are insecure because they are constantly living hand-to-mouth on *walkman* rather than buying large bags of maize. The sense of precarity, of constantly worrying about food, seems to be a widespread experience. In the third section I draw on the concept of bargaining (Agarwal, 1997) to argue that *how* people manage their household resources within these adverse circumstances mediates the effects of low and unreliable incomes on food security. Cooperation between men and women, including budget planning, can make a crucial difference between eating and going hungry. *Gender* is therefore at the heart of urban food security particularly for low-income households for whom small amounts of money can make an appreciable difference in the quantity, quality, and consistency in their food access.

4.2. Food consumption norms in Blantyre

In order to understand the subjective experiences of food insecurity in Blantyre, it is necessary to first understand local conceptualisations of normal food consumption. The typical Malawian meal consists of a starchy staple (*nsima*) and a relish of meat, vegetables, or beans (*ndiwo*) (Morris, 1994; von Oppen, 1999; Mandala, 2005). The actual foods that make up these two components can be adapted to what is available, but they are both essential to make a whole meal. Maize (*chimanga*) is the overwhelmingly preferred ingredient for *nsima* (Bettison & Rigby, 1961; Smale, 1995; McCann, 2005)*,* to the extent that several transcripts suggest a conceptual conflation of "maize" and "food." In the interviews, most people took the question of whether their households had ever experienced food shortages to refer to whether they had experienced shortages of maize. The following statement from Mr Tembo in Ndirande illustrated the centrality of having

maize in the household to feel food secure (interview 16): "The first thing to buy is maize; maize needs to be always found in the home. Maize needs to be a priority because you can go and buy relish but if there is no maize then things are not right." The importance of maize is bound up in culture, history, and political economy as well as basic caloric requirements. Mr Zeleza (interview 32) said that many middle-class people such as himself do not consider other starches to be a replacement for *nsima,* such that even if you serve them rice, potatoes or pasta, they will not feel they have eaten until they have *nsima.*

The accompanying dish, known as "relish" in English or *ndiwo* in Chichewa, is far more flexible and can be made of a variety of types of meat, fish, vegetables, legumes, and pulses. Because the category is less restrictive, the act of buying relish is different from the purchasing of maize. Most people said they purchased "food" monthly, whereas subsequent probing revealed that items used as relish were probably purchased on a daily basis. Green leafy vegetables (*masamba*) cooked with oil, onions, tomatoes, or sometimes groundnuts or groundnut flour (*nsinjiro*), is a popular and affordable relish. *Masamba* is widely available even in the smallest markets. Dried fish and dried beans are the most affordable protein sources. One man in a low-income household in a formal housing area said (interview 30): "nowadays relish is expensive and that is why we go for local things like *matemba* [dried fish], vegetables and beans." Meat can be replaced with eggs or fish, which can be replaced with dried fish or beans if necessary. Even one kind of dried fish, *usipa,* can be replaced with *matemba,* a less desirable kind of dried fish because it has more bones and less flesh.

Table 4-1: Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS): type of food eaten yesterday in order of frequency of occurrence (source: AFSUN)

TYPE OF FOOD	HOUSEHOLDS CONSUMING FOOD TYPE YESTERDAY (%) (BLANTYRE, 432 HHS)	HOUSEHOLDS CONSUMING FOOD TYPE YESTERDAY (%) (11 AFSUN CITIES, 6,421 HHS)
Cereals (foods made from grain)	99.1	96.1
Other foods	87.2	70.2
Sugar or honey	84.0	68.9
Vegetables	83.8	67.3
Foods made w oil, fat, or butter	53.5	58.7
Fresh or dried fish or shellfish	45.4	17.9
Fruits	42.9	31.7
Foods made from beans, peas, lentils, or nuts	30.9	23.0
Meat, poultry, or offal	22.9	46.4
Roots or tubers	22.5	37.6
Cheese, yoghurt, milk, or other milk products	17.9	31.3
Eggs	15.6	22.4

Table 4-2: Lived Poverty Index (LPI): reported frequency of not eating preferred foods because of a lack of resources (source: AFSUN)

IN THE PAST FOUR WEEKS, WERE YOU OR ANY HOUSEHOLD MEMBER NOT ABLE TO EAT THE KINDS OF FOODS YOU PREFERRED BECAUSE OF A LACK OF RESOURCES?	HOUSEHOLDS (%) (BLANTYRE, 432 HHS)	HOUSEHOLDS (%) (11 AFSUN CITIES, 6,421 HHS)
No	41.9	23.4
Rarely	23.6	23.9
Sometimes	28.9	32.2
Often	5.0	20.5

The AFSUN survey gathered data on dietary diversity in Blantyre that provides

further insight in to what people are eating and with what frequency. Table 4-1 illustrates

the proportion of households that ate each food type on the day before the interview and

the proportion of households in the entire sample of eleven cities that ate each food.

Nearly all households consumed grains (99.1%), which based on my observations was likely maize in the case of Blantyre. Households in Blantyre were far more likely to have consumed sugar or honey (84%) relative to the overall sample (68.9%), suggesting that households in Blantyre are supplementing caloric deficiency with cheap sugar-based calories. It is customary to drink tea with a lot of sugar, in part because it gives the feeling of being full. Table 4-1 also shows that households in Blantyre are much more likely to consume fish and legumes for protein than meat, dairy, and eggs. Fish is plentiful because of the proximity to Lake Malawi, and dried fish is easily preserved, which is an important factor in a city where few households have a refrigerator.

The high prevalence of consumption of "other" foods in Blantyre (87.2%) relative to the overall sample (70.2%) can partly be explained by the exceptionally strong urban-rural linkages in Blantyre and the popularity of rural foods that do not easily conform to this style of Household Dietary Diversity Score questionnaire, which is standardised for international comparison. Several foods that appeared in Table 3-2, such as *thodwa* (locally brewed millet beer that I observed in several urban informal markets)*, dothi* (mineral-rich clay most often consumed by pregnant women), insect-based foods, and field mice, are widely consumed foods that would be in the "other foods" category. Some of these foods might be considered to be snacks rather than meals, and there is insufficient evidence to conclude that people consume them as a last resort. In fact, a further finding from the AFSUN survey, illustrated in Table 4-2, suggests that households in Blantyre are more likely than households in other cities to consume foods that they prefer. This finding might be different in the hungry season when maize is scarce, but

nonetheless it suggests a more complex food culture than simply a preference for meat and processed "urban" foods.

4.3. "If you don't have money life becomes tough in town"

The widespread consumption of maize, vegetables and dried fish is partly based on cultural preferences, but it is also the case that these are the more affordable options and as I discuss in this section, most households have extremely tight food budgets. The title of this section, "if you don't have money, life becomes very tough in town" was a comment drawn from our interview with Mr Kaunda, an older man who had worked for several years but was laid off and was now struggling to get by without a pension, relying on casual labour and help from his children. He was living in a good house in Chitawira, which he had been able to secure in the 1980s when the Malawi Housing Corporation was providing affordable housing options and he had steady employment. He spoke from his own experience, as someone who had enjoyed the amenities of town when he was gainfully employed and then experienced the uncertainty of living off piece work, day by day, and pursuing multiple livelihood strategies to get by. Even though he had several advantages, owning his own house and producing food in his wife's home village in nearby Chileka (see Chapter 7), he still found it difficult to make ends meet. For households forced to pay rent and buy maize, the financial circumstances were far worse.

Mr Longwe was living under very tenuous financial circumstances. He had come to Blantyre decades after Mr Kaunda and did not have the opportunity to experience gainful employment or state-subsidised housing. He and his family settled in the informal area of Nkolokoti. He had moved to Blantyre from rural Thyolo District in 2005 with the

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intention of saving enough money for a passport and bus fare to South Africa to work and

send remittances to support his extended family. He was staying with his wife, two young

children, and two school aged nephews. He was employed full time as a night watchman,

but because his salary was so low his family ate sparingly and lived in a small shack with

no electricity or running water. His wife sold popcorn to augment their income. When I

asked him about his expectations of life in Blantyre, he said life would have been better

had he stayed in the village (interview 25):

> Because in our village we can rely on banana farming. So here if
> you receive maybe MWK 5,000, you eat for only the month.
> While in the village we would have been living in our own house
> [for free]. We would have bought chickens or goats and raised
> them; we would grow bananas and sell them. So for five years
> there would have been some good change. But now the house that
> we built in the village might have collapsed if no one was living
> in it and it will be difficult to move back with no house.

According to Mr Longwe, his money could go a long way in the rural area and the

gamble he took by moving to town had set him back because of the high demands on his

small income. Mr Longwe said that migration back to the village was prohibitively

expensive because of the costs of starting to farm and building a house. This nuclear

household with two healthy parents of working age, one of whom is employed full time,

does not bear the typical markers of conjunctural poverty (single parenthood, illness), and

yet they are struggling to make ends meet. The basic problem for Mr Longwe and his

household, as demonstrated in Table 4-3, was simply that his salary did not cover his

basic expenses.

Table 4-3: Mr Longwe's estimated monthly budget (source: interview 25)

EXPENSE ITEM	COST	NOTES
Rent	MWK 1,400 (USD 9.33)	Small house, no electricity, no running water, shared outdoor latrine
School fees	MWK 500 (USD 3.33)	Niece and nephew in home village. Does not include school uniform, books, writing utensils
Maize	MWK 1,500 (USD 10.00)	Seasonal price fluctuation, up to MWK 3,000 (USD 20). Not enough to eat until they are satisfied, always worrying about running out
Daily food (relish)	MWK 4,000 (USD 26.67)	Diet of beans and leafy vegetables – does not include meat
Total expense	MWK 7,400 (USD 49.33)	Does not account for charcoal, water, clothes, utilities, transportation, remittances, medicine, charitable donations
Wage income	MWK 7,000 (USD 46.67)	Working as a night watchman. Difference in income made up by wife selling popcorn, harvesting maize when possible (see Chapter 6)

The MNSO (2012) set the food poverty line at MWK 22,956 (USD 153.04) per person per annum and the overall poverty line at MWK 37,002 (USD 246.68) per person per annum (adjusted at February/March 2010 prices), which is applicable to other areas of Malawi, but in Blantyre at different times of the year and under different circumstances food can be much more expensive. The food prices published by the Centre for Social Concern in their monthly "Basic Needs Basket" give an indication of what the daily food expense might be for a household of six members.[24] A list of the prices of typical foods including beans, dried fish (*usipa* and *kapenta*), cassava, onions, tomatoes, and rape are provided in Table 4-4. A typical day (in March 2010) based on Table 4-4 could consist of MWK 86 (USD 0.57) for cassava for breakfast, MWK 583

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[24] The Centre for Social Concern states on their website: "Currently the monthly surveys are done in Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba, with data collected from a sample of 7 to 10 markets and retail outlets (in each of the cities), as well as from selected households from each of the sampled areas" (Centre for Social Concern, 2013).

(USD 3.89) for a meal of vegetables and *utaka* with *nsima*,[25] MWK 140 (USD 0.93) for

charcoal and MWK 20 (USD 0.13) for water, totalling MWK 700 (USD 4.67) in a day to

eat two good meals (exclusive of the cost of maize purchased previously in bulk). For

those households relying on small daily purchases of maize, this could add an additional

MWK 100-200 (USD 0.67-1.33). Therefore a modest day's food for a family of six could

be MWK 700-900 (USD 4.67-6.00) depending on the season, whether they have already

purchased maize, what they are eating, and where they buy their food. By comparison,

the MNSO food poverty line works out to MWK 377 (USD 2.51) per day for a household

of six. Mr Longwe's salary works out to MWK 233 (USD 1.55) per day (based on a 30-

day month). With this additional perspective on incomes and food costs, it is clear that

the MNSO poverty line is insufficient for a household to purchase all of its food in

Blantyre.

Table 4-4: Food basket for an urban household of six, prices based on the monthly price survey conducted by the Centre for Social Concern, Blantyre, Malawi, in March 2010 (source: Centre for Social Concern, 2010)

	UNIT PRICE (MWK)	PRICE PER DAILY USE AMOUNT (MWK)	PRICE PER DAILY USE AMOUNT (USD)
Maize	2,500/50 kg bag	167 (3.3kg)	1.11
Milling (including grinding)	40/tin	19	0.13
Beans	207/kg	166 (0.8kg)	1.11
Usipa (dried fish)	1,050/kg	262	1.75
Utaka (dried fish)	1,379/kg	276 (200g)	1.84
Kapenta (dried fish)	1,200/kg	240 (200g)	1.6
Beef	436/kg	436	2.91
Eggs	25 each	300	2.00

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[25] Onions, tomatoes, oil, rape, and *utaka* at the daily portions given in Table 4-4.

	UNIT PRICE (MWK)	PRICE PER DAILY USE AMOUNT (MWK)	PRICE PER DAILY USE AMOUNT (USD)
Rape	92/750g	69	0.46
Tomato	152/kg	76	0.51
Onion	258/kg	30	0.20
Cooking Oil	463/kg	46	0.31
Bread	103/loaf	103	0.69
Sugar	143/kg	38	0.25
Kitchen Salt	83	3	0.02
Tea	13	17	0.11
Cassava	43/kg	86	0.57

The non-food expenses of rent and school fees put additional pressure on urban household budgets. They vary widely and reflect vast differences in living standards and the cycle of urban poverty for future generations. The MWK 1,400 (USD 9.33) rent that Mr Longwe said he pays in Nkolokoti (Table 4-3) represents the cost of very low quality accommodation. Mrs Johnson in Ndirande said that she paid MWK 1,200 (USD 8.00) per month but that the roof leaked so badly that in the rainy season they could not lay down to sleep (interview 15). Mr Kadzamira had inherited the lease for a permanent structure in a formal housing area when his parents died (interview 27). He told us that he paid MWK 4,000 (USD 26.67) in rent, far below the estimate of MWK 15,000 (USD 100) per month given by the Centre for Social Concern (CSC) as the market rate for a similar type of formal housing in Blantyre. His rent was below the market rate because it was state-owned housing that his family had occupied for decades, and yet even this reduced rate was challenging for him to pay on income generated through casual labour. The good fortune of occupying a state-owned house imparted the benefits of a central location,

large yard, and amenities like indoor plumbing and electricity, which are out of reach for most residents.

Income levels appear to be highly variable but it is easy to conclude based on the available figures that many low-income households would be challenged to find MWK 700 (USD 4.67) per day in addition to fixed expenses. The tight budgets in most urban households create a need to diversify livelihoods to reduce vulnerability by producing some of their own food (see Chapter 7); cutting back on the type, quality and quantity of food consumed; and asking for help from members of other households. The salary for a night watchman given in Table 4-5 is consistent with data given by the CSC, which showed unskilled and low-skilled wages in the service sector earning around MWK 5,000-MWK 10,000 (USD 33.33-66.67) (CSC, 2010). Women's income is at or below this range; for example, Mr Moyo told us that his wife was earning MWK 5,000 (USD 33.33) per month as a domestic worker (interview 11). There is little data on the rates of pay for piece work, but among the people I interviewed the range was between MWK 200-400 (USD 1.33-2.67) per day. It is impossible to extrapolate this amount to a monthly rate because the work is often seasonal or project based, and hence the income is inherently inconsistent. Assuming someone was able to work consistently five days per week for four weeks, the range would be MWK 4,000-8,000 (USD 26.67-53.33). Mr Mponda told us that construction sites could be more lucrative, especially for men. He said a man would be paid per brick; if he produced 1,500 bricks in a day, he could earn MWK 1,200 (USD 8.00). Women were assigned work on construction sites fetching water at a rate of MWK 200 (USD 1.33) per drum of water, of which she would normally carry 2-3, giving a daily wage of MWK 400-600 (USD 2.67-4.00). Mr Mponda lived in

Misesa Village, a squatter settlement, and it is possible that the pay scale is higher there because it is uphill from a middle-class suburb that is currently under construction. The rates of pay seemed to be much lower in Ndirande, where women in two separate interviews (13 and 14) said they would be paid MWK 20 (USD 0.13) (per pail) to carry sand for construction projects. This would be a last-ditch effort to earn enough money to buy food for the day when necessary.

Table 4-5: Estimated income levels for daily and monthly pay periods (source: interview transcripts) with the poverty line income equivalent given for comparison (source: MNSO, 2012)

ACTIVITY	RANGE/AMOUNT (MWK)	RANGE/AMOUNT (USD)
Daily Wages		
Piece work (generally reported)	200-400	1.33-2.67
Construction (men, hearsay)	1,200	8.00
Construction (women, hearsay)	400-600	2.67-4.00
Piece work for women in Ndirande (reported)	20 per pail	0.13
Limbe Leaf tobacco processing (woman reported)	500 (when quota is met, seasonal)	3.33
Breaking rocks (man reported)	600 (average per day after selling gravel)	4.00
Poverty line	101 (per person)	0.67
Absolute (food) poverty line	63 (per person)	0.42
Monthly Wages		
Security guard (men reported)	7,000	46.67
Domestic worker (female, husband reported)	5,000	33.33
Unskilled public sector (hearsay)	6,000-8,000	40-53.33
Accountant & nurse supervisor (man reported)	500,000 (combined household income)	3,333.33
Poverty line	3,084 (per person)	20.56
Absolute (food) poverty line	1,913 (per person)	12.75

The most common way to earn income was through small businesses (see Chapter 5), but the incomes were very difficult to ascertain and they are difficult to compare to monthly and daily wages. Certain products, mostly those typically sold by men, were more profitable than others. Market women dominated sales of vegetables, which tended to have smaller profit margins than the items men sold such as dried fish, meat, and bananas. When we visited Chemussa Market, Mrs Mwanza stood out because we had not seen a female chip seller in any of the informal markets. When we later interviewed her (interview 1), she said that she had been selling raw potatoes but then realised that the men selling chips were making more profit so she joined them. By all accounts, food vending was not an easy way to make a living, although it could be more lucrative than salaried work once the business was established with regular suppliers and customers.

Some people said that their livelihoods were so precarious that they or people they knew had gone into debt to pay for food and rent. Debt is a long-standing issue in African cities, especially in relation to isolated events, such as a funeral or for medical treatment (Iliffe, 1987; Chilowa, 1991; Maxwell *et al.,* 2000). A worrying trend noted in South Africa, but not yet studied in Malawi, has been the increasing *burden* of debt for low-income households who often borrow small amounts for basic needs and are forced to repay at high interest rates (Hurwitz & Luiz, 2007; Collins, 2008). Their relatively small debts are often enormous in proportion to their incomes, and as interest accumulates it can become a household financial crisis. Mr Longwe said that he is often forced to borrow against his next paycheque at 100% interest rate (interview 25). In two separate interviews, men told me stories about when they were not paid for goods or services in their businesses, forcing them borrow from someone else and creating a chain

reaction of unmet obligations (interviews 11, 36). In yet another example, Mrs Bwanausi was relying on her husband, who lived with his other wife, to sporadically come and give her money for food and other basic expenses (interview 23). She said that when he does give her money it immediately goes to her friends who had lent her money for food and she is forced to borrow again. These experiences demonstrated the vulnerability of many households; taking on debt for basic needs under normal conditions suggests an extremely high degree of vulnerability to adverse events such as illness, death, or loss of employment.

The consequence of precarious, insufficient, and irregular incomes in terms of food insecurity was that many households purchased food on a day-to-day basis in the form of *walkman,* rather than buying a 50 kg bag of maize, which was conventionally the normal amount to buy at one time. The origin of *walkman* dates the practice of purchasing maize in small quantities to the time when the eponymous personal music device was popular in the 1990s. People were embarrassed to be seen walking around with these small quantities of maize because it signalled that their household did not have food, so they would pretend that it was a Walkman[TM]. Thus the current signifier for a small purchase of maize was a macabre joke that outlived the device from which it took its name. In light of the local meaning of food security as having a good *supply* of maize in the home, which is linked to the agricultural experience of having a full granary, the popularity of *walkman* is highly emblematic of the experience of urban food insecurity in Malawi. Even if people are managing to feed their households, they often go to bed wondering how they will eat the next day, or go to bed hungry because they have reserved some food in case of emergency.

When we asked Mr Longwe, whose food budget is illustrated in Table 4-3, whether it was easier to have food in town or in the rural areas, he replied (interview 25): "here in town people eat the food they buy, just small portions, *walkman*. Even if you could go around in the houses you would not find someone keeping three 50 kg bags [of maize] in the house." He then said that they always eat sparingly: "we don't get satisfied; the food is somehow little and everybody knows that we can't eat too much because of this problem." During an interview with a young woman who was responsible for several younger siblings and her own baby, we asked how things were changing in terms of food security in Blantyre. She replied (interview 13): "It is at least better for those who have gardens and cultivate. It is easy for them to find food unlike us who don't have anywhere to cultivate and if we don't find piece work on that particular day then we won't eat." I will discuss the issue of urban food production further in Chapter 7, but for the current discussion the starkness of this statement illustrates the high stakes of survival in Blantyre for households that rely entirely on money for survival.

Mr Tembo, a Catechist in Ndirande, responded to my question of whether he and his wife sit down and prepare a budget when he receives his pay at month end by saying (interview 16): "You budget if you have enough money. However, in a month we spend more than the money we earn and God provides the other money." The idea that God will help to bridge the budget deficit illustrates the precarity of many households in Blantyre for which food security even on a monthly basis is out of reach. As I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, Mr Tembo used to have a good job at a textile mill but was laid off. He had invested in maize cultivation, but the rains failed that year in his home village. His wife had invested in cotton as a cash crop, but the cotton price was too

low to make it profitable. It was clear that their food insecurity was not due to a lack of effort, ingenuity, or ability, but rather it was directly linked to circumstances well beyond their control such as the changing global economy, the Government's mismanagement of the cotton industry, and possibly climate change. The fatalism implied by his comment about God providing the rest is a reasonable response to the "situation of conflict, hope, resistance, ambivalence despair and uncertainty" (Sylvester, 2011: 187) that they and many other low-income households experience in Blantyre. The following section exposes some of the ways in which households respond to these circumstances, for better and for worse, and how gender shapes these responses.

4.4. Bargaining and household budgeting in precarious circumstances

Money management within households is crucial for understanding the link between precarious, insufficient, and inconsistent incomes and household food security. Prudent budgeting, open communication about livelihood strategies, and pooling of resources can mitigate the effect of low and irregular incomes on food security (Kennedy & Peters 1992; Haddad *et al.,* 1997; Quisimbing, 2010). The bargaining approach to understanding intra-household decision-making emphasises the fact that households are composed of individuals whose interests sometimes converge and at other times diverge, and that decisions are made on the basis of bargaining from different power positions (Agarwal, 1997). Gender and generation are the two main characteristics that create different power positions within households. Adult men usually have more control over household assets giving them a greater influence over household decisions, although this varies with time and place, and even within households gender relations are constantly shifting as personal relationships evolve and external circumstances change. The pressure

of daily life in an uncertain economy makes small decisions about when, where, and in what quantities to buy food highly consequential for the wellbeing of household members.

The arrangement in most of the nuclear households of the people I interviewed followed a conventional pattern whereby men make decisions about big purchases like housing and school fees while women make decisions about daily purchases (Haddad *et al.,* 1997). Men who said they were practising *gender* at home often expressed this in terms of *consulting* their wives before making a final decision rather than negotiating as equal partners. Mr Phiri seemed to be practising *gender* when he said that he and his wife work together to decide on purchases for major items such as bags of maize, clothes and furniture, but then he added (interview 36): "we make the decisions together but authority resides in the man." Mr Kadzamira described a similar arrangement when he told me he discussed financial decisions with his wife but in terms of who ultimately made the decision, "It is I, a man. It is a man who takes the active role" (interview 27). He explained that his name is on the utility bills and the rental agreement, such that "it is men who are taken to task when the rentals and bills are not paid." His explanation exposed a very practical way in which the external social convention of recognising the man as the head of household shapes power relations between a man and wife.

The central issue in terms of power dynamics is the idea that men's "fair share" is larger because they are earning the money (Agarwal, 1997; Bouis & Pena, 1997). Mrs Tengani, a self-identified housewife, said that she would decide what relish to buy. When we then asked about other household decisions she said (interview 9): "on other decisions most of the times it is my husband who decides since he is the one who earns money in this home." These comments show that the convention of men dominating in most

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household decisions was related to their higher incomes, and thus inextricable from women's economic dependence within the household and economic disadvantage outside the home.

The implications of men's domination of household decision-making can be different depending on the household, but several empirical studies have noted that when additional resources are put in the hands of women, they are more likely to be used for food and other investments in the welfare of household members (Kennedy & Peters, 1992; Levin *et al.,* 1999; Ruel & Garrett, 2004; Quisimbing, 2010). This observation has been deployed in the design of social protection programmes that direct money to women rather than men in order to increase the likelihood that the funds will be used to increase child nutrition (Miller, Tsoka, & Reichert, 2011). Men's use of money for personal entertainment, especially drinking, is one reason for this phenomenon (Agarwal, 1997; Levin *et al.,* 1999; Bezner Kerr, 2005; Iverson, 2005). Mrs Ngwira had experienced food insecurity due to her husband's drinking before he passed away. Her husband had had a good job in the public sector and they had owned their home, yet his drinking problem made it difficult for her to obtain money from him to buy food. I asked her if she had tried to discuss the food budget with him and she said (interview 37): "I used to do that but I realised that caused a lot of chaos at home, so I decided to stop because we were always ending up in quarrels." She then explained: "When my husband was alive he was drinking and not taking care of his children. He was not supportive enough. Things started changing when I started working because that was when I started buying things in my house." Her experience provides an illustration of how a wife's lack of control over

resources could create household food insecurity even when the husband earned a decent, regular income as a civil servant.

Most women I encountered, like Mrs Ngwira, are involved in earning money for their households whether as a supplement to their husband's income or as sole breadwinners. Because women are *responsible* for feeding their households, the profitability of women's businesses can have an even more profound impact on household food security than other types of income. These benefits are compounded when women work in the food trading business because they have access to food at lower prices when they buy directly from rural areas or wholesale markets (see Chapter 6). They also have the additional resource of knowledge about where food can be found at a lower price. In one of the participative diagramming sessions there were a few women who worked as food traders and discussed where to find the best deals for different foods within the urban and peri-urban areas around Blantyre. When we asked for feedback after the activities were finished, one of the participants who was not a trader said that she had learned a lot about where to buy food and she was grateful to have this knowledge so that she could improve her household's food security.

The food security benefits of working as a trader hinge on a woman's mobility (as I discuss in later chapters) but also on her autonomy in being able to make financial decisions without consulting her husband. Mrs Mwale, who conducted business across Malawi, emphasised this point when she said (interview 8): "I don't bother [asking my husband for permission to buy something]. I am able to make a decision alone, depending on the way I observe things. I just tell my husband that I have done this and this. I have bought this and this." Food prices are highly volatile according to the season and where it

is purchased. For Mrs Mwale, the freedom to move around doing business and to make independent decisions about large food purchases had the dual benefit of increasing income and decreasing the cost of food. Her autonomy to make decisions about how to use that money was also vital for the success of her trading business.

For the most food insecure households, *ad hoc* food purchasing is not a strategy to save money but rather a necessary part of daily survival. Having a steady income can make a household more food secure at the same income level as it allows for monthly planning of basic food purchases at wholesale prices and before the money has a time to disappear. Regularity of income can also allow households to mitigate the effects of predictable fluctuations in maize prices by stocking up during the harvest season. Conversely, households with irregular income sources face a challenge in planning for food security when they do have cash. When I asked Mrs Malenga, whose daughter worked seasonally at Limbe Leaf (see Chapter 5), if she and her adult children discussed a monthly budget, she replied (interview 26): "sometimes we do and most of the times we do not have money to budget for the whole month because most of the children are not working." Mr Mponda, who supported his family by crushing rocks, described how difficult it was to budget on a sporadic income. He said he and his wife would sit down together after he sold a pile of gravel (for about MWK 3,000 or USD 20) to discuss how to use it. He described the process (interview 38):

> It's difficult [to make a budget plan when you do not know when the next money will come in]. So what we do is we add more maize. Taking three-quarters of the money we buy maize. The remaining amount we buy relish for just a day or two days so that at least flour should be inside the house so that I can make *phala* [thin porridge made of maize] if I have no relish or we can go and hunt for some vegetables and eat. Just trying to put food on the table is the challenge.

The constant stress and uncertainty was a common theme of many of the stories about food insecurity among households whose income came entirely from the informal economy and food came entirely from commercial sources. In contrasting urban and rural food insecurity, some people in such precarious circumstances pointed out that at least rural households have some reprieve during the harvest season when food is plentiful, even if it means they are worse off in other times because they cannot find casual work to buy food.

The challenge of feeding a household under such precarious circumstances is compounded for women. In my interviews with divorced and widowed women I asked them how their lives had changed in terms of food security when they lost their husbands. Mrs Mlanga, who was divorced but raising her son in a multi-generational household with her mother and sisters, said that the quality of the food she ate declined after she and her husband separated. She said (interview 22): "the way we used to eat also changed, when my husband was there we were eating well – almost every weekend we were having chicken but now things are not the same." When I posed the question, "how did your life change when your husband died," to Mrs Lamba, a widow taking care of four school-aged children, her reply evoked the increased strain of her responsibilities as a young widow (interview 21): "when my husband was alive things were okay . . . now it is not easy to get enough food." She told me that her husband had been earning a wage and he would pay all of the major expenses such as housing and school fees, give her money twice a month for food, and help her with capital for her business. She said that when her husband was alive her business of selling vegetables was adequate for augmenting the household food supply and for small personal items, but she was suffering because her

business was insufficient to cover all of the household expenses in addition to food. She was constantly worried that she would spend her capital on food for consumption and be unable to afford to buy more goods to sell. This scenario could also force her to take one of her children out of school because of lack of money for school fees.

As the type of formal employment in industrial and public sectors diminishes (see Chapter 5), it is also increasingly difficult for a single male breadwinner to meet all of his financial obligations by drawing on informal sector employment. Such was the case for Mr Nyirenda, a banana seller at Zingwangwa Market, who was living with his school-aged brother and financially supporting his elderly mother and three orphaned nephews in rural Chiradzulu. His household was food insecure because of the financial challenges that emanated from his role as the sole provider for several relatives and the precarity of his banana vending business. When I asked, "where do you get your food," he replied (interview 35):

> After selling these bananas we buy a *walkman* of flour. That is how we eat in town. 1 kg or 0.5 kg of *walkman* does it. After selling I just go down there [in Zingwangwa Market] to buy my *walkman* and some relish such as *utaka* depending on how much money I have earned on that day.

This pattern of variable daily purchases of food was typical of low-income households that relied on purchased food. He said that he had fallen ill the previous year and this had exposed the vulnerability of his livelihood as an independent businessman without a wife to help him in his business. He told me in reference to the question of whether he had experienced hunger in the past year (interview 35):

> When I was coming out of the hospital I was very weak and couldn't do anything. It was also difficult for a friend to lend me enough money for my upkeep. I did not have any money for

buying anything and for three days I was taking medication
without food. I came to the market and borrowed MWK 1,000
(USD 6.67) from my colleagues for my upkeep.

He said that if he had a wife she could have been managing the business for him while he

was sick and the consequences would have been less severe. His experiences highlighted

the problem of households with insufficient labour (regardless of gender) that are overly

reliant on micro-enterprises sustained only through constant work.

Household decision-making in Blantyre takes place within a precarious

environment where even a small mishap can be detrimental to household food security.

The most vulnerable households rely on sporadic and insufficient incomes to purchase

most of their food, such that their entitlement bundles are not only narrow, but also built

on a shaky foundation that can easily give way. Single income earner households have a

difficult task in managing various demands while also working to earn money to support

their households. They can be extremely vulnerable to events such as serious illness that

prevents them from being able to work, leaving no choice but to spend their business

profits on food and start again from scratch. Married men and women face different risks

and opportunities. The intention to practice *gender,* for example in allowing one's wife to

run her own business, is often superficial as men continue to exert their authority when

major decisions are made. In the most extreme cases of unequal power relations between

husbands and wives, husbands divert their resources to their own interests at the expense

of the food security of the rest of the household. In households already relying on daily

profits from a vegetable stall or casual labour to buy *walkman,* a lack of coordinated

effort within the household can have disastrous effects on food security for some

individual household members. The level of income relative to food prices and the

reliability of income sources can have a different effect on food security depending on how the finances are managed.

4.5. Conclusion

Food insecurity in Blantyre is evident in the increasing consumption of *walkman,* which represents the precarity, insufficiency, and inconsistency of incomes and the volatility of food prices. The most insecure households rely entirely on piecework to earn money to purchase enough food for the day. Households with a single income earner, usually but not exclusively a woman, can rapidly become insecure when their income earner is incapacitated. Even households with multiple income earners and steady sources of income, such as Mr Longwe and Mr Tembo, are insecure because the cost of living in town is simply too high relative to wages. Cooperative budgeting can help to mitigate the effects of low incomes, but it is rarely enough to make a substantial difference when the money is simply inadequate. The following chapters trace some of the ways people overcome these arduous circumstances, through entrepreneurialism (Chapter 5), creative solutions to food procurement (Chapter 6), and agriculture (Chapter 7). In all of these examples, the problem of governance rises to the surface. The daily problems described in this chapter are consequences of specific policies and geographies of power that work against the food security needs of the urban poor.

Chapter 5: Gendered geographies of work

5.1. Introduction

The "informal sector" is one of the most frequently discussed topics in the literature on African urban development (Moser, 1978; Stren, 1991; Hansen & Vaa, 2004; Simone 2004a, 2004b; Meagher, 2005, 2010; Potts, 2008). In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of structural adjustment reforms including the liberalisation of imports, the privatisation of state-owned industries, and government cutbacks in civil servants reduced urban formal employment in Malawi and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Jayne & Rubey, 1993; Drakakis-Smith, 1994; Rakodi, 1997). The effects of these changes on urban household food security are evident in the income precarity I described in the previous chapter. The informal sector has become a ubiquitous forum for urban economic activities, and informal vendors, producers and service providers are also customers and suppliers to economic actors in the formal sector (Hanson, 2005a, 2005b; Potts, 2008).

Informality is a broad and often "vague and imprecise" term (Murray & Myers, 2006: 13), especially when it is used to describe diverse geographical categories such as "urban Africa" and multi-faceted phenomena like "structural adjustment." In this chapter, I focus on specific features of formal and informal employment in Blantyre, how they shape gendered access to food, and what they signify within the context of Malawi's political economy. The bifurcated socio-economic geography of Blantyre today is highly reminiscent of the colonial-era landscape in which indigenous Africans were mostly excluded from planned residential areas (Power, 1995; Ross, 1996; McCracken, 1998).

While structural adjustment reforms in the 1980s and 1990s hit urban Malawian households as they did elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Chirwa & Chilowa, 1999), the labour conditions in Blantyre had always been poor relative to other cities (McCracken, 1989). A long view of events shows that the informal sector is well established, especially as a source of livelihoods for urban women dating back to the colonial city (Bettison & Rigby, 1961; Vaughan, 1987; Power, 1995). My postcolonial approach to understanding the link between informality and food security in Blantyre requires that I look beyond the watershed moment of "structural adjustment" and analyse the colonial legacies of an urban landscape designed for socio-economic segregation. The widespread and deeply entrenched pockets of poverty, and neo-patrimonial politics that hinder advancement toward equality and democracy, are legacies of these colonial geographies of disempowerment.

This chapter and the following two chapters will draw in issues of governance, a concept that "points to how effectively government is discharged in terms of attaining the key ideals of equity, accountability, transparency, participation, legitimacy, honesty, fairness, and rule of law" (Tambulasi, 2010: 334). Urban food insecurity is sometimes the consequence of policies that favour the middle class or formal sector investors, while in other cases one can trace its causality to policy *inaction* and the inertia of deeply entrenched urban poverty. Lwanda's (2006) assessment that money, more than ideology or the need to address poverty, has animated Malawian politics since the transition to multipartyism in 1994, is crucial for understanding why the poor have seen little material improvement since the introduction of democratic reforms. At the political economic heart of the problem, according to Lwanda (2006), is a divided society forged through the

divide-and-conquer politics of colonialism. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) consolidated its control over the formal private sector by establishing parastatal companies (such as Press Holdings Limited, see Chapter 6) and nationalising large estates and companies in the name of the people of Malawi. In addition to political violence (Power, 2010), neopatrimonialism kept this system in place and the MCP maintained power as long as it could manage to strategically redistribute resources while suppressing political dissent.

At the transition to a multi-party system in 1994, the formal economy was so dominated by the MCP that the new ruling political class had to come from the parallel informal economy (Lwanda, 2006). By the early 1990s, Muluzi was "one of the biggest independent businessmen outside the Banda/Tembo [MCP] business hegemony" (Lwanda, 2006: 533), with extensive business networks in the domestic informal economy and abroad. He provided a crucial source for the funds needed to provide a patronage network that could rival that of the MCP. As a result, the UDF patronage network was rooted in the informal economy, and this affiliation partly informed their support of the small-scale informal sector, including vendors. Lwanda's (2004, 2006) reading of the re-ordering of the importance of the formal and informal sectors for the neo-patrimonial system shows the potency of the legacies of colonial era political economy. In this light, the UDF's drive to privatise large parastatal enterprises, which had funnelled money into the rival MCP, was as much due to the particular features of Malawi's political economy as to the broader development trend of structural adjustment imposed by international financial bodies. International factors were of course crucial,

but in order to understand how these broad trends played out on the ground it is necessary to focus on the domestic context and responses at the household level.

The first section of this chapter discusses the consequences of retrenchment, seasonal employment, and low wages in the formal sector for some households in Blantyre. The idea of a single income source supporting an entire household is only applicable to a small minority of professionals; the vast majority of households drawing income from formal sector activities rely on multiple strategies to get by. In the second section, I focus on informal enterprises, which are a popular livelihood strategy, especially for women. The viability of this strategy is hindered by domestic responsibilities that compete for women's time and sometimes constrain their mobility. The third section is about Operation *dongosolo,* in which the newly elected DPP Government enforced a ban on street vending in the central business areas of Blantyre and Limbe (and other major cities) in 2006. I draw primarily on newspaper accounts of the events to show that *dongosolo* was an articulation of the DPP's strategy to turn away from the UDF's traditional support base among informal sector traders and appeal to the urban middle class, formal sector entrepreneurs, and foreign investors (as well as a rural smallholder constituency through the fertiliser subsidy programme discussed in Chapter 7). The reasons and consequences of the event are inseparable from the DPP's decision to postpone local elections, thereby undermining the City Assembly's capacity to respond to the daily needs of the urban majority. It undercut their political voice on local issues related to food distribution, production, and access (see Chapters 6 and 7), thus fitting the pattern of Maxwell's (1999) assessment of urban food security as a politically invisible issue in sub-Saharan Africa.

5.2. Structural adjustment, labour casualisation, and urban livelihood insecurity

The labour trend in Blantyre is consistent with the southern African region, where unemployment and underemployment are endemic problems for urban households and people rely on a mix of strategies to meet their basic needs (Hansen & Vaa, 2004; Meagher, 2010; Mosoetsa, 2011). Blantyre has historically had a much smaller industrial work force than other southern African cities (McCracken, 1998), due largely to the lack of investment in colonial infrastructure (Vail, 1977). The large employers that did exist, in transportation and tea and tobacco processing, employed only men and widened the gender gap in urban poverty (Vaughan, 1987; McCracken, 1998). Women's labour in colonial Blantyre was concentrated in the informal sector, with a notable dominance in beer-brewing (Power, 1995). The gender segregation of the workforce was partly responsible for the gendered effects of the 1949 famine in Blantyre, during which food relief was distributed through workplaces and women who did not have close ties to a wage-earning man suffered disproportionally (Vaughan, 1987). At the time of the 1949 famine, the Nyasaland Railway Company employed about 4,800 men and housed most of them and their families in Mpingwe (McCracken, 1998). Today, this type of employment is extremely rare. By comparison, the Mozambican conglomerate that operates Malawi's railways now employs only 1,200 people in three countries (INSITEC, 2012).

The reduction in formal industrial employment in urban Malawi largely took place from 1996-2004 when the Privatisation Commission oversaw the privatisation of about half of Malawi's parastatals, which had employed 500,000 people nationally and accounted for 20% of GDP (van buren & Iheme, 2013). Mr Tembo's experience of being laid off from David Whitehead & Sons (DWS) textile mill in 2002 is representative of

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thousands of other households that lost steady employment during political and economic restructuring (interview 16). DWS was established in 1967 with a co-ownership shared by the Government of Malawi (49%) and Lonrho (51%) (Lonrho sold its shares to the Government of Malawi in 1994). It prospered during the economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s, and in the 1980s it remained operational due to financial support from the MCP Government. In the 1990s, the business was spurred on by a free trade agreement within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In the late 1990s, South Africa filed a complaint that DWS was violating the terms of the trade agreement and funnelling cheap imports into the region through Asia (National Working Group on Trade Policy, 2009; van buren & Iheme, 2013). Exports plummeted and the production at DWS in 2002 was at 3% of its peak in the early 1980s (NWGTP, 2009). It went into receivership in 2002 and its 2,600 employees were laid off. In May 2003, the UDF Government announced that it had sold the company to Mapeto Wholesalers Ltd (Malawi) and Jimtex Private Ltd (India) for MWK 700 million – an amount so low that it was the subject of a court injunction (Chimwala, 2003). This was one of several controversial sales of public assets that took place against the backdrop of rampant corruption in the UDF's second term (Cammack, 2011a).

Mr Tembo explained that he and his former colleagues were still waiting for compensation from the company when we interviewed him in 2010 (interview 16): "I worked for 11 years until the company was closed, it was David Whitehead & Sons. Up to now they haven't fully compensated us, we are just waiting to see what will happen. After it was closed I was just staying, I stopped working." He had to find another way to earn an income, so he went to school for two years to train as a Catechist for his church in

Ndirande. He also started working as a freelance photographer to supplement his income. His wife had been growing cotton in her home village in Balaka (a major cotton producing area) but because of Government mismanagement of the cotton markets she had not been able to sell any of it since 2008. With the setbacks in their cotton production enterprise they decided to grow maize in his home village in 2010, but because of poor rainfall, they had not harvested any maize. He told us that people in the community would often give him food because he helps them through his role as a Catechist. His wife was also growing food in a small garden, although this was limited by the lack of access to water. He said that she also did some vending, although she was constrained in her access to capital to buy goods for resale. This mix of formal and informal, agricultural, commercial, and services-based economic activities, taking place in rural and urban environments, is typical of the complex enterprise of feeding a household in Blantyre following the loss of formal industrial employment.

The successor to DWS, Mapeto (DWSM) Ltd, is typical of the new labour economy in Blantyre as it operates at a low capacity with a highly flexible work force. A combination of out-dated machinery and competition from imported textiles and second-hand clothes on the domestic market makes the domestic textile industry uncompetitive and highly fragile (NWGTP, 2009). Mr Tembo made reference to the new reality for industrial labourers in Blantyre, which plausibly applies to Mapeto (DWSM) Ltd, in response to my question of what difficulties men face in trying to make sure there is food at home, saying (interview 16): "Job scarcity. Most men are struggling. We hear that some people work in companies for three years on the basis of piece work. So the company can fire him any time and it will take him a long time to find another job." The

frustration he expressed at the unfairness of a system in which companies can hire on a casual basis with no job security echoes a global trend of casualisation that is deepening vulnerability for many urban households (Kabeer, 2003; Davis, 2006; Standing, 2011). Reliable labour statistics for Malawi are scarce, but the reduction in membership in the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions from 450,000 in 1995 to 113,000 in 2008 (during a period of rapid population growth) provides an indication of how labour conditions have deteriorated with the privatisation of parastatal companies and the liberalisation of imports (Murison, 2004; Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, 2012). Consistent with the experiences in other African cities (Briggs & Yeboah, 2001; Meagher, 2010; Potts, 2012), these policies have created vulnerability for many working class urban households who have seen a decline in their living standards and now worry about basic necessities.

Tobacco processing has been a resilient industrial employer in Blantyre through the period of economic restructuring but it is seasonal and offers low wages. Tobacco accounted for more than half (55%) of the value of exports from Malawi in 2010 (External Trade, 2012). The Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company employs up to 2,000 employees during the peak processing period after the tobacco has been harvested (Limbe Leaf, 2013). I encountered an employee of Limbe Leaf serendipitously during one of the interviews in Nkolokoti when I noticed an industrial face mask in the yard of Mrs Malenga, an elderly woman who had been born in Blantyre (interview 26). She said the mask belonged to her daughter, Mary, who was working at Limbe Leaf. When I met Mary at a subsequent participative diagramming session I asked her how she felt about working there. She said it was seasonal work, up to a maximum of six months depending on the labour required. When she is working, she leaves her baby with her mother and

starts work at 5:30 am. She would finish her shift at around 6:30 pm and have an hour for lunch during her thirteen-hour shift. The company provided lunch and Mary described the lunches in detail, noting that on Mondays they would have beef and Thursdays chicken. Regular access to meat was a significant benefit of working there, as most households would find it too expensive to consume meat regularly. The pay was below a living wage; she was paid by the amount of tobacco she sorted, up to about MWK 500 (USD 3.33) per day when quotas were met (Table 4-5). Over a twelve-hour shift the hourly rate of pay works out to about USD 0.28. This rate of pay was astonishingly low from my perspective, and yet Mary seemed happy to be working there. A few days later I was discussing issues of employment with a friend who worked in a small mechanic's shop in Ndirande. He said that to have an employer that pays you promptly and reliably would be extremely valuable and he and many others would "praise God" if they could get a job at Limbe Leaf.

The declining quality of formal employment led two men I interviewed to opt in to informal sector work because it was more flexible and remunerative. Mr Moyo in Angela Goveia took advantage of the free carpentry training offered by a local NGO as part of the self-help housing project. He was not only earning money through carpentry, but he had saved money by building his own house. When I asked about his experience moving to Blantyre he told me about his previous job as a clerical worker for a security firm (interview 11):

> It has really been difficult to find employment for a long time. I went to school for four years. I have a certificate in clerical duties. I was lucky initially; I went to Group 4 Securicor with my paper [certificate] and they considered me. I started working but the payment was low. The money I can be making on my own is more than the salary that I waited 30 days to receive. Even the

> guards were getting more than me because they could work
> overtime. So I observed that I should go and do my own things.
> Here [as an independent skilled labourer], within one week I
> make money that is equivalent to what I could get there per month.

It is notable that the clerical job at Securicor had required a certificate and was therefore not an "unskilled" position like the job at Limbe Leaf, and yet the payment was insufficient to support a household. In a similar case, Mr Mponda was earning a living by crushing rocks so I was surprised when he told me that he had previously been a teacher. He told me his story directly in English quoted here verbatim (interview 38):

> I came here to Blantyre joining __ Private School where I was
> paid little amount of money.[26] So I said 'no this is not enough for
> me, my wife is going to die, what can I do?' I bought a saw to
> start my career now, a leveller, a trawl, a plane for wood, not
> everything but some of the tools. I started working and I said 'I
> will not have a necktie on my neck because I will kill my
> children.' I was having a bath every morning, ironing my shirt,
> trouser, while I have nothing in my pocket because a teacher
> needs to be exemplary. So I was not able to buy enough food.
> When I started doing this kind of work, dirty works, I found
> myself buying a plot after eleven months, while when I was
> working with schools even food was a challenge to find.

Mr Mponda said that he would earn MWK 3,000 (USD 20) per seven ton lorry of gravel, which takes him about five days to produce. This works out to about MWK 600 (USD 4) per day (Table 4-5), which is higher than Limbe Leaf's daily rate, but it is highly unpredictable when he will make a sale. These examples suggest that the informal sector is not only a replacement of lost opportunities in formal employment, but it can also be a response to the insufficient pay and working conditions offered by formal sector employers.

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[26] It is notable that he was working at a private school. The private education sector has become highly commercialised since the removal of school fees in the 1990s began to erode the quality of public education (Chimombo, 2005; Kendall, 2007).

5.3. Gendered mobilities and informality

Given that the formal sector offers inadequate employment opportunities, often at less than living wages and increasingly on a casual basis, it is not surprising that many people have turned to small-scale informal enterprises for their livelihoods. Informal enterprises, which Rogerson (1997: 346) defined as "small-scale, mostly family-operated or individual activities that are not legally registered and do not provide their workers with social security or legal protection," provide much of the employment in African cities today (Rakodi, 1997; Levin *et al.,* 1999; Hanson, 2005b; Davis, 2006; Potts, 2008; Meagher, 2010). Such was the case among my interview participants (Appendix B), although vendors were over-represented in my sample because of my focus on food and marketplaces. The third IHS drew from a more representative sample of households in Blantyre and found that 29.2% of households were operating off-farm enterprises, and of these almost three quarters (74.4%) had trading businesses[27] (MNSO, 2012). In this section, I focus on women's challenges in pursuing entrepreneurial activities in the informal sector. My analysis highlights the importance of mobility for a successful enterprise because, as discussed in the previous chapters, mobility is gendered.

The most frequently noted barrier to starting a trading business among the people I interviewed was to find capital to start a business. After finding the capital, it was a constant struggle for many to reserve enough cash to keep the business running and many micro-enterprises went under because the proprietor "ate the capital." This commonly articulated metaphor, which neatly expresses the connection between micro-enterprises and food security, refers to situations in which the profits from a business are insufficient

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[27] The report does not identify food trading separately from other trading businesses.

to sustain a livelihood. The business owner is then forced to use the capital to feed their household rather than reinvesting in more merchandise to sell. The death of the household head sometimes forces surviving household members to eat the capital. Mr Kadzamira was an adult who had lost his parents at a young age and had failed to keep their tuck shop business open after they died. He explained (interview 27): "I was running a hawker (tuck shop) which was mine . . . But I closed it down since I was buying food using the profits I could get. Now, I am just staying." He said a major reason the business failed was because people would frequently buy things on credit and not pay him. They might have been taking advantage of his young age and lack of protection from parents, suggesting a specific way in which orphanhood is connected to food insecurity. Mrs Jere, an elderly widow in Zingwangwa, said that her business closed down soon after her husband died because she could not make enough profit to pay for the children's education and feed the household. She said (interview 33): "As you know, profit margins are very small. We ended up eating the whole capital and that was the end of the grocery." I asked her if she had the desire to start another business, and she told me that she did not have capital and it would be impossible for an older woman to get a loan.[28] She said her friend was doing business selling vegetables at Zingwangwa Market because she had several adult children supporting her and she was living rent-free in her father's house.

In many cases, women who are the sole breadwinners of their households are in the most financially precarious situations because they are less likely to have the kind of support Mrs Jere's friend relied on. Mrs Kachere in Mbayani was living with her school-aged son and when we visited her the first time she was apparently in poor health. When

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[28] No one I spoke to had a micro-credit loan from a development NGO.

we asked her what challenges she was facing in getting enough food, she replied

(interview 2): "I manage to eat here in town because of my business [selling groundnut

flour], so the only challenge is if my business will not work that means I will not be able

to get food." Mrs Kalinga, whose family included an ailing husband and two children,

replied to the same question by saying (interview 3): "The main challenge that I usually

face when it comes to the issue of getting food is when the business is not working

because this business is the only means that I use to get money to buy food." In

households with multiple income earners there is more security because there can be

more diversity of income sources and thus a broader-based livelihood strategy. Mrs

Mlanga was divorced from her husband and living with her elderly mother, her nine-year-

old son, five adult siblings, and three-year-old nephew. Although none of the adults had a

wage income, they were all involved in various income-generating activities and in a

given day someone would have found enough money for food. The additional household

labour offset the insecurity she likely would have experienced if she lived alone with her

son after her divorce.

Mobility is another inter-related "resource" that is fundamental for independent

trading businesses to prosper. Mobility is unequally distributed within society as certain

people have more freedom and ability to move around (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Porter *et

al.,* 2010). The link between gender, mobility and the profitability of micro-enterprises

appeared in the gendered segregation of vendors in the markets; vegetables were usually

sold by women and dried fish by men. When I asked some vendors about why this was

the case, they said it was because to purchase fish for resale one has to travel to

communities near Lake Malawi, which entails an overnight stay because the journey is so

long. This journey was a challenge for women with childcare responsibilities at home as well as for women whose husbands would forbid them from going on long journeys alone. Dried fish is more profitable than vegetables, and hence women's incomes were lower on average because of what they were able to sell. On the other hand, the possibilities for women traders who were able to move freely in conducting their businesses came to light in an interview with an active trader, Mrs Mwale. She said at the beginning of her interview (interview 8):

> Let me tell you, I do business. I like travelling. Do you remember three days ago you phoned me and I said, 'I am not at home, I am far away?' I went to buy some items in town and carry them to other places to re-sell. So when I am there I buy some items and bring them home. If you find me in this house, it is by luck.

Mrs Mwale's children were old enough to fend for themselves if she spent the night away and she told me that her husband would also cook for himself if necessary. Another advantage was that as the wife of a senior ranking police officer her family had been stationed in several Districts giving her contacts all over the country. Taking into account the profits from her business, the money she saved on their food budget by buying directly from farmers on her business trips, and her husband's wage and housing allowance, this household was one of the most food secure that we encountered because it drew on a broad base of resources and both husband and wife were economically active.

Childcare was a key factor curtailing women's mobility to engage in business activities. In speaking with a roadside vendor in Nkolokoti, Mrs Lamba, I found that as a widow responsible for young children she was limited to conducting business close to her home. She was therefore confined to conducting business in the underserviced Khama Market and paying the daily market fee of MWK 50 (USD 0.33) to the City Assembly

(interview 21) (Chapter 6 provides further details on the politics of market management). When I asked why she chose to conduct business at Khama Market (see Figure 6-1), she told me that the first obstacle was money for transport to go to one of the larger markets. Another major factor was that she was a single parent and had to stay close to her children during the day. The household was operating hand-to-mouth such that when she sold something, even a few leaves of *masamba* for MWK 15 (USD 0.10), she would send one of her older children to buy some maize and then start cooking it so they could have lunch. The responsibilities of being a mother and single parent directly compromised the possibilities to expand the profitability of her business. Mrs Chipeta, whose extremely difficult situation I described in Chapter 2, summed up the problem of gender and mobility when she responded to my question of why women find it more difficult to earn money compared to men in town (interview 14): "It is better for men because they are mobile. Where can a woman go?" She was referring to her observation that men are always out of the house so they have business connections and opportunities outside of the home that women do not have. She said that when she needs to make money for food she carries pails of water or sand for construction projects with her baby on her back. This experience brings to life the *literal* burden of childcare that makes income-earning activities more arduous for women.

5.4. "We have become foreigners in our own country:" the proscription of street vending and the politics of urban livelihoods

Food, livelihoods, and space are not only linked by people's movements, but also through the regulation of the use of urban space for commercial purposes. Since the enactment of Operation *dongosolo* in 2006, the main commercial areas of Blantyre and

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Limbe have been off-limits to street vendors. The politics behind street vending reveal an unresolved class tension over who has the right to use public spaces for economic activities, which in turn demonstrates continuity with the colonial city in terms of how the City Assembly, the national Government, and middle to upper class residents imagine their urban landscape. The media discourses surrounding Operation *dongosolo* that I discuss below illustrate that a geographical divide, akin to the racial divide of the colonial city and often tracing the same boundaries, exists today in the socio-economic and cultural differences in the urban population. Now as then, the urban poor are excluded from the "modern" areas of the city, making their livelihoods within the city more precarious and reinforcing the need for economic links to rural areas. The urban poor lack an important component of their political voice because of the DPP Government's postponement of local elections, and because many are aligned with the opposition UDF and therefore positioned out of favour within Malawi's neo-patrimonial political culture.

Some vendors continue to sell in the streets in central Blantyre despite the prohibition. Patience, Rose, and Sarah were sitting on the sidewalk on a side street in central Blantyre selling groundnuts, cucumbers, and fresh cassava when we approached them one day. They said they were taking a break from walking around carrying their wares (and Rose's baby). They had purchased the produce they were selling from a wholesaler in town and each of them would earn about MWK 500 (USD 3.33) profit for the day. The women said that if they were stopped, City Assembly officials would fine them each MWK 1,500 (USD 10) and confiscate their goods. Rose, the eldest of the three women, told us that when this happens her business stops and because she is a single parent, her household has no income until she finds enough capital to resume. The daily

caution these women take to avoid City Assembly officials while vending takes on deep significance in light of the history of urban Malawi as exclusionary space. The cost of housing compels them to live in low-income neighbourhoods, and *dongosolo* was designed to circumscribe their livelihood activities within these neighbourhoods just as their residency was confined to these low-cost housing options.

Operation *dongosolo* took place on Tuesday, April 18, 2006. Similar evictions of street vendors had been previously announced by different levels of government but never executed, so when the eviction date was moved to accommodate Christians wishing to celebrate Easter many thought it would be postponed indefinitely (Namwaza, 2006). The week leading up to *dongosolo* was characterised by police intimidation and belligerent rhetoric from politicians. Mr Chimombo, the secretary general of the Malawi Union for the Informal Sector was quoted on April 12 as saying "we [the vendors] are just spectators in the whole process, Government never consulted us but all we get are intimidatory announcements" (Namwaza, 2006). On April 17, the day before the ban was to take effect, vendors gathered at Kamuzu Stadium and Kristwick Park in Blantyre to hold public prayers to rescind the eviction notice (*Vendors going today,* 2006; Nkawihe, 2006). The police claimed that the protest was illegal and "two Police vehicles stormed the praying crowd throwing teargas onto the crowds" (*Vendors going today*, 2006). At the end of the day, forty vendors had been arrested for unlawful assembly (Nkawihe, 2006a). The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development responded to the chaos and violence by drawing a line in the sand and declaring: "Come April 19, there will be no vendor in the streets. This is not a government of failures, just ring me the day there will be vendors in the streets" (Ng'ambi, 2006).

The enduring impact of *dongosolo* on the livelihoods and sense of place of poor residents of Blantyre was captured in a poignant article about a woman from Ndirande, Mrs Mangani, who was selling boiled potatoes near the Makata Industrial Park a few months after the eviction (Sabola, 2006). She said that the authorities were always harassing her and others like her and "every time they find us they beat us up and confiscate whatever we are selling." Mrs Mangani's testimony exposed the profound absurdity of the post-*dongosolo* city where a woman could be beaten up and intimidated for selling boiled potatoes. The title of the article, *Trading from dark corners,* is more likely to evoke illicit activities, such as prostitution or drug trafficking, rather than lunch. Mrs Mangani stated her feelings about the new situation: "we have become fugitives in our own country. All our freedom of doing business is gone. We are like foreigners" (Sabola, 2006). Mrs Mangani's statement reflects the message she received that people like her are out of place in the "modern city." In re-articulating the duality of formal and informal urban spaces and asserting state dominance over the use of formal spaces, the DPP Government signalled that its development strategy would no longer rely on the informal sector, but rather on growth in the formal economy that relied on greater transparency to promote investment and trade. The state lacked the capacity to reconfigure the country into a legible place to foreign investors, but it demonstrated through *dongosolo* that it could effectively regulate parts of Malawi's cities for the externally-oriented business purposes.

The controversy over *dongosolo* revealed a sharp difference of perspective between classes, which echoes the colonial legacy of racial segregation that reinforced the racial character of socio-economic stratification. In 1897, men of European origin

who owned property in town worth at least one hundred pounds elected Blantyre's first Town Council (McCracken, 1998). Blantyre was by then the commercial centre and transportation node for the settler economy of the Shire Highlands and the Nyasaland Protectorate. Residency in Blantyre was restricted to Europeans and Asians (confined to the crowded Asiatic quarter) (Power, 1993). Black Africans were barred from residing in Blantyre and even their physical presence in the urban space was highly regulated. When the Township Police Force was established in 1899, one of the first laws passed was a curfew on Africans in town from nine p.m. until five a.m. unless they had a note from their employer (McCracken, 1998). There were a few areas of employee housing by the 1940s but still "the vast majority of African urban residents . . . lived in settlements approximating to 'villages' in the surrounding areas" (Vaughan, 1987: 22). After independence, the privileges of urban life only accrued to a small number of urban residents who had access to formal housing and waged employment in government, transportation, or export processing. Then as now, the majority of the population lived in underserviced informal areas.

The editorial columns in the newspapers at the time *dongosolo* was taking place provided insight into the middle-class point of view, which was generally intolerant of street vendors. Some editorial commentaries in the newspapers directly expressed the need for class-based exclusion; they cast vendors as "others" relative to the literate, formally employed, English speaking columnists and commentators who see themselves as the rightful inhabitants of the city. Chingwalu (2006) described the clean streets of the 1980s and contrasted them with the "irritating" and "discomforting" spaces in 2006; he showed his contempt for vendors by arguing that since profits must be so low for these

businesses, they must have been supporting themselves through petty crime. He then

claimed that people who have little choice but to earn their livelihoods in the street

should not be in the city at all. He went so far as to blame urbanisation for the country's

food shortages: "regardless of drought and other natural disasters, the low production [of

food] is a result of people not utilising the land which is available. What are these people

doing in the street instead of going to the villages and produce for their country?" The

Executive Secretary for Malawi Institute of Physical Planners in Lilongwe (Kenan, 2006)

expressed a similar point of view in his editorial when he wrote that Malawi's cities have

been "left to the dogs for the past decade." The discursive effect of this rhetoric is to

dehumanise the vendors, and by extension the urban poor, in a clear echo of racialising

discourses that were essential to the social injustices perpetrated by the colonial regime.

The political expression of this attitude of superiority leads to the spatial *containment* of

the urban poor rather than the confrontation of the political economic structures that

perpetuate and deepen poverty.

  Dongosolo was mainly about a nascent political party (DPP) seeking to

distinguish itself from the former ruling party (UDF) from which it emerged. The

political significance would have been clear to urban Malawians because the urban

informal sector had been crucial to the UDF's patronage system (Lwanda, 2004, 2006;

Cammack, 2011b). Vendors had claimed the right to occupy urban public spaces for their

livelihood activities in part because the 1994 Constitution had guaranteed them the right

to pursue economic activities (Jimu, 2005; Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009). Muluzi, who was

a businessman and the self-professed "Minister of Vendors," encouraged this sense of

entitlement (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009). The close association between the UDF, the

informal economy, and urban street vendors provided the political rationale for the DPP to sacrifice electoral support from urban vendors. *Dongosolo* was consistent with the "developmentalist state" image that the DPP was cultivating in sharp contrast to the UDF's *laissez-faire* approach that was clearly linked to corruption, a famine, and the rapid spread of HIV (Englund & Mapanje, 2002; Devereux & Tiba, 2007; Cammack, 2011a).

While it is foolhardy to speculate what might have happened had there been a timely re-election of City Councillors, it is theoretically sound to link the DPP's strategy of undermining the City Assembly to their ability to regulate the use of urban commercial space from the political centre of the country, favouring national development interests over the interests of residents. This centralised approach mirrored Banda's tight control of public space, which reached an apex with the "Red Star Directive" of the early 1990s (BCA, 2000).[29] The *raison d'etre* of local councillors is that MPs are physically absent from the daily lives of constituents, and are therefore less in tune with day-to-day issues related to food security such as the provisioning of market spaces (Chapter 6) and opportunities for urban agriculture (Chapter 7). Local councillors would be a bridge between neighbourhoods like Ndirande and Zingwangwa and a City Assembly mandated to address such issues. Improvements in local governance are a prerequisite to the reduction of urban food security, insofar as the urban poor would have more influence on governments to address their daily problems (Maxwell, 1999; Parnell & Pieterse, 2010). Progress on urban food security is halted by "contextual challenges" and the example of

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[29] The Red Star Directive stated that upon "an observation from the President of Malawi" a red star would be marked on a building indicating that it would be demolished. This law illustrated that the "look" of the city was at the discretion of the President.

dongosolo draws these challenges into focus in a way that clearly demonstrates the link between urban space, politics, food access and livelihoods.

5.5. Conclusion

The people, activities, and politics that make up the "informal sector" in Blantyre have been a vibrant and vital part of the city since its inception. At different points in history, and for different political and economic reasons, these activities have been geographically separated from formal sector activities, although they have always been interdependent. Chapter 4 demonstrated the precarity of urban livelihoods and the high-stakes game of managing to access food within an insecure context. In this chapter, I have provided more details about how households earn money, and the practical and strategic obstacles they face. The case of Operation *dongosolo* revealed a fundamental political problem for addressing urban food security - a pernicious denial of the urban poor's right of place within the city, especially the "modern" areas of the city that showcase Malawi's "development." The execution of *dongosolo* was feasible in part because of the suspension of local elections and the consequential silencing of the democratic voices of the urban poor on local issues. The spatial regulation of informal enterprises is not in itself inappropriate, but in the context of Malawi's postcolonial politics, the manner in which the eviction took place clearly signified a political turning point toward centralising state control of the economy and of the use of urban space. In following chapters, I document events related to food access and production subsequent to *dongosolo,* which reinforce my political economic reading. In the absence of elected City Councillors, the City Assembly has mismanaged food markets and repressed urban agricultural activities without consulting the people directly affected. Taken together,

these examples show that "informality" in the context of urban food security in Blantyre

is deeply resonant with longstanding socio-economic and political faultlines.

Chapter 6: Gendered geographies of food access

6.1. Spatialising urban food access

Operation *dongosolo* had clear implications for urban livelihoods, but it also told a story about the regulation of *where* food consumption can take place in the city. Many of the street vendors, like Patience, Rose, and Sarah, were providing a convenient and affordable source of food for low-income residents. In this chapter, I draw primarily on observations and participative maps to identify the unique geographical features of Blantyre's food landscape that create locally specific spaces of vulnerability. In some places, it is very inconvenient to access affordable food sources and women are particularly disadvantaged by trade-offs of time or money when deciding where to buy food. Enhanced mobility can provide opportunities to buy food cheaply in rural markets while conducting business or visiting relatives saves money for the household. These examples show the importance of mobility for accessing food, which corresponds to my observation in the previous chapter that mobility is also vital for successful informal enterprises. The politics of informality that I discussed in the previous chapter are also central to this chapter in terms of the lack of planning for food access in Blantyre's low-income neighbourhoods. The few markets that have been constructed by the City Assembly are underserviced, dilapidated, and often unhygienic (with the notable exception of Limbe Market). The "fractured food landscape" is evidence of the gulf between the urban poor and the City Assembly, a symptom of the underlying problem of poor governance.

The analysis of Blantyre's food system from the ground up highlights the vitality of informal systems of food distribution, economic activity, and governance that are the backbone of most households' livelihoods. The range of market types in Blantyre shows a *spectrum* of informality, as opposed to a formal/informal dualism that tends to dominate development thinking (Moser, 1978; Potts, 2008). Households in communities that are disconnected from the central commercial areas sometimes had better access to food, either through their linkages to rural informal markets or through informal markets in their neighbourhoods outside of the purview of the City Assembly. The appropriateness of these food sources to local needs helps to explain the low rates of supermarketisation in Blantyre relative to other cities in southern Africa (Crush & Frayne, 2011b). The low rates of supermarketisation are also a reflection of the extremely low incomes in Malawi relative to other countries, as the food available at Shoprite tends to be extremely expensive relative to local norms.

This chapter is divided into three sections, which examine in turn the types of places where people buy food, the trade-offs they face in deciding where to buy food, and the political geographies that regulate people's food shopping choices. The juxtaposition of place, household strategising, and the political economy of Blantyre's food system helps to reveal the interaction of geography, gender, and politics to produce spaces of vulnerability to food insecurity that do not always correspond to other markers of poverty such as low household income. This chapter demonstrates that physical access to multiple types of food sources can improve food security for low-income households, an observation that establishes the importance of place for understanding urban food security. Poor governance, and the consequential lack of coordinated planning, creates a

high degree of variation among different neighbourhoods in terms of convenient access to affordable food. This variation shows how place of residence intersects with gender (and age, health, income and ability) to produce highly contextual spaces of vulnerability that require closer attention.

6.2. Sources of food in Blantyre

Residents of Blantyre access food at different places with various characteristics that do not easily conform to conventional formal/informal dualism. Table 6-1 provides defining characteristics of the eight types of commercial food sources that I have delineated for heuristic purposes to redress the inadequacy of the informal/formal binary for analysing Blantyre's food landscape. The categories are defined by who owns and manages each source. It is important to emphasise the hybridity of these places; for example "informal" markets offer some processed foods and can be part of complex distribution chains, while supermarkets and formal shops offer some local produce, fish, and eggs. Mbayani Market (Figure 6-1, number 10) is an example of a truly hybrid market in that a bridge divides a "semi-official" (vendors pay daily fee to City Assembly officials) side and an "unofficial" side (vendors pay a similar fee to the traditional authority). In other markets, such as Khama Market in Nkolokoti (Figure 6-1, number 18), small formal shops, informal vendors, and roadside stalls operate in tandem, symbiotically meeting the different needs of local consumers. The typologies outlined in Table 6-1 emanate from the postcolonial impetus to "de-colonise" development geographies by rebuilding theory grounded in places outside the Western world (Blunt & McEwan, 2002; Saunders, 2002; Robinson, 2003; Radcliffe, 2005; Sidaway, 2007). For African urban theory, this intellectual project entails moving beyond Western models of

urbanism, which tend to match with the formal spaces of African cities and crudely

categorise other types of spaces as inferior. In Blantyre, as in cities throughout sub-

Saharan Africa, "traditional authority, religion, and informality are as central to

legitimate urban narratives as the vacillations in modern urban capitalist public policies"

(Parnell & Robinson, 2012: 596). The starting point of this chapter is therefore to

describe the places where people buy food in order to show the richness of the urban food

landscape.

Table 6-1: Types of food sources in Blantyre

	MAP LOCATION (FIGURE 6-1)	OWNERSHIP	COST	FOOD COMMONLY PURCHASED
Supermarkets & formal shops	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Shoprite & Metro - South African corporation; Game - subsidiary of Walmart; Sani C & C - domestic private; PTC - domestic corporate	Expensive; Cash & Carry (Metro & Sani) offer bulk quantities for lower prices	Dry goods, processed foods, many imported items, meat, bread, consumer goods (soap)
Official markets	6,7,8	Operated by Blantyre City Assembly & vendors' committee; independent vendors renting stalls & others selling for wholesalers	Moderate; best prices on market days	Local seasonal produce, dried goods (rice, beans), imported items, meat & fish
Semi-official markets	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20	Same as above; less oversight and investment in infrastructures	Variable (e.g., Kambe said to be more expensive than Zingwangwa)	Local seasonal produce, dried goods (rice, beans), imported items, meat and fish
Unofficial markets	14, 15, 16, 17, 19	Independent, owned by vendors or rented, small	Variable (depending on the market, the	Local (seasonal) produce, dried goods, dried fish,

	MAP LOCATION (FIGURE 6-1)	OWNERSHIP	COST	FOOD COMMONLY PURCHASED
		fee sometimes paid to traditional authority	quality of the food, bartering skill, relationship to vendor)	meat, live chickens, eggs, *thobwa*
Neighbourhood kiosks (tuck shops) & roadside stalls	Throughout the residential areas	Independent, owned by vendors or rented	More expensive than markets	Variety of groceries, fresh produce on the roadside
Door-to-door vendors	Throughout the residential areas	Independent, often from rural areas	More expensive than markets	Leafy vegetables, onions, tomatoes, fish
Rural markets		Farmers, rural traders	Less expensive than sources in town	Local seasonal produce, maize, dried fish, seasonal availability
ADMARC		Parastatal	Mandated to even out the cost of maize in the hungry season	Maize

Figure 6-1: Aerial view of central Blantyre showing the location of participative diagramming and selected food sources located within the city (base map Google Earth, adapted by the author)

Supermarkets & Formal Shops	Official Markets	Unofficial Markets		
1. Metro Cash & Carry	6. Blantyre Market	9. Chemussa Market	14. Zion Market	19. Makhakha Market
2. Chichiri Mall (Shoprite & Game)	7. Limbe Market	10. Mbayani Market	15. Quarry Market	20. Bangwe Market
3. Limbe CBD Shops	8. Ndirande Market	11. Zingwangwa Market	16. Manje Market	
4. Chitawira Road Shops		12. Kambe Market	17. Makata Market	
5. Sani Cash & Carry		13. Chilobwe Market	18. Khama Market	

Of the eight categories identified in Table 6-1, only two (supermarkets & formal shops and ADMARC) are "formal" sources (Table 6-1). ADMARC, the parastatal maize marketing board, only operates to stabilise prices at times of the year when food is scarce. Its mandate has been substantially reduced in recent decades as part of the broader process of divestiture of state assets (Jayne *et al.,* 2010). There are different types of supermarkets and formal shops interspersed in the city, but only a handful conform to the variety of food selection, regularity of supply, and wide-reaching supply chains that

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typify Western supermarkets. Shoprite and Game stores at Chichiri Mall (Figure 6-1, number 2) have a wide variety of imported foods, accept international credit cards, and offer brightly lit air-conditioned shopping environments. The older supermarkets in the downtown cores of Blantyre and Limbe, such as People's, Metro Cash & Carry, and McConnell's offer less variety but generally at lower prices. Metro and Sani Cash & Carry (Figure 6-1, numbers 1 & 5) sell food in bulk at wholesale prices. In addition to these large stores, many areas, especially formal housing areas, have smaller People's outlets or other chains such as Iponga and Chipiku. We noted also that British Petroleum filling stations sold groceries at high prices to cater to the automobile-owning middle and upper class consumers. The prices here were often higher even than at Shoprite and Game stores.

The remaining six categories in Table 6-1 are informal to varying degrees. The "official markets" were built with public funds (see 6.4) and are managed by the City Assembly. The 2000 comprehensive city plan (BCA, 2000: 87) names Blantyre, Limbe, and Ndirande Markets as the three major markets. They are informal in the sense that the vendors rent the space from the City Assembly and most source their food through informal networks. The semi-official markets have some oversight from the City Assembly, to the extent that vendors pay fees to the City Assembly officials who come to collect every morning, but there are widely different levels of infrastructure investment at the different markets. At Chemussa Market (Figure 6-1, number 9), for example, there were toilet and piped water facilities that were not functioning. There was also a dumpster for refuse that, according to some vendors, was rarely emptied. Some vendors did not have a space to operate within the market so they set their wares out on a blanket

on the ground outside the market, and yet they were also required to pay the daily vending fee.

Unofficial markets were located in areas controlled by traditional authorities, and hence the vendors were not subject to the City Assembly's vending fees. When we visited Quarry Market (Figure 6-1, number 15), we asked one of the vendors if she paid the daily vending fee to the City Assembly. She said she could only remember once years prior when someone came to collect the fee. The prevalence of these unofficial markets, whose popularity was evident in participative mapping sessions (see below), served to illustrate how different the urban geography appeared depending on where someone lived, their level of income, and which markets they were oriented to. These markets were not featured on maps, were off the passable roads and thus practically invisible to me as a visitor travelling by car through the city, until people told me about them. As a visitor with a Western bias about urban space, I was also surprised by the importance of rural informal markets as a source of food for urban households. Participants in six out of eight sessions listed rural informal markets as places where they obtained food. Moreover, in certain circumstances people were *regularly* obtaining food at these markets, for example if they were informal vendors or if they frequently visited their rural relatives (the cost of tranportation and other considerations are discussed in 6.3).

The ubiquity of informal markets of different types, sizes, and variety of foods available, helps to explain the near-universal patronage of informal markets among Blantyre households in the AFSUN survey (Crush & Frayne, 2011b). Almost every household (97%) had sourced food from an informal market in the previous week, and a vast majority (80%) said they normally patronised informal food sources "frequently" (at

least five days per week). This rate was much higher than the regional average of about a third (32%) patronising informal sources "frequently." Conversely, the proportion of households in Blantyre that patronised supermarkets was extremely low relative to the regional average. Whereas 28% of households in Blantyre had purchased food at a supermarket in the previous week, the figure for the entire sample was 54%. Almost half of surveyed households in Blantyre (48%) said they "never" purchase food at supermarkets, much higher than the 22% for the entire sample (Crush & Frayne, 2011b). These findings suggested that Blantyre has an exceptionally robust informal food system, and that supermarketisation is not directly shaping where most low-income households obtain their food. The diversity of types of informal sources identified in Table 6-1 helps to explain why the "informal markets" category in the AFSUN survey pointed to a comprehensive set of food sources for households in Blantyre rather than a single type of marketplace.

6.3. Navigating the food landscape

The participative mapping sessions illustrated the importance of place and mobility for accessing food in Blantyre. As I discussed previously in terms of livelihoods and domestic work, mobility is gendered (Cresswell & Uteng, 2008; Porter *et al.,* 2010; Porter, 2011; Uteng, 2011). The effects of this gendered mobility on food access are influenced by where a household is located in relation to different types of markets. Some neighbourhoods had excellent opportunities to buy desirable and affordable food nearby, whereas in other places it was costly in terms of time and energy to access affordable food. There was no evident pattern that could predict the geographical relationship between place and food access. The cost of housing in different places, the length of

residency, proximity to transportation networks, and emplacement in traditional or formal areas seemed to influence which places offered better opportunities to access affordable food, but none were determining factors. In this section, I will focus on the different geographies of food access that emerged from the participative mapping sessions in order to demonstrate the overall importance of place and mobility for food access. Each of the participative mapping sessions demonstrated a different set of benefits and challenges in terms of accessing food and the following analysis provides a grounded perspective on where people were accessing food and why they chose these sources.

Figure 6-2: Diagrammatic representation of where people were sourcing food; participative diagramming session 1, Naperi, Soche East Ward, July 9, 2010
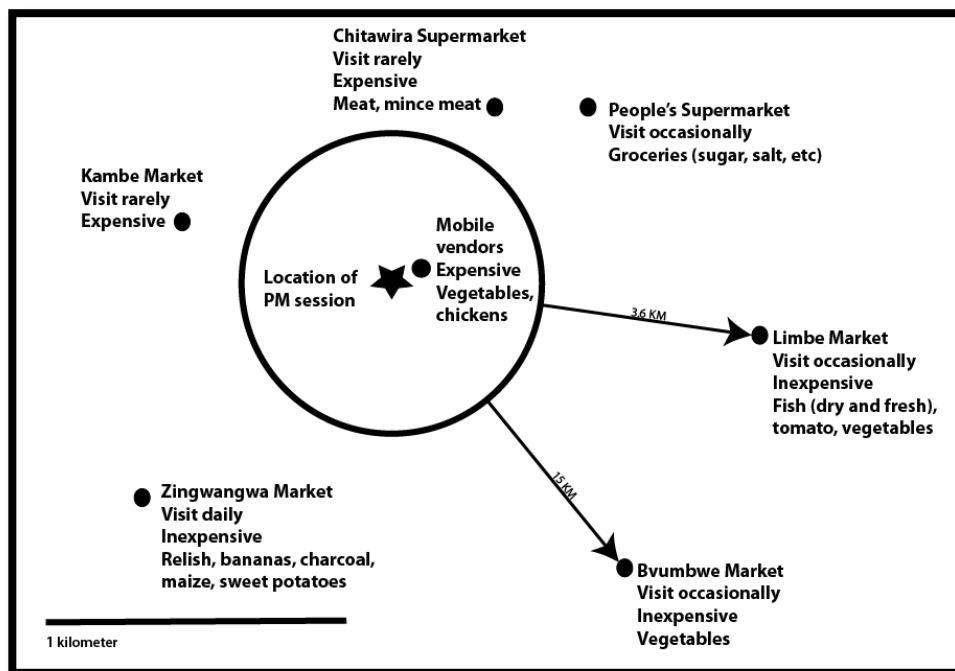
Our first participative mapping session took place in Naperi, a formal housing area located near Chichiri Mall and Blantyre's central business district (indicated on Figure 6-1 as "PD1"). Figure 6-2 provides a schematic representation of their "food map." The star represents where the session took place, roughly approximating where the

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participants lived (we conducted all of the sessions with neighbours). The circle represents a 500-metre radius of their homes. Beyond that, the points without arrows are at a scaled distance from the star and those outside of the frame of the map have arrows indicating the distance from "home" to these places. Thus on Figure 6-2, "Chitawira Supermarket" is less than a kilometre away, whereas Bvumbwe Market is about 15 kilometres away.

Three women participated in the session in Naperi and they told us that they normally bought their food from Zingwangwa Market, about one kilometre away. Kamba Market was much closer, but they said it was more expensive. They said they patronised the supermarkets on Chitawira Road, such as Iponga and PTC, especially to buy mincemeat, although this occurs "very rarely." They said the best place to buy food was at Limbe Market on a market day (Monday, Wednesday or Friday), but that this requires paying for a minibus so it was not always possible to go. As they were quite close to Chichiri Mall, I asked if they ever bought food at Shoprite and they said it was far too expensive for them. One of the participants said that she usually buys food at Bvumbwe Marketbecause her home village is there and she visits weekly. She said she also produced food there, which was easy to do because it was so close (see Chapter 7). Another woman said that she used to produce food at her home village in Ntcheu but she had stopped because it was too expensive to transport her food. Throughout the discussion, these women emphasised the trade-offs between distance, cost, time, and food quality. I had expected that living in a formal housing area would have made them more likely to use formal food sources, but Zingwangwa Market, their daily source for food, is a "semi-official" market in a former THA. Moreover, the patronage of rural Bvumbwe

Market 15 kilometres away showed that physical accessibility was less important than the *economic* accessibility of food. The popularity of travelling to save money on food purchases emerged as a common thread among the participative mapping sessions.

The second participative mapping session, which took place in Nkolokoti, showed even more dramatically the importance of rural informal markets for urban household food provisioning. The group of six women named informal markets and small shops within metres of their homes for daily purchases and several rural markets where they would infrequently (about once per year) go to buy foods that they could store, such as maize, beans, groundnuts, dried fish, and rice. The fourth session, with five women, also took place in Nkolokoti. These women painted a similar picture whereby daily purchases of vegetables, tomatoes, meat, and oil were made at informal markets and small shops close to home and durable items such as maize, groundnuts, sorghum, millet, rice, and sweet potatoes were purchased in less frequent trips (about once per month) to rural informal markets. They said that they would buy food at Limbe Market about once per month when they happened to be there, but usually they go to Limbe Market to buy clothes and not food. The purchasing habits of the Nkolokoti groups were the most integrated with rural food systems, perhaps because this area has only recently been urbanised (in spite of its close proximity to central Limbe). Many households here have access to customary land for farming (Chapter 7). Households with free access to farmland spend less money on food, and hence there is less need to invest time and money going to the large markets for everyday consumables. Another factor may lie in their traditional outlook on food consumption; for example, in the second session an elderly woman showed us some of her smoked vegetables. She said that by smoking

vegetables in the time of year when they are plentiful, they were preserved for several

months.

Figure 6-3: Diagrammatic representation of where people were sourcing food; participative diagramming session 3, Ndirande, Ndirande North Ward, July 14, 2010
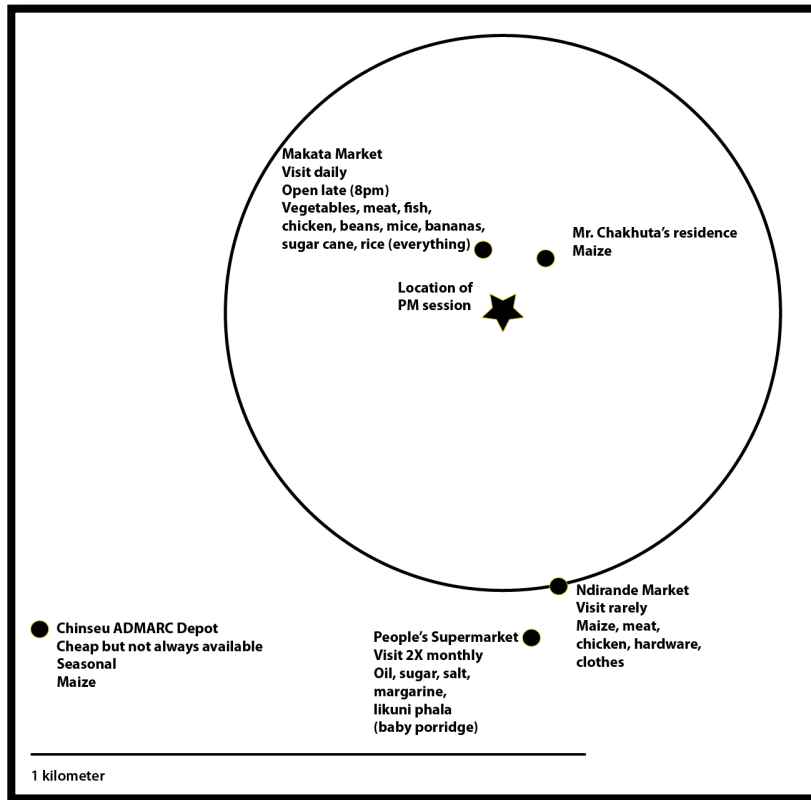
The third session took place in Ndirande and included four women and one man (Figure 6-3). They all said that they received food from their home villages, such as maize and groundnuts. One woman said her home village is in nearby Thyolo District and she visits once per month and takes back avocadoes, bananas, cassava, sugar cane, and maize. They said that approximately twice per month they would go to the small People's supermarket in Ndirande to purchase oil, sugar, salt, margarine, or baby porridge (*likuni phala*). In terms of daily food purchases, the most popular place was Makata Market, which was just metres away from where the participative mapping session took

place. They emphasised the convenience of this market, where they could buy just about any food they wanted at a good price. They also noted that it was open late, which meant that if a visitor showed up unannounced it was easy to just go there and buy something quickly. Makata Market is "unofficial" and yet it was far more popular than the official Ndirande Market (also very close by). The participants said they rarely go there to buy food, except perhaps if they happen to be shopping for clothes or hardware. The women noted that they saved money and time buying their food at Makata Market, and they were very happy to have this food source close to their homes. They did not need to go to rural informal markets to access affordable food because it was so convenient to buy it at Makata Market.

In Angela Goveia, seven women participated in the participative mapping session (Figure 6-4). Angela Goveia was the site of a recent sites-and-service scheme by the NGO CCODE (UNHABITAT, 2010a). The people living here joined a group savings programme that paid for the site development, and upon being granted a serviced site they constructed their own homes. They said that it was of significant benefit to be within 50 minutes' walk to Limbe Market where they could buy high quality food at low prices. The proximity to Limbe Market, as well as other closer unofficial markets including Quarry and Manja, made life easy relative to the neighbourhoods where they had lived before joining the CCODE housing scheme. They said they would go to Limbe Market about once per week on a market day and while there they would also go to the shops such as Shoprite U-Save and Metro Cash & Carry to buy dry goods and some groceries. Daily provisioning would be at Quarry Market, the unofficial market on the slopes of Mount Soche only about 15 minutes walk from their neighbourhood. The group in this

session seemed to draw on the most eclectic set of food sources, including all types of

formal and informal commercial sources except for ADMARC.

Figure 6-4: Diagrammatic representation of where people were sourcing food; participative diagramming session 5, Angela Goveia, Limbe West Ward, July 21, 2010
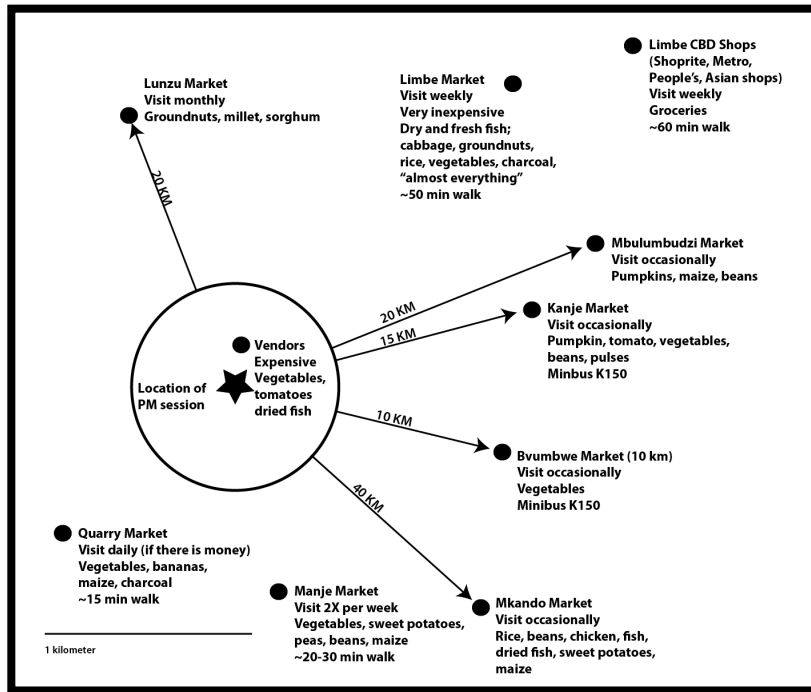
The session in Chemussa was interesting because it included a mix of women

who engaged in food trading and women who did not (they were five altogether). The

women who were doing business said that they would go to Bvumbwe to buy food to sell,

but that they would not consume this food at home. They had extensive knowledge of

when and where to buy what kinds of food in town; for example, the best place to buy

Irish potatoes was at Blantyre Market, and the women who were not vendors said they

were happy to learn about these lower prices from the other participants. Some said that

at month end when their husbands received their pay cheques they would pay the MWK

100 (USD 0.66) (return) minibus fare to go to Metro Cash & Carry in central Blantyre to

buy groceries. Generally, they would shop at Chemussa Market nearby because they

could be assured of good prices from their regular vendors. There was another market about 20 minutes' walk away known as "Hunger Market" (*Msika wa Njala*) where food could be purchased very cheaply. The savings were a trade-off with the relative inconvenience of getting there and the lower quality of the food.

Figure 6-5: Diagrammatic representation of where people were sourcing food; participative diagramming session 8, Misesa Village, Soche West Ward, August 7, 2010
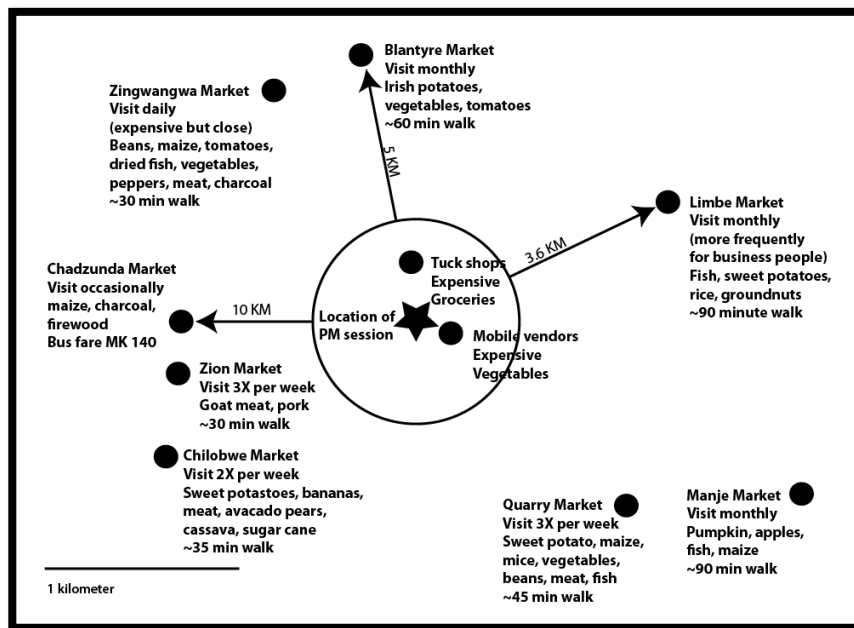
The final two sessions were in Soche West Ward. One was near Quarry Market so the four women who participated said that they did most of their daily purchases there. They were also involved in businesses so they visited rural markets multiple times per week to purchase food to sell, and they would also buy food cheaply at these markets for their home consumption. One woman said that she could travel to Mkando Market in Mulanje District 50 km away and pay MWK 360 in bus fare. The other group, in Misesa Village, said that they could not afford to go to rural markets to buy food cheaply because they were not doing business (Figure 6-5). They said that they could not afford the bus fare, nor could they afford to spend the time away from their income-generating activities

(one was making decorative crafts for sale, one was breaking rocks). This group was probably the most food insecure of the participative mapping groups, largely because of where they were situated high on the slopes of Mount Soche. The group said that it was a good place to live because the housing was very cheap and there was access to clean water from the mountain, but that the trade-off was that it was difficult to access markets. Quarry Market and Zingwangwa Market were the easiest to get to, although both of these involved steep hills and narrow paths. They said that often it was too difficult to go to the market so they would spend more money buying relatively expensive food at nearby tuck shops. Most of the people in the group had irregular income streams, which meant that food was purchased on an *ad hoc* basis and it was difficult to plan ahead for large purchases that would warrant long walks to Limbe or Blantyre Markets.

The participative mapping sessions showed clearly that geography matters for urban food security. There are many ways to access more affordable food, and hence reduce vulnerability, if one is mobile. The benefits of mobility for household food security are more closely associated with women's mobility than men's because it is normally women who go to buy food. Women who were engaged in trading had the opportunity to buy food cheaply on market days, in rural markets, and in bulk, which compounded the food security benefits of their livelihood activity. These women usually had a husband who could provide them with start-up capital, and other household members who could take on household responsibilities in their absence. By contrast, households living hand to mouth and single parent households miss opportunities to shore up their food supplies since they have less time and less mobility for shopping (see Chapter 3). The following section examines the political context of the evolution of

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Blantyre's food landscape, which helps to link the daily challenges and opportunities of food procurement to the political economy of urban food security. The political economic analysis offers key insights into why food distribution and access are highly politicised in Blantyre, as it reflects the same kinds of tensions - between formal and informal, lower and middle class, and state and citizen - that were evident in my analysis of Operation *dongosolo.*

6.4. Postcolonial reading of a fractured food landscape

The preceding accounts of where people were accessing food illustrated that geographies of poverty, socio-economic inequality, and food insecurity were not aligned in Blantyre. Some low-income households had adequate access to affordable food that mitigated the effects of their small cash incomes, whereas in other areas it took excessive time and energy to find affordable food. These geographic intricacies are deeply embedded in the political economy of Blantyre, making it extremely challenging to delineate the problem of urban food insecurity from the entrenched geographies of inequality, which in turn are held in place by the neo-patrimonial system that is animated by the formal/informal dialectic (Lwanda, 2006). Fundamental to the question of how to improve urban food security is an assessment of who is building cities, and whose needs are prioritised in urban design (Maxwell, 1999; Battersby, 2012). The original designs of many African cities, including Blantyre, were intended to facilitate colonial political economies and not the daily needs of the urban poor (Iliffe, 1987; Myers, 2003). The devolution process that began in the 1990s promised to put more control over local issues, such as the construction and maintenance of markets, in the hands of elected City Councillors who would represent the interests of the urban majority (Chiweza, 2007;

Tambulasi, 2010; Cammack, 2011b). Maxwell (1999; 1940) was sceptical about the potential for devolution to lead to improved urban food security in African cities, stating that: "even with the devolution of political authority from central to local government, questions remain about the access of the urban poor to local political processes." His concern was warranted in the case of Malawi where party politics have side-lined devolution and local governance is a realm of disjointed institutions, including the Ministry of Local Government, a purely bureaucratic City Assembly, traditional authorities, and other informal leaders (religious leaders, community-based organisations) (Cammack *et al.,* 2009; Tambulasi, 2010).

In the absence of leadership on local issues affecting urban residents, private interests have made the most significant investments in the urban food landscape by constructing new supermarkets that do not serve the needs of Blantyre's low-income households. The literature on urban food systems in cities of the Global South frequently refers to the process of supermarketisation by which urban consumers are increasingly supplied through global food supply networks by way of large supermarkets (Drakakis-Smith, 1991; Crush & Frayne, 2011b). Supermarketisation is associated with globalisation, specifically the globalisation of food marketing and distribution, the spreading dependence on industrially produced food, and the commodification of food in the Global South (Weis, 2007; Clapp, 2009; Koc *et al.,* 2012). The supermarkets in Blantyre have made only a superficial impact on the shopping habits of most residents, suggesting that supermarkets such as Shoprite (a South African chain) and Game (a department store offering a variety of foodstuffs that was acquired by Walmart in 2011) are directly shaping the food sourcing only of relatively wealthy households and

expatriates. As stated above, the results of the AFSUN survey suggested a lack of penetration of supermarkets into the daily lives of Blantyre residents relative to low-income households in other cities in southern Africa (Crush & Frayne, 2011b).

Mr Silo was the only person I interviewed or encountered during participative diagramming who said that members of his household go to Shoprite on a regular basis (interview 12). His household had an unusually high income; he reported that his salary as an accountant combined with his wife's salary as a nurse supervisor earned them a monthly household income of MWK 500,000 (USD 3,333) (Table 4-5). The ease with which Mr Silo's household pays for groceries was evident when he said (interview 12):

> We buy food straight from the shops. To me it's not even a
> struggle . . . I have my ATM card and my wife has got her own
> ATM card, but if she wants to use my ATM card she just goes,
> draws money, if she wants to buy something at Shoprite, she is
> the one who is at the shops and buys meat. And all she does is tell
> me I used your card, withdrew 20,000 [USD 133, the maximum
> allowed per ATM withdrawal], and this is the meat.

I expected this response from middle class households, so I was surprised when Mr Kondwani said that that he and his wife rarely buy food from Shoprite, only when there is a sale (interview 29). He lived in Soche East and owned a small web design company while his wife worked full time in a bank. They had a comfortable income, a car, and no children to feed, yet rather than shop at the supermarket they sent their domestic worker to nearby Zingwangwa Market to buy most of their food. Other relatively well-off households with reliable income from the formal sector used their economic advantage to invest in farming rather than buying more expensive food at supermarkets, although they would source basic grocery items like sugar, oil, tea and salt from supermarkets.

The impression from my interviews, observations, and participative mapping was that international chains such as Shoprite and Game cater to the small group of middle

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class consumers who have benefitted from recent economic growth and these food sources are well beyond the means of most residents. Shoprite, which opened in 2001 at Chichiri Mall, is based in South Africa and has been aggressively expanding throughout Africa since the 1990s (Shoprite, 2012). The company claims to strengthen local markets through investments in local food supply chains, yet a recent study found that the vast majority of Shoprite's supply chains in southern Africa are connected through South Africa's industrialised agricultural system (Bench Marks Foundation, 2009). This business model is predicated on standardisation of food, uniformity of retail spaces, and reliability of transportation and communication infrastructures. The physical presence of Shoprite in Blantyre evokes its otherworldliness relative to the nearby informal settlements; it appears as a fortress of the global food system protected from the informal city by a busy road, a wall, and a parking lot. In her study of Shoprite in Lusaka, Miller (2005: 132) tapped in to the architectural symbolism of Shoprite when one employee said, "I see Shoprite as a powerful company . . . even the way their buildings are, the way they display their merchandise." Rather than bringing economic development to Blantyre, Shoprite provides a symbol of the vast socio-economic inequality of the region. It also reproduces gender inequality in that low-paid cashier jobs are overwhelmingly given to women and managers are overwhelmingly likely to be men (Miller, 2005; BMF, 2009). Even those fortunate enough to have a steady job at Shoprite are unlikely to do much of their grocery shopping there because it is so expensive relative to local markets.

Shoprite and Game are a conspicuously affluent food sources in Blantyre, but there are many other types of formal shops with a long history in the city that do not evoke the same sense of affluence. The commercial landscape in colonial Blantyre was

largely a competition between traders of European and Asian origin (Power, 1993).

Africans were forbidden from entering European-owned shops and forced to make

transactions *pa window* (through the window), but Asian traders did not uphold this

custom and encouraged African customers to enter their shops (Power, 1993). In the

sense that these traders were coming from outside of Malawi and were highly connected

to global capitalism as it then existed, there is an identifiable continuity in the global

character of Blantyre's formal commercial sector. There is also continuity in the way that

the marginalised classes were separated from these spaces of consumption. According to

my interview with Mr Banda, who moved to Blantyre in the 1950s from his village in

Zomba District, at that time most people would go to villages around Blantyre to buy

food. I asked him about how people accessed food in the past and he said (interview 31):

> In the past we used to buy . . . because in the past we were not
> many [Africans in Blantyre] and most people used to travel to
> Chileka, travel to their homes to bring food into Blantyre. Now
> we are able to find food in Blantyre more easily than in the past.

Urban-rural linkages in contemporary Malawi should be analysed in light of this

longstanding trend of informal trade between rural and urban areas when urban Africans

were often very explicitly marginalised from accessing food from formal sources in town.

Food distribution changed radically after independence when the Malawi

Congress Party (MCP) banned Asian traders from small commercial centres and confined

their activities to the major cities (Patel, 2007). The parastatal People's Trading Company

(PTC) was launched in 1973 to address the need for food distribution throughout the

country in the absence of Asian traders. The PTC was a division of Press Holdings

Limited (PHL), which was owned by president Banda, ostensibly in the name of the

people of Malawi (van Donge, 2002). During this period, vending was strongly

suppressed and the formal shops in town run by European-owned chains (such as

McConnells) and Asian traders did not service the needs of low-income urban Africans. I

asked Mr Banda, "At that time, if you were in town and ran out of food and wanted to

buy something, would you buy in PTC or McConnell?" He replied (interview 31):

> I don't think there was food available, only rice but not maize
> flour in the PTC. Maybe this time they are keeping flour. But rice,
> bread, and sugar - we used to buy in PTC and Kandodo.[30] There
> was Limbe Trading Company, McConnell. Any time we wanted
> maize we used to travel to Lunzu or Mpemba.

Mr Banda's recollection that these formal shops did not sell maize flour shows that the

formal food outlets have long been catering to elites rather than the tastes of low-income

Malawians. In both the colonial period and the post-colonial period under single party

rule, these outlets have been associated with a top-down approach to food distribution for

processed and imported foods, with popular consumption taking place in the ubiquitous

informal sector.

The transition to multipartyism in 1994 was accompanied by the liberalisation of

commercial activity in many sectors, including street vending (see Chapter 5). The

popularity of informal vending and its political significance under the UDF Government

led to the construction of flea markets in 2002 in Malawi's three largest cities. These

projects were not mandated by the City Assemblies, but rather through an outlay of

charitable funds from the Press Trust. The Press Trust was established to redirect the

wealth amassed by the Press Corporation (in the name of the people of Malawi) from the

MCP towards projects for the public good (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009; Press Trust,

2008). The markets were presented as a gift from the UDF Government to the vendors of

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[30] A chain of shops operated by the London & Blantyre Supply Company from the 1920s until taken over
by PHL in the 1970s and finally closed in the 1990s (Kalinga 2012)

Malawi, who were key supporters of the government (Jimu, 2005). The markets were constructed in the peripheries of the main commercial centres of Blantyre, Lilongwe, and Zomba (and later Mzuzu). The design was set apart from the street life and few vendors chose to relocate to the markets because of a lack of customers (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2009). Vendors' objections to Operation *dongosolo* were partly based on the inadequacy of these markets in terms of space, physical accessibility, and sanitation services (Nkawihe, 2006b; Phiri, 2006; *Vendors desert streets,* 2006). One leader of the vendors' association said at the time that these markets were places "where no sane person would know their existence" (*Vendors going today,* 2006).

The politics behind the construction and forced occupation of flea markets helps to explain why vendors and customers underutilised one of the flea markets, Ndirande Market. When we initially visited Ndirande Market, we found the vast sales counters inside were nearly empty, while the periphery was buzzing with vendors in self-constructed stalls. As I discussed above, the participative mapping group in Ndirande said they rarely bought food at Ndirande Market, even though it is only half a kilometre away. A fire had destroyed the market in 2008 and the question of who would pay to rebuild it sparked a political controversy (Cammack & Kanyongolo, 2010; Cammack, 2011b). Cammack (2011b: 48) wrote: "In other markets, where there were fires in the same period reconstruction efforts were handled by vendors and local officials. But in Ndirande rebuilding was politicised because Ndirande is 'the political bedroom of the UDF'." Because it occurred just prior to the 2009 national elections, a series of politicians pledged money for rebuilding the market. When the City Assembly mishandled the funds, the vendors blamed the DPP Government and set fire to the local

DPP office. This led to Mutharika claiming that, in retribution, the DPP Government

would not be paying for the reconstruction. The vendors were soon divided between a

committee that supported the ruling DPP and a committee that supported the UDF. It is

highly plausible given these circumstances that the choice of not occupying the market

and not shopping there was a silent protest against the DPP's handling of the

reconstruction. Given the City Assembly's lack of democratic accountability, boycotting

the market would have been one of the few ways to express opposition to Government

policies.

The lack of leadership, resources, and democratic accountability at the City

Assembly contribute to the lack of organisation and improvement of markets in Blantyre,

which in turn influences where vulnerability exists. I interviewed a vendor at

Zingwangwa Market, Mr Phiri, who claimed to be the acting chair of the vendors'

association. I asked him about his experiences dealing with the City Assembly on behalf

of the vendors and he illustrated their frustration by relaying a story about their efforts to

coordinate the building of a fence (interview 36):

> Discussions are under way between us and City Assembly
> officials to build a fence around the market. We have been asking
> for this for a long time now. As a result, we [vendors] have split
> opinions; some are selling illegally alongside the road while some
> are up here, and in turn the City Assembly is unable to collect
> enough revenue [through the daily fees] which they are supposed
> to get from us. We vendors are also at loggerheads since some are
> selling outside and hence our potential customers buy from them
> and do not get to us. Right now the City Assembly has dissolved
> the vendors' committee so that we should elect a new one in an
> endeavour to find ways of bringing development to this market.

The procrastination on the part of the City Assembly on the construction of a fence is

evidence of the "paralysis of policy-making at the local government level" (Tambulasi,

2010: 340). The split between vendors who remained in the market and those who abandoned it to illegally conduct business outside makes it increasingly difficult to make progress on the development of a safe, secure, and hygienic market that serves the needs of the local community.

In some areas traditional authorities (Chiefs, Village Headmen, Group Village Headmen) compensate for the weakness of formal governing institutions. Traditional authorities continue to exert *de facto* control over many aspects of people's lives in the former THAs and other 'informal' areas of the city (Chome & McCall, 2005; Cammack *et al.*, 2009; UNHABITAT, 2011) even though all legal jurisdictions were removed from traditional authorities within the city limits by the Chief's Act of 1981 (BCA, 2000; Cammack *et al.*, 2009). The role of 'town chiefs' and overlapping informal urban governing structures in Blantyre has many implications for urban food security (particularly in relation to food production, as I discuss in Chapter 7). In terms of markets, I found that several of the 'unofficial' markets were relatively well managed and more responsive to local consumption needs than formal sector shops and official markets. Makata Market in Ndirande, for example, seems to be successful at meeting the needs of local residents *because* it is firmly embedded within the informal space and not overseen by the City Assembly. There was no obvious way to determine which markets were under the purview of the City Assembly or traditional authorities. We asked vendors in each market we visited whether they paid the daily fee of MWK 50 to operate, which was how I delineated "semi-official" and "unofficial" markets in Table 6-1. At Mbayani Market, we learned that vendors on one side of the bridge paid MWK 50 to representatives of the City Assembly every morning and vendors on the other side of the

bridge paid MWK 30 to representatives of the traditional authorities every morning. In other markets, including the popular Quarry and Manje Markets, vendors did not pay a fee to operate. In Quarry, Angela Goveia, and Misesa Village participative mapping sessions, participants told us that food was generally cheaper in these markets, which I conjecture was related to fact that the vendors did not have to pay operating fees.

The MWK 50 operating fee charged to vendors in some markets showed how the City Assembly could sometimes impinge on food access by imposing a tax on trading activities without necessarily providing services to make the markets more physically accessible, safer, or more hygienic. The funds collected should be used to provide piped water for cleaning vegetables, toilets for vendors and customers, security services, building maintenance, and refuse collection. Yet even where these facilities and services were provided, they were partial and irregular. Among the markets we observed, the most egregious case of vendors being charged a fee without services was in Khama Market in Nkolokoti. Here there were a few poorly constructed stalls and several women sitting on the ground with vegetables displayed on blankets. We chatted with the women sitting on the ground and were surprised when they told me that they paid MWK 50 daily to the City Assembly. They did not even have shade from the sun and yet vendors in Blantyre Market also paid MWK 50 but they had shelter in a permanent structure and security that allowed them to leave their wares overnight. I asked the women at Khama if they ever refused to pay the money in protest of the fact that improvements have not been forthcoming. They said if they refused to pay, City Assembly officials or the police could confiscate their goods and they would have to pay MWK 200 to retrieve them. With no democratic accountability to the residents of the area, the City Assembly can continue to

arbitrarily enforce laws in parts of the city with less influential local leadership, particularly areas with more recent migrants and more poor households.

In the absence of an elected local government, it is the responsibility of MPs to represent the interests of their constituents. Yet, as I argued in Chapter 5, MPs are unlikely to be aware of day-to-day issues such as the conditions of informal markets and whether City Assembly officials are mistreating vendors. Mr Phiri said that he and other vendors at Zingwangwa Market had a difficult time getting the attention of MPs. In response to my question about whether politicians could help to improve the sanitary condition of the market, he said (interview 36):

> It is hard for our MP to offer any help because he sides only with those that belong to his political party. We are all staying together as a people who are being governed by one Government but everyone in this market belongs to a different party. It is difficult for the MP for this area to help someone in need once he discovers he or she is from a different party . . . Moreover, since his election our MP has never come back to this market to thank us or listen to our problems. After an election, MPs become very selfish by furthering their own interests rather than our interests.

The vast majority of people I interviewed echoed his sentiment, saying that they never received direct help from politicians or the Government except during election campaigns. The governance problem I identified in the previous chapter in regards to the livelihoods of the urban poor are thus also applicable to the planning and management of markets, which directly shapes the physical accessibility, cost, and quality of food.

The inaccessibility of places like Shoprite to the majority of consumers is consistent with the long view of food sourcing in Blantyre, where different segments of the population (variably defined by race, class, place of residence, and other markers) sourced their food at different places. The formal sector took precedence because of its

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relevance to the needs of those residents who deemed themselves to be properly urban. These types of shops were always "global" in the sense of catering to non-indigenous tastes, being owned by settlers, and financed through global networks. The problem is that places like Shoprite create the illusion of prosperity even when it only applies to a small proportion of the population. The City Assembly's apparent indifference to the need for basic facilities at places like Khama and Zingwangwa Markets reflects the low priority accorded to the needs of households in low-income neighbourhoods. Yet the example of Ndirande Market showed that the problem runs much deeper than mere indifference. Investment in public goods such as markets is inherently political, as they are built to garner political support and their use can display a consumer's allegiance to the party that built it. Successful unofficial markets like Makata owe their success in part to the customers who remain loyal even though there is a more formalised market nearby, which is tainted by its association with the DPP Government. It is difficult to see a way forward from this situation without local elections. A local government that is accountable to the needs of the urban majority could at least begin the process of mapping out where the spaces of vulnerability exist, and start working in good faith on the improvement of marketing facilities that are accessible to most people and provide basic standards for vendors and consumers throughout the city.

6.5. Conclusion

Blantyre's fractured food landscape has evolved over decades to meet the needs of different groups within the city in different ways. The duality of formal and informal sectors does not adequately account for the types of food sources, nor does it adequately capture who is shopping at each type of place. Households in all areas use the different

sources depending on their needs, usually weighing the factors of time and convenience. In most cases it is women making these trade-offs, and women's time is lost to long and sometimes arduous trips to farther away marketplaces to economise on food. In neighbourhoods where food is less easily accessible, gendered household responsibilities can have an appreciable impact on a household's food security. More cooperative couples can divide the extra time burden of going farther away to buy food, thus saving time and money needed for other domestic priorities. In areas where people can easily draw on a variety of types of food sources, food is more convenient and more affordable and food security is higher.

The meta-narratives of supermarketisation that inform much of the academic discourse on urban food insecurity in the Global South are less applicable in Blantyre than in other cities because of the robust variety of sources. Furthermore, the economy has functioned in separate formal and informal spheres since the city's inception due to racial segregation and socio-economic inequality. The historical details in this chapter show that the current bifurcated food landscape is rooted in Blantyre's long history, as far back as when colonial corporations and Asian-owned businesses dominated food retailing for the urban middle classes while the urban poor relied heavily on rural and informal sources for food. Supermarketisation is happening in Blantyre, but its effect on most households was not apparent from the perspective of my research approach. The vast difference in price between supermarkets and other types of markets means that they are a viable food source for only a small segment of the urban population, even excluding middle class households I interviewed. While I have argued that the City Assembly should be given the mandate and the capacity to provide better market facilities, I cannot

overlook the favourable response I had in the participative mapping exercises about unofficial markets where food is more affordable. From a postcolonial perspective, these types of markets are a vital resource for marginalised urban communities who need culturally appropriate food that is physically and economically accessible. The challenge for future City Assemblies seeking to address this problem will be to understand and preserve the aspects of these food sources that are working while making sustainable interventions where they are needed.

Chapter 7: Gendered geographies of food production

7.1. Introduction

In the difficult economic environment of Blantyre, many low-income households are food secure because they are producing some of their own food. Urban agriculture is a multi-faceted phenomenon, encompassing the production of "food . . . and non-food . . . items within the urban area and its periphery, for home consumption and/or for the market, and related small-scale processing and marketing activities" (Hovorka *et al.,* 2009: 4). Considering the close association between having a good supply of maize at home and being food secure (see Chapter 4), in this chapter I focus on the issues surrounding the production of maize for household consumption. Maize production loomed large in conversations about food security; even though garden vegetables, small livestock, and fruit trees were commonplace, they could not make a household food secure without maize. The land, labour, and inputs needed to cultivate maize are too expensive for most urban households to afford at market prices (Mkwambisi *et al.,* 2011), but there are important social and political means of accessing these resources outside of commercial sources. It is mostly households with customary land in town and neighbouring districts that are able to farm. For others, the time and money expense of going "home" to farm is often greater than the cost of buying food in town. The result is that some households have land entitlements that greatly reduce their vulnerability to food insecurity even though they have very few financial resources.

Blantyre has an exceptionally large proportion of urban households engaged in farming relative to other cities in southern Africa. The results of the AFSUN survey

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suggested a correlation between household food security and household staple food production that set Blantyre apart from other cities in the survey (Crush & Frayne, 2010b; Crush, Hovorka, & Tevera, 2011). The high proportion of households in Blantyre consuming field crops that they had produced (61%) relative to the sample as a whole (11%) appears to be a crucial factor supporting the high rate of household food security in spite of the widespread poverty in Malawi (Crush *et al.,* 2011: 292-3).

The third IHS provided further indication of the extent of urban agriculture in Malawi (MNSO, 2012). The report does not disaggregate by city, but it shows that more than a third (38%) of urban households are "agricultural households."[31] Urban farmers dedicate 82% of their plots to maize production, far more than the 70% of plots that rural farmers dedicate to maize production (MNSO, 2012). These figures reinforce the centrality of maize production *especially* for urban farmers, which is likely related to the availability of a variety of foods for relish in town and the fact that relatively insecure land tenure is a disincentive from planting crops that take longer to mature like pigeon pea (17% of rural plots and 6% of urban plots). Among the households I interviewed, 14 out of 37 (38%) had harvested maize that season for household consumption. The vast majority of these households (86%) farmed on customary land that they had either inherited or were granted by a traditional leader. Many others had access to customary land but it was often too far to go there for farming. Other people told us they were not farming because it was too risky an investment or they had not maintained links with their home villages.

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[31] Table 9.1 in the third IHS report classifies households engaged in agricultural activities as "agricultural households" without giving specific parameters as to the extent to which these households rely on their agricultural activities for their livelihoods.

The need to maintain social links with rural communities in order to access farmland and reduce vulnerability is one example of the complexity of rural-urban interaction. Urban-rural linkages in relation to food security are much more intricate than the conventional rural/producer urban/consumer dualism (Satterwaithe & Tacoli, 2002; Lynch, 2005; Lerner & Eakin, 2011). Previous chapters have demonstrated the importance of urban-rural linkages in terms of food purchases at rural markets and micro-enterprises based on trading across the rural-urban interface. The geography of food production by urban households shares this pattern and reinforces the concept that urban livelihood analysis must trace connections beyond the boundaries of the city (Flynn, 2005; Satterwaithe, McGranahan, & Tacoli, 2010). The mobility requirement of drawing on resources in different locations is often gendered because of women's responsibilities within the home and their relative shortage of time. Of particular relevance to the case of Blantyre is that the majority of rural communities in the Shire Highlands allocate customary land based on matrilineal inheritance, which gives some women an advantage in accessing rural land for food production. The issue of rural-urban linkages is more complex than urban households *going to* rural areas to access land because of the existence of several ostensibly (and legally) "rural" functions and institutions within the boundaries of the city. These include the widespread availability and use of land for wildlife conservation and farming, the possibly extra-legal functioning of urban traditional authorities, and the existence of communal land tenure within the city (Swyngedouw & Heynen, 2003; Cammack *et al.,* 2009). Some urban households are able to draw on these typically "rural" resources within the city while simultaneously

engaging in the urban economy. The diversity of livelihood strategies reduces vulnerability and increases food security for these households.

This chapter is organised into three sections. In the first section, I argue that customary land access in rural and urban areas is important for urban household food security, especially for women and female-centred households. In the second section, I analyse Malawi's Agricultural Inputs Subsidy Programme (AISP) from an urban perspective and show that while some households are benefitting directly from the programme, in other cases it is exacerbating the precarity of some urban households that fall outside of urban and rural support networks. In the third section, I use the example of the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme (NFSP) to argue that community-based influence over the use of urban natural resources can dramatically improve urban household food security. The devolution of power to City Assemblies in the 1990s helped facilitate the establishment of this important programme, which provided low-income residents with farmland near their homes. Its termination in 2010 signalled a return to centralised control of urban natural resources that mirrored the impetus to centralised regulation of urban public spaces displayed in *dongosolo.* This chapter provides further evidence of the link between governance, space, and food security.

7.2. Farming on customary land in rural and urban spaces

Only one household I interviewed had the financial resources available to rent land for farming in town (interview 32). The vast majority of urban farming households were using customary land in the city or in neighbouring districts (Figure 7-1). Close proximity of customary farmland was crucial for the viability of farming on rural customary land as it reduced the time and money expense of travelling to one's village to

farm and transporting the food back to town after harvest. Distance was even more crucial for women; especially women heading households, because of their greater limitations of time, money, and household labour. In spite of these gendered livelihood constraints, which have applied to most of the cases in the preceding chapters, my gender analysis of household food production reveals a nuanced picture because most of the landholding systems in southern Malawi are based on matrilineal inheritance (Phiri, 1983; Peters, 1997). Matrilineal inheritance provides some women more secure access to land than they would likely have under a freehold land tenure system or patrilineal system of inheritance (Wanyeki, 2003; Whitehead, 2009). In households with adequate labour, such as multi-generational female-centred households, nuclear households, and extended households, customary land access could provide reprieve from the harsh reality of relying on a precarious income to purchase food.

Figure 7-1: Chart featuring circumstances under which households were cultivating maize
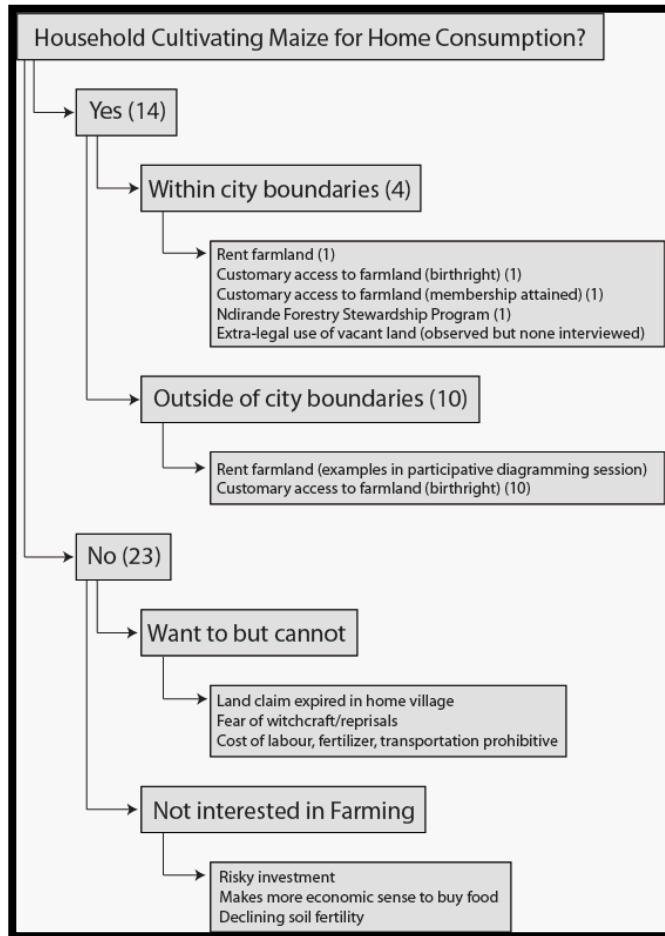
The customary systems of land tenure in Malawi are diverse systems rooted in concepts of tradition and culture, and shaped by politics and social relations (Pachai, 1973; Ng'ong'ola, 1990; Peters, 1997, 2002; Binauli & Kunkwenzu, 2001; Kanyongolo, 2005; Holden, Kaarhus, & Lunduka, 2006; Peters & Kambewa, 2007; Cammack *et al.,* 2009). The characteristics of each system are as varied as the ethnic diversity of Malawi would suggest. Malawi has eleven officially recognised major "tribal"[32] identities and each "tribe" has its own practices in terms of land tenure. Further complicating matters,

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[32] I reproduce this highly problematic term here from the 2008 census report in reference to the officially recognised ethnic affiliations. Individual Malawians may identify with multiple "tribes" or choose to emphasise other identities, for example based on region rather than "tribe."

traditional authorities have interpreted "tradition" differently in practice according to political considerations (Power, 2010). It is therefore impossible to generalise about land tenure systems in Malawi and even more cumbersome to generalise about the rural customary land rights for households in Blantyre because they are associated with diverse rural communities located throughout the country.[33] The link between matrilineal systems of inheritance and women's access to land in southern Malawi was evident in the third IHS, where half (50%) of farm plots were exclusively owned by women (MNSO, 2012: 134). These diverse systems provide an alternative to the private land market and give some households access to resources regardless of their income levels.

The use of customary farmland requires maintaining close social connections with rural communities and traveling frequently to the home village for key agricultural tasks and events like weddings, funerals, and holidays (Vail, 1983; Iliffe, 1987; Vaughan, 1987; Moore & Vaughan, 1993). In general, urban Malawians remain connected to their "home villages" for social, cultural, political and economic purposes (Chilimampunga, 2006). During my interviews, even for people who were born in town the question, "where is your home village?" usually had a clear-cut answer. A study in Lilongwe found that most urban residents invested more in their rural houses because the village was the locus of their social identities (Englund, 2001). As urban livelihoods have become increasingly precarious following structural adjustment, ties to rural communities, and by implication rural resources, have become increasingly vital to urban livelihoods in Blantyre and elsewhere in the developing world (Satterwaithe & Tacoli, 2002; Potts, 2012). Flynn (2005: 119-123) used the word "straddling" to capture the multi-spatiality

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[33] The household interviews included people from 15 district origins (Appendix B). Several other districts were represented in the participative diagramming sessions, although we did not formally collect biographical data on participative diagramming participants.

of household livelihoods in Mwanza, Tanzania. The metaphor of straddling is apt in that it applies to the problem of distance in accessing rural natural resources; the wider the straddle the less stable the stance.

The cost of transport is the main barrier to urban-rural straddling, especially for low-income households, but for some highly vulnerable households the erosion of social linkages with rural kin was more significant. Adults who had been orphaned and widows who remained in town were socially disconnected from their rural villages and hence not allocated land. In one case, I interviewed a man in his mid twenties who had been orphaned when he was a teenager and had weak ties with his rural relatives. Henderson was married without children and he and his wife lived day to day on what they could earn through casual labour. We enquired about the possibility of cultivating in his home village and he said (interview 27): "Those thoughts are there but it all depends how you communicate with the people in the village, how do you chat, can they give you some land to cultivate and how much land." He then said that in terms of making contact with those relatives "the delay is coming from my side," and added that even if he made contact it would be prohibitively expensive to pay for fertiliser and labour to cultivate maize. The cost of transportation, as well as the need to work constantly to survive in the informal sector, can create a vicious cycle when social bonds are broken through circumstances such as widowhood or orphanhood. This vicious cycle continues by weakening the livelihoods of the urban households through the inaccessibility of rural resources, thus creating new financial demands that further reduce the likelihood of social interaction.

A major feature of customary land allocation in southern Malawi where all of the urban farming households held customary land is the system of matrilineal inheritance. Land is allocated within sorority groups (*mbumba*) under the leadership of a senior male relative (*nkhoswe*) (Peters, 1997; Holden *et al.,* 2006; Peters & Kambewa, 2007). Men can hold dual roles within this system, as a husband in his wife's village (*mkamwini*) and/or as an *nkhoswe* in his natal village (Phiri, 1983). It is therefore inaccurate to say that women in matrilineal communities are more powerful than men because the real power struggle usually occurs between the *nkhoswe* and the *mkamwini*. Nonetheless, women's entitlements to the use of customary land gives them an advantage in terms of food security relative to women in patrilineal societies such as in northern Malawi (Bezner Kerr, 2005). Phiri (1983) noted that a husband could optimise his self-interest by maintaining links with his natal village as well as his wife's village by marrying into a village within walking distance of the natal village. These dynamics were at play in two households I interviewed in which the wives principally resided in their rural villages and farmed on their customary land while their husbands principally resided in the city and earned income through formal employment. The duality of residences was an extreme form of straddling in the sense that the households were *simultaneously* resident in the rural and urban spaces. Within the context of uxorilocal residence, it resolved the problem of male economic insecurity as *mkamwini,* but it also allowed the whole households to benefit from both urban and rural economies and social services.

I interviewed the husbands in both of these households (Mr Banda and Mr Kaunda). Their households had several characteristics in common: both were in Soche

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East Ward in formal housing areas, both were of an older generation, and both had been

in Blantyre for several decades (having moved there in 1959 and 1964 respectively).

Both men said they maintained social ties within their rural villages. For example, when

I asked Mr Banda whether people in his wife's village recognised him as a member of

the village, he replied (interview 31): "They do because in everything we go - wedding,

funeral - we go home and attend and when we die we take the body and bury it at home.

So we can live here but we are buried at home." In another example, Mr Kaunda's adult

son Joseph was describing how easy it was to obtain basic necessities in the village such

as food, water, and housing. He then added (interview 30), "everything is found there

except if you are a stranger then you cannot find everything." These statements

underline the social dimensions of the entitlement to customary farmland; the

maintenance of social ties and not "being a stranger" are pre-requisites to community

membership and hence the use of farmland. Their multi-spatial household arrangements

make sense within the social context whereby husbands traditionally play dual roles in

multiple places as *mkamwini* and *nkhoswe*. Were the wives to move permanently to the

city to rely on their husbands' incomes, the households could lose an important source

of household food security.

The multi-spatial arrangements of many households reinforce the associations of

urban space as male space and rural space as female space. Mr Banda had been a

journalist and a human rights activist; the interview was in English and some of his

comments about his living arrangement are worth presenting in detail because they

resonate with the issues of gender, urbanisation, and entitlements. In the following

excerpt, he explained in detail his reasoning behind the decision to buy a house in town

and exposed the insecurity that some men experience in parts of southern Malawi

(interview 31):

> I chose to be independent here in case of divorce, because
> sometimes you don't prepare for divorce but due to circumstances
> beyond your control you find yourself divorced . . . So with me I
> solved that problem when I was working. I had foreseen that
> anything could happen in the future. Sometimes it could be
> people at home who could force us to separate. They could say
> we don't want this one [referring to himself]. So I said no I have
> to look after myself and spent all the money I had from my
> gratuity to buy the house and said now I am safe because they
> cannot come here to chase me; I have the title deed.

He depicted divorce in the rural social milieu as an event beyond a man's control; it

would be decided by the "people at home" (likely men and/or women elders). This point

shows that a man can be vulnerable depending on his social position; were he a first-born

son and an *nkhoswe,* he would have more of a secure position within the rural community.

The title deed was like an insurance policy for Mr Banda, shoring up his independent

economic position. He then explained how *mkamwini* could be taken advantage of within

the matrilineal system:

> There is this trend among the matrilineal people, which I realised
> very late but it's very bad, whereby you are married, you are at
> their home, you produce children, you train and educate them,
> they start working and now they [village elders] start looking for
> problems, creating challenges for you so that you should leave
> that they should enjoy the benefits; the investment you made in
> your children . . . I don't want to fall into that quagmire.

In this excerpt, Mr Banda makes it clear that his investment in his children, which was

possible because of his waged employment, was at risk in the hands of the village elders.

Mr Banda's concern about being pushed out of his wife's natal community implies that

professional employment cannot protect the *mkamwini* from being chased out of his

community. Mr Banda portrayed the urban formal economy as a refuge where he could

have security to personally benefit from his lifetime of labour and investment in his children and household.

Some households do not have to straddle beyond the urban boundary because they have access to customary land within the city boundaries. Customary land within Malawi's urban areas falls within a murky legal area and urban bureaucrats at the City Assembly and traditional authorities refer to contradictory legislation in making their cases for jurisdiction (Cammack *et al.,* 2009: 44-46). The result of this stalemate for urban residents who share ownership in communal urban land is that, at least for the moment, they have free access to valuable urban farmland. The Group Village Headwoman (GVH) for Misesa told me that she had harvested 90 bags of maize (4,500 kg) on her customary land. She said that she granted newcomers land upon request to build their homes, but that they were not automatically given farm plots. New residents are less likely to be allocated communal farm plots in town as the population density increases within Blantyre, especially in the informal areas. Increasing population pressure in southern and central Malawi, especially in and around the major cities, will lead to more challenges over the control of customary land in urban as well as rural areas (Peters & Kambewa, 2007; Cammack *et al.,* 2009).

For some households, the availability of urban customary land for food production helped to narrow the gender gap in food security caused by women's unequal incomes relative to men. Having access to farmland within close proximity to home saves valuable time, which is often more beneficial to women than to men (Blackdon & Wodon, 2006). I interviewed members of two households that were farming on customary land in town. Both were multi-generational female-centred households in Nkolokoti that drew on

multiple income sources in addition to farming. In one case, Mrs Mlanga was a divorced young mother living with her widowed mother, siblings, son and several nieces and nephews (interview 22). Her parents had come from Mulanje District in 1978 and the Chief had allocated a plot of farmland to them every year since they arrived. They had produced 20 bags (1,000 kg) of maize in 2010. During the interview, the value of their maize supply was evident as we sat in their living room on the bags of maize that had recently been harvested. Mrs Malenga was the head of the other household in Nkolokoti farming on customary land in town (interview 26). Her roots in Nkolokoti ran so deep that when we asked her when she had moved to Blantyre she began tracing her lineage back to the first Yao chief Kapeni in the 19th century! The maize they produced on their farm reduced the pressure on her daughter's seasonal income from her job at Limbe Leaf tobacco processing facility (see Chapter 5). Access to farmland within the city was a privilege that allowed these households to draw on multiple livelihood strategies in the agricultural, industrial, and commercial realms without sacrificing time and money to travel to the rural areas. The population growth of Nkolokoti Ward between 1998 and 2008 was 49%, suggesting that the availability of customary land for farming will be under threat in the near future and unlike Mrs Mlanga's family thirty years ago, few new residents will be granted plots of communal land.

7.3. Urban perspectives on the politics of fertiliser subsidies

The colonial economy pushed many households to extreme measures to meet their food security needs (Vaughan, 1987; Mandala, 2005). The demands of hut taxes forced households to engage in the cash economy and sell their labour on the estates or in South Africa and the Rhodesias, often neglecting their crops at the crucial planting and

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harvesting times. The expropriation of the best land by settler estates further squeezed the productivity of the average smallholder farmer (Vaughan, 1987; Kanyongolo, 2005; Peters & Kambewa, 2007). The scarcity of land led to more maize cultivation because it had a much higher yield than pre-existing crops such as millet and sorghum (Mandala, 2005). Maize originated in the Americas and first appeared in the Shire Highlands area in the 17th century by way of Mozambique (Phiri, 1984). Mandala (2005) described the switch to maize as a gamble for smallholder farmers; on the one hand they could produce an abundant crop in a good harvest year, but they were more vulnerable to food supply crises in the events of drought or weevil infestation. The establishment of the Maize Control Board (MCB) in 1938 reflected the primacy of maize in colonial Nyasaland. The MCB directed maize surpluses from smallholder farmers to large employers at low prices, thus helping to control the cost of feeding their tenant labourers and suppressing the price of exports (Vaughan, 1987). The brutality of this system as a means of distributing surplus food supply was vividly displayed during the 1949 famine when the formal employers were given priority access to the emergency food supply and people working in informal activities were largely excluded from food aid (Vaughan, 1987). This famine was disastrous for women who did not have close ties to an employed man; it exposed women's unique vulnerability under the colonial political economic system (Vaughan, 1987). The Government also controlled food production methods through agricultural extension programmes that reached absurd levels of interference when traditional cropping methods were outlawed. The backlash against these policies was at the forefront of the independence movement of the 1950s (Power, 2010).

Access to arable land, whether in urban or rural areas, does not guarantee that a household will be able to produce adequate maize to meet its basic staple food needs. Fertiliser is increasingly important for agriculture in the Shire Highlands where smallholder farmers have the smallest holding sizes in the country.[34] Intensive production in recent decades without adequate soil management has led to declining yields in the absence of fertiliser inputs (Dorward & Chirwa, 2011). The demand for labour on estates beginning in the colonial period disrupted pre-existing soil management practices on smallholder farms, thus creating the need for commercial fertiliser. The labour demands on urban households engaged in agriculture can be especially acute, as they must continue to meet the financial obligations of urban life through formal and informal employment while farming. Due in part to the constraints of time and soil infertility, the food security benefits of own food production are greater for households with higher incomes (Mkwambisi *et al.,* 2011). In their study of food production within the urban boundaries of Blantyre and Lilongwe, Mkwambisi *et al.* (2011: 188) found that urban agriculture in Malawi was mostly benefitting the urban middle class. Productivity was highly correlated to the use of fertiliser; per hectare yields of maize for high-income households (1155 kg/ha) were almost four times those of low-income households (297 kg/ha). We also heard from participative diagramming participants and in interviews that low-income urban farmers often lacked money for fertiliser, and this was a key reason for low yields. One of the most financially secure households I interviewed, that of Mr Zeleza in Soche East Ward, had rented a plot of land in Blantyre to cultivate maize (interview 32). They paid MWK 10,000 (USD 66) for fertiliser and harvested 2,500 kg of

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[34] Blantyre Rural, Chiradzulu, and Thyolo have the smallest mean holding sizes in the country at 0.606, 0.650, and 0.588 hectares respectively. Twelve *per cent* of holdings in Thyolo District are less than one tenth of a hectare (MNSO 2010).

maize. This was more than enough to meet their household's needs for the year and they shared some of their food with neighbours and relatives in town. They also told me that when they visited their rural relatives in Mzimba District they brought them maize because there was a chronic food deficit in their village.

Mr Zeleza's MWK 10,000 investment in fertiliser was beyond the financial capabilities of most households. Some low-income households were able to access fertiliser in spite of the prohibitive cost through the 90% Government subsidy provided through the AISP (Chinsinga, 2007; Denning *et al.,* 2009; Dorward & Chirwa, 2011). The AISP was the cornerstone of Malawi's food security strategy under the DPP Government. Its goals are to achieve national food security through domestic maize production while reducing poverty by targeting low-income households that are capable of farming. Urban households are officially not farming households and are thus excluded from the programme *de jure.* This exclusion is partly the result of the political decision to introduce targeted subsidies rather than universal subsidies such as price controls or state-administered distribution as had been in place during the Banda era (Chinsinga, 2007).

Banful (2011) argued that targeted subsidies in Malawi and elsewhere necessarily entail political manoeuvring in their distribution and Malawi's AISP has followed this pattern. Some of the people I interviewed claimed that political considerations shaped coupon distribution in their communities. Mr Kondwani, who hails from the northern region where many people were disillusioned with the DPP Government in 2010, referred to the programme as "a political tool" (interview 29). Mr Kamba, a fish vendor at Chemussa Market who was also cultivating maize in his village near Blantyre, said that it

was difficult to obtain fertiliser coupons because of political disagreements. He said (interview 4): "the chiefs who distribute the coupons always favour those that they know, for example those that support the DPP they always have the coupons but those from UDF and MCP it is hard, sometimes they buy [coupons on the black market]." Group Village Headmen (GVH) have a high level of discretionary control over the distribution of coupons in their areas and while corruption is not a problem everywhere, there have been few institutional safeguards in place to verify proper distribution (Chinsinga, 2007). The result is that some urban households are food secure due to decisions taken by traditional authorities in their home villages. It is highly plausible that these decisions were influenced by political allegiances.

As one could expect from this highly politicised programme, there was little consistency among households in terms of whether urban households had access to fertiliser coupons. Some people were able to receive them even though they lived in town whereas others heard from their traditional authorities that the coupons were not for urban residents. Mr Longwe in Nkolokoti, whose precarious financial situation was discussed at length in Chapter 4, was excluded from the AISP by both urban and rural traditional authorities. When he was discussing the financial barriers to farming on his land in Thyolo District, I asked him if he was entitled to fertiliser coupons and he replied (interview 25):

> No, I don't receive the coupon. Here in town there are chiefs and there are people who have stayed here for a very long time and who are well known, so when 100 coupons are available they are distributed only to the well known. We are like strangers, visitors.

I then asked whether he could receive coupons from his traditional authority in Thyolo, and he said that this was also a problem because they tell him that he cannot receive a

coupon because he is living in town. In contrast, the two households in which the wife lived in the village and the husband in town both said they had received fertiliser coupons because of their continued membership in their rural communities. I asked Mr Kaunda, if his wife were residing in town, would she continue to receive the coupons. He replied (interview 30): "It is difficult if you are in town. My brothers who stay here farm in the village but they do not access subsidised fertiliser because they are living in town. They say we will give the coupons only to a person who has a house in the village; no house, no subsidy." In addition to maintaining a house in the village, Mr Banda said that participating in community events was a crucial part of keeping ties and accessing land and fertiliser. He highlighted the importance of social ties when he said (interview 31): "We get coupons at home because we belong there." He added that their status as senior members of their community was part of why they were entitled. He said, "They say you know they are old ones; the village headman has to treat us well by giving us coupons." That continued social ties to rural communities provided access to state-based entitlements underlined the political and economic motivation for urban households to maintain rural ties. In targeting rural households through a locally variable distribution system, the AISP raises the material consequences for low-income urban households to maintain political allegiance to rural communities.

Fertiliser coupons were distributed in town among households aligned with traditional authority structures and with access to communal land, such as in the informal settlements of Nkolokoti and Misesa. At the fourth participative mapping session, which took place in Nkolokoti, I raised questions about the distribution of fertiliser coupons. They said that there were 5,000 households registered in that area and there were 170

coupons available for distribution. Every year when the coupons were distributed, eligible local residents would go to the local school in the hopes of receiving a coupon. They said that Government officials - not traditional authorities - allocate the coupons, although they did not specify the level of government nor the agency. The one stipulation they knew of was that no one should receive coupons two years in a row. Otherwise, it appeared to them to be a random, yet fair, process. I later raised the issue in my interview with the GVH in Misesa, Mrs Demula.[35] She told me that every year she has 200 fertiliser coupons to distribute among farming households in her "village." The maintenance of ostensibly rural institutions in town facilitated access for some urban households (in some years) to the state-based entitlement of fertiliser coupons. The legitimacy of traditional authorities relies on lineage and consensus but also on support from the national Government, as it has since the "invention of tradition" necessitated by the use of indirect rule during the colonial period (Patel & Svasand, 2007; Cammack *et al.,* 2009; Power, 2010). From the onset of indirect rule, governments have intervened in choosing traditional leaders (Vail & White, 1989; Power, 2010). During the period of my fieldwork, the GVH in Misesa was involved in a legal battle over the title of Chief Kapeni (Muwamba, 2010). She based her claim to the chieftainship on the consensus of the three leading families in the area, but the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development had announced they would install Mr Mtuwa (whom they claimed was elected) and blocked Mrs Demula's court injunction. Given the high value of the land and coupons under the GVH's control, the DPP Government was clearly motivated to maximise the political benefits of the fertiliser subsidies by handpicking the new GVH.

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[35] I have used her actual name here because she is a public figure.

His discretionary distribution of these resources could be used to further neopatrimonial politics and shore up DPP support among peri-urban farmers.

The fertiliser subsidy programme indirectly benefitted other urban households by providing them with opportunities to purchase coupons illegally on the black market. Despite improved security features in each year of its implementation (Dorward & Chirwa, 2011), the underground trade in coupons still appeared indirectly in my fieldwork. The intense poverty of coupon recipients compels some to sell the coupons to meet their immediate needs rather than wait to reap the benefits at harvest time. Mr Zeleza explained the phenomenon to me (interview 32):

> If I remember last season, people were saying there are a lot of coupons in Machinjiri and if you go there you will find them. Not that you will directly be given coupons, but you will buy from the people who have received them. MWK 500 per coupon [redeemable for MWK 5,000 worth of fertiliser]. You know that coupons are intended for poor people. So these people get the coupons and meanwhile there is nothing to eat at home, so the only thing is "let me sell the coupon so that I can go and buy something from the market and feed my family." So most of the guys who get coupons in town here get them this way.

Coupon selling is further evidence of the ineffectiveness of the targeting system. The subsidy programme was not targeted to the extremely poor, but rather to low-income households who would be capable of making use of the inputs and hence optimise smallholder productivity to achieve national (aggregate) food security (Chinsinga, 2007). This feature of the targeting system has been used to justify the *de jure* exclusion of potential urban farmers. For example, one senior official at the City Assembly used the logic of productivity to justify his purchases of coupons on the black market. He said he acted ethically in that he ultimately contributed to the overarching goal of aggregate food production by using the coupons on his farm. His justification reflects the broader policy

problem of overemphasis on boosting aggregate production of maize without addressing the social, political, and economic barriers to access even when food is available.

Malawi's experience with fertiliser subsidies has made it a model for agricultural development and poverty alleviation in some development circles (Masina, 2008a, 2008b; Denning *et al.,* 2009; Juma, 2011). The jump from decades of dependence on food imports and aid to large surplus crops and becoming a net exporter is an undeniable marker of success. Nevertheless, the emphasis on aggregate food supply only indirectly addresses the problem of access at the heart of urban food insecurity. While the increase in supply theoretically helps lower market prices to benefit net consumers in rural and urban areas (Denning *et al.,* 2009), this cannot happen without serious attention to the maize marketing system (Jayne *et al.,* 2010) and the viability of household livelihoods. As I discussed in Chapter 6, there has generally been little state investment in the food distribution system following structural adjustment. The achievement of national food security in terms of aggregate maize supplies has dominated the political landscape of Malawi to such an extent that it has reduced the political space and financial resources available for complementary food security initiatives more directly relevant to food insecure *households*. Complementary programmes could include the promotion of organic farming methods, social protection, and expanding non-agricultural employment opportunities (Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme, 2009; Msachi*,* Dakishoni, & Bezner Kerr, 2009; Dorward & Chirwa, 2011). These are part of a suite of policy approaches that are needed to solve the problem of household and individual access to food by taking into account differences in entitlements, capabilities, and place.

7.4. Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme

The intersection of space, livelihoods and the political economy of urban food security was evident in the case of the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme (NFSP), which was in existence from 1996 until 2010 when the City Assembly gave farmers notice that it would be their last season to cultivate. The City Assembly had permitted residents of Ndirande to grow maize on public land in exchange for planting and protecting trees on the Mountain. The devolution of Government in Malawi in the 1990s made the NFSP possible by devolving control over public land to the local government level (the City Assembly). Not only did this provide the legal framework for the Programme, more importantly, it gave power to City Councillors who were more closely associated with the day-to-day problems of urban residents. From a political ecology perspective, shrinking the scale at which publicly owned natural resources are governed gave low-income urban residents greater access to urban natural resources and more influence over these state-owned resources. The cancellation of the NFSP in 2010 took place five years after the City Assembly had expired and the national Government had not called local elections. Amidst this institutional hijacking, the national Government also took back *de facto* control of the urban forest reserves through the parastatal Blantyre Water Board and other organisations. This section provides further evidence that, as with the AISP, the Government has made no effort to improve urban food security and its policies frequently *undermine* urban household food security.

I first learned about the NFSP during a meeting with the Director of Parks, Recreation and Environmental Affairs at the City Assembly. He said that during the Kamuzu Banda era, the Government employed forest rangers who protected the urban

forest reserves from poachers and squatters. The high level of social control during this period in all aspects of daily life contributed to the Government's ability to control the use of natural resources (Lwanda, 1993; Power, 2010). According to the Director, and resonant with related narratives about the turmoil associated with the political transition in the 1990s (Englund & Mapanje, 2002; Lwanda, 2004; Englund, 2006; Cammack 2011a), the forest protection was all but lost in the transitional period of the early 1990s for a host of reasons. Austerity measures under structural adjustment had reduced the number of forest rangers and reduced their real incomes. No longer able to live off their public servant salaries, many forest rangers themselves became poachers. Second, the severe economic downturn induced people to make use of forest resources for survival by gathering firewood, wild foods, and by cultivating illegally. Third, the social changes brought on by political liberalisation made people feel less inhibited about trespassing. Within a few years of political transition, Mount Ndirande was completely deforested, causing serious problems with erosion, which in turn threatened the utility of water sources on the Mountain. Community-based resource management addressed the need to restore the urban forest with little financial investment. It simultaneously reflected the ideals of more participatory social and economic development.

The Director of Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Affairs told me that his Department gave local residents plots of farmland in the Ndirande Forest Reserve (Figure 7-3) for cultivation and in return they agreed to plant trees from saplings provided by the City Assembly and ensure that the trees grew to maturity. The Programme aligned with the National Environmental Policy (NEP) (1996), which aimed to enhance cooperation between communities and governments in the management of environmental resources

(BCA, 2000). It also coincided with the decentralisation policy that was formalised in the Local Government Act (LGA) (1998), which gave elected local assemblies more control over resource management (BCA, 2000). The NFSP signalled a progressive approach to urban resource management that encompassed multiple goals of forest preservation, community partnership and capacity building, and urban food security. It responded to the need for low-income households to draw on multiple types of resources to reduce vulnerability (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002) while investing in the longer-term sustainability of the urban natural environment by planting and protecting trees.

We met with representatives of the Ndirande Farmers' Association to discuss the impact of the NFSP on their food security and the anticipated impact of its termination. Unsurprisingly, considering the link between space and entitlements discussed throughout this dissertation, they told us that the access to land close to their homes to cultivate maize was vital to their household livelihoods. In their version of events, the allocation of plots had been *ad hoc* and spontaneous. One day in 1996, authorities from the City Assembly arrived and allocated the available land on a first-come, first-served basis to 3,000 farmers. The farmers I spoke with recalled that many people did not believe that the land allocation would be legitimate so they did not show up on that day and they were left out of the programme. Each farmer was allocated at least two acres, with some having as many as 11 acres of land. The farmers established the Ndirande Farmers' Association to represent their collective interests and ensure that ownership rights were recognised. When an "owner" wanted to rent out the land rather than farming it him or her self, he or she would verify the title with the Farmers' Association. The farmers also informed us that when an "owner" died the Farmers' Association would

oversee the transfer of the land to a surviving spouse or child. There were men and women "owners" and there were some women on the committee when we met with them in 2010. The NFSP did not target women's poverty *per se*, but even when men "owned" the land, women in their households would have benefitted from the improved household food security. Like those female-centred households in Nkolokoti farming urban customary land, female participants[36] who were also heads of their households would have benefitted enormously from having access to farmland close to their homes, which would have reduced the time burden and transportation costs of traveling to rural areas to farm.

Figure 7-2: Aerial view of central Blantyre depicting the locations of urban forest reserves and Ndirande informal settlement, and Mudi Reservoir (source: Google Earth, adapted by the author)

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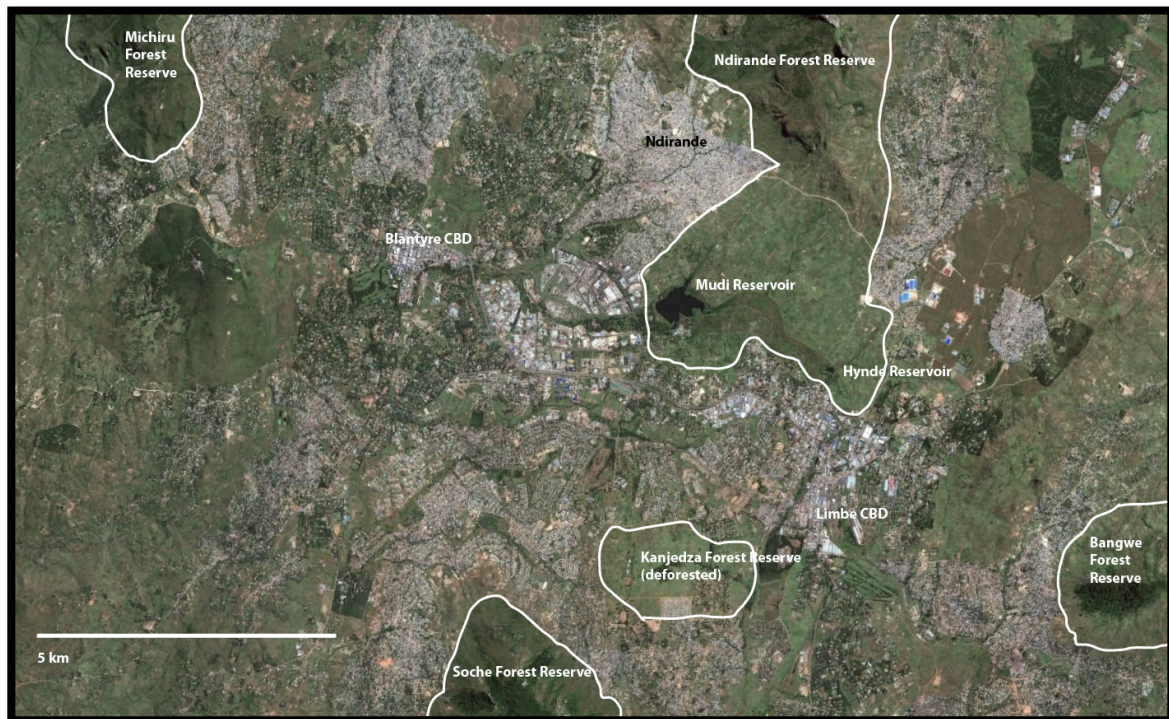
[36] Unfortunately, a full inventory of the households who participated in the NFSP was not available and I do not know the proportion of female centred households participating.

Figure 7-3: View of Ndirande Mountain (photo: author)

The economic impact on the households who were granted plots of farmland can hardly be overstated. The leader of the Farmers' Association, himself controlling 11 acres of land, harvested 100 bags of maize in 2009 (5,000 kg) worth MWK 200,000-350,000 (USD 1,333-2,333); this was a fortune compared to the MWK 100-200 (USD 0.66-1.33) one of his farm labourers might earn in a day. At the time of our meeting in May 2010, the farmers told us that the City Assembly had already reclaimed 300 of the 700 acres they had allocated in 1996. The remaining farmers, who were in the process of being evicted, said that there had not been any opportunity to negotiate their compensation. The compensation was based on the trees on each plot with certain predetermined amounts given based on the type and maturity of each tree. The farmers said that the households who had already lost their land were having a difficult time feeding their families now that they did not have access to this land for cultivation. Some were able to resume farming on rural customary land; others were attempting to start businesses with the capital they received as compensation. The Farmers' Association members noted that this

situation was even more disheartening to witness because many of the fruits on the trees they had planted were rotting or being taken by forest guards and thieves. They said the forest was already starting to deteriorate because of firewood poachers in those areas where the farmers had been protecting the trees.

In my sample of household interviews in Ndirande, I happened to interview one man who was participating in the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme, Mr Chirwa. He had come to Blantyre from Dedza District in 1974 and married a woman from Ndirande. They were living with three of their children (one of whom was still in school, the other two were unmarried adults) and a grandchild. Mr Chirwa worked as a night watchman for a private residence (interview 18).[37] His wife supplemented the household income by making *mandasi* (local doughnuts) for sale within the neighbourhood. Mr Chirwa told me they had been harvesting on "the hill" for more than six years and most of their staple food was coming from the farmland allocated through the NFSP. He said, "I am lucky - at least when I harvest I try to manage the food, preserve it very well. We do buy a little food to add on to what we harvest so that it should be enough, and that it should last longer until the next rains fall." They grow beans in addition to maize and they bought several foods that they do not grow (including pigeon peas, vegetables, rice, groundnuts, and millet).

The loss of farmland on Mount Ndirande was about to make their livelihood activities much more challenging. Mr Gondwe asked Mr Chirwa, "How do you think your life will change when you stop cultivating here?" and he replied; "We are supposed to be ready for anything. I have already arranged that if we completely stop cultivating then we are supposed to go back home where our parents' fields are. The fields are

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[37] He shares this occupation with Mr Longwe, whose financial situation I describe at length in Chapter 4.

already there." His home village is in Dedza but his wife's family is from Ntcheu. The

farm in Ntcheu is much closer to Blantyre so that is where they plan to cultivate. He said,

"we will be cultivating there but we will be staying here. We will be going to the village

to cultivate during the rainy season. When it is harvest time we will be going to harvest

and take the food and bring it here." He said that this was their first contingency plan, but

that: "it may be possible that right here, around Blantyre such like in Chileka, Mpemba,

or Chigumula we also find some land, rent, cultivate and find some food to bring it

home." Farming on customary land in Ntcheu will be far more expensive than farming

through the NFSP because of the cost of transportation and the lost income from not

working when they go to cultivate. The new geographical challenge may force the

Chirwas to retire in the rural areas, or they might decide to maintain dual homes as the

Bandas and Kaundas have done.

To the extent that there was a clear reason for the termination of the NFSP beyond

the fact that the goal of reforestation had been achieved, it was to protect the water

quality in the reservoirs at Mudi Dam and Hynde Dam (Figure 7-3). The Blantyre Water

Board, a parastatal company whose board is appointed by the President (Blantyre Water

Board, 2011), manages the municipal water supply and hence the reservoirs. More than

three quarters of households in Blantyre (78.6%) have access to piped water, but only

18.4% have piped water within their dwelling. Most communal standpipes charge a

nominal fee for water, but for many low-income households the water fee is an

appreciable sum.[38] The Blantyre Water Board is not accountable to the farmers, nor is it

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[38] The fact that many low-income households struggle to pay even the nominal rates for piped water was
evident at Angoni Lonjezo CBO. They had constructed a standpipe that provided free water to residents
while an NGO, Water for People, was charging a nominal fee per bucket. I observed several people lining

accountable to the City Assembly, and yet it controls a large parcel of land in the centre of the city surrounding the dams. Its jurisdiction is based on the Waterworks Act (WWA) (1995) and contradicts the Local Government Act by giving both the Water Board and the City Assembly *de jure* control over the land. In exercising the power of the Blantyre Water Board, the DPP Government in effect overruled the City Assembly regarding the NFSP after years of weakening it by not holding local elections. The Water Board's push to have the City Assembly remove the farmers rather than negotiate with them, perhaps identifying organic farming methods that would preserve the quality of the water in the reservoirs, indicated the disregard for the livelihoods of the urban poor. Furthermore, in sacrificing poor people's livelihoods for the sake of the piped water supply (that mostly serves formal houses, commercial buildings, and industries), the City Assembly arguably sent a message implying that the poor do not *belong* in the urban space.

The representatives of the Farmers' Association said there was no channel for them to voice their opposition to this decision. In keeping with most of the interviews in which we discussed politics, the group felt that their MPs were difficult to reach and only concerned about them during election time. The traditional authority in Ndirande was not supporting their cause, and there were no City Councillors to advocate for their position within the formal local governing system. Their powerlessness is part of a deep problem with urban politics in Malawi by which the urban poor, except those who fall into one of the urban "traditional" communities, are not recognised as belonging in the city. In a similar vein to Mr Longwe's experience of being denied fertiliser coupons by his rural traditional authority because he is "urban," and being denied in town because he is a

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up for water at the Angoni Lonjezo standpipe and no one using the Water for People standpipe. The fact that people would opt to wait in line shows that the fee was not nominal to them.

"stranger," many urban households occupy an awkward political space. The example of the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme shows that urban households *can* have improved food security if they are given access to the resources needed to produce their own food. It also shows that the lack of understanding of urban poverty and the lack of political will undermine the implementation of known solutions. In this way, the issue of urban governance is central to the issue of urban food insecurity.

7.5. Conclusion

The majority of households in Blantyre do not produce their own food, but for those with access to land, labour, and farm inputs, household production of maize can make the difference between being food secure and food insecure. This chapter has focused on maize cultivation for several reasons. It is the most popular crop by far and the household supply of maize is directly correlated with the subjective experience of household food security in Blantyre. Furthermore, my focus on maize rather than other types of food production helps to draw out the implications of the fertiliser subsidy programme for urban farmers and would-be farmers, who have been largely by-passed by the programme. The fertiliser programme aimed at improving the aggregate national food security (indicated as national maize production) rather than food security at the household scale. The study of urban household food security clearly demonstrates that this programme fails to address the underlying problem of individual and household food access. This shortcoming has broader implications in light of the fact that a majority of rural households are also net consumers of maize (Andersson, 2011).

The examples of households straddling urban and rural spaces and drawing on rural resources while maintaining residence in town show that urban and rural livelihoods

are inextricable from each other. In closely examining how households maintain these linkages, an intricate picture of gender relations emerges that shows multiple intersectionalities with place of origin, age, and birth order. The example of customary land access in the context of matrilineal societies shows that "gender and food security" is not simply a question of why women are more insecure than men. The implications of one's gender identity for one's food security have vast variations even within the limited scope of my Blantyre case study.

The issue of governance also comes to a head in this chapter in a very explicit way regarding the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme, which resonates with examples in previous chapters in terms of the political economic foundation of urban food insecurity. Like the street vendors during Operation *dongosolo* discussed in Chapter 5 and the poorly served consumers and market vendors discussed in Chapter 6, the farmers in Ndirande had no means of recourse when their livelihoods were threatened by the termination of the programme. The decision to terminate the programme came from the national government level in accordance with their priority of promoting a modern city. The environmental reason given does not obscure the fact that the extreme importance of urban agriculture for the households enrolled in the programme was neither considered nor accommodated. The disregard for the needs of the urban farmers is not surprising considering that the Blantyre Water Board is not accountable to the local community. As I concluded in the two previous chapters, improving accountability at the local government level will be an essential step towards improving urban food security. Policies like the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme show that the natural resources are *available* to give low-income residents the opportunity to reduce their

vulnerability by broadening the scope of their livelihood activities. Like the availability of food in town, for highly political reasons these resources are inaccessible to the people whose livelihoods could be most improved through their use.

Chapter 8: Drawing together the conceptual threads

> [This matters because] food is the most important and frequently
> encountered material object that translates regulatory regimes and
> power relationships into lived experience. Thus food has the
> almost magical property of jumping scale: as it moves, it links the
> global economy and household economies, political bodies and
> bodies of individuals, the world and the self. (Dunn, 2009: 208)

8.1. Introduction

In this dissertation, I have "jumped scale" (Dunn, 2009: 208) in order to link the
daily challenges people told me about in interviews, participative diagramming sessions,
and informal conversations, with structural problems inherent in the wider food economy
and in the political economy of urban poverty in Malawi. I focused on issues internal to
Malawi, even as the contextual factors of colonialism, globalisation, and structural
adjustment underlined the importance of linkages beyond Malawi's borders. The AFSUN
survey provided a basis for comparing Blantyre to other cities in southern Africa in terms
of household food security measurements (Frayne *et al.,* 2010). Blantyre's peculiar
situation as relatively food secure in spite of its much lower levels of income and other
development indicators introduced a theme of complex relationships among income, food
security, and poverty. The gendered lens helped to unearth some of the deeply ingrained
power imbalances that shape vulnerability in Blantyre, ultimately allowing me to draw
out important linkages between the political economy of urban food security and the
domestic politics of gendered household roles and responsibilities.

Understanding food security even in the limited time and space covered by my
fieldwork led me to conduct extensive research into the history, cultures, and economies
of Blantyre. It necessitated the re-examination of established concepts like gender, food

security, and urbanity in terms of the perspectives of people in Blantyre. The breadth of issues and questions that intersected with the straightforward question of how people access food in Blantyre attest to Dunn's (2009: 208) statement that: "food is the most important and frequently encountered material object that translates regulatory regimes and power relationships into lived experience." In this chapter I refer directly and in turn to the conceptual threads introduced in Chapter 1 in order to consolidate my arguments in light of the evidence presented in this dissertation. I also draw attention to events that have transpired since my fieldwork, in particular widespread protests against political violence, the lack of political freedom, and the rapidly rising cost of living in town. These problems are the logical result of the high degree of frustration that many people expressed to me in 2010, where their basic daily needs have been marginalised in favour of economic growth and the further enrichment of political elites.

8.2. Urban livelihood precarity and household food insecurity

The first conceptual thread was that urban livelihoods are increasingly precarious, and the effect is that food insecurity is increasingly an issue of relying on small amounts of food purchased daily, going hungry on a seasonal basis when prices spike, or being increasingly vulnerable to adverse, but not unusual, life events. Most people in Blantyre were earning their income through the informal economy, which, as I discussed in Chapter 5, is a vast and multifaceted arena. The most precarious income sources were through unskilled piecework, such as the women in Ndirande who told me they would earn just enough in a day of carrying things to buy something to eat. People with enough money to invest in goods to sell at a profit or tools for skilled piecework fared better but they were also vulnerable to adverse household events that could lead to bankruptcy and

indebtedness. The implications of this livelihood precarity for urban food security, as I identified in Chapter 4, are captured by the popularity of *walkman*. Rather than purchasing maize in bulk and being assured of a household supply of staple food, more and more low-income households are relying on these small purchases of maize. As a consequence, many people experienced the disempowerment of food insecurity as the feeling of trying to sleep while worrying about how they will eat the next day. Roles and tasks that seem mundane in other contexts, such as purchasing, cooking, and allocating food, become crucial under these conditions. Food secure households could afford to eat from the same pot, whereas women in food insecure households had to allocate food precisely and sparingly in order to conserve for the following day should they be unable to procure more food.

These trends are in line with the global trend of precariatisation (Standing, 2011, 2012), which is characterised by increasing casualisation of the global workforce with the increasing mobility of global capital and production (Kabeer, 2003; Wright, 2006; Razavi, 2009). Blantyre is perhaps out of step with the global trend because it hardly experienced the kind of secure, remunerative employment experienced elsewhere during the twentieth century (McCracken, 1989). Strategies such as straddling urban and rural spaces and renting farmland in the city were longstanding practices by elderly urban residents, suggesting that urban employment in Blantyre was rarely ever sufficient to support a household (Bettison, 1958; Bettison & Rigby, 1961; Chilowa, 1991). Even if waged incomes were once sufficient to meet the needs of some households, Mr Tembo's struggles after being laid off from his industrial job showed the elevated levels of insecurity that have befallen retrenched workers. Food insecurity might not be evident at

first to a visitor; food is widely available in markets and there are few people begging on the streets (because of the strict control of the main commercial spaces), but a detailed examination of household budgets and a sensitive reading of what food insecurity in Blantyre's cultural context looks like, reveals it to be widespread. Moreover, there is a high level of vulnerability to even small price fluctuations, crop failures, or adverse household events that make the chances of a full-blown crisis very high.

8.3. The gendered effects of precarity

The gender focus of my research has presented many analytical challenges. The political and economic invisibility of women in Malawi's cities and towns presents a challenge in understanding how women's situations have changed with recent democratic reforms and the legal implementation of formal equality for women and men. My dissertation was not focused on women *per se,* but on the gender roles of men *and* women, and how the unequal power relationships and opportunity costs of constraining women's livelihood activities has an impact on whole households. This applies to female-headed and male-headed households differently under different circumstances, such as when a single male parent faces similar forms of precarity as a single female parent, or when multiple generations of women combine their resources in like manner to multi-generational households with adult men and women. The roles of men and women are under pressure from changing political and economic circumstances and changing social norms responding to rapid changes at multiple scales of discourse, political economy, and interpersonal interaction.

The predominant challenge, which I addressed in the early chapters, was to grapple with the effects of my own gendered positionality on the questions I posed, how

people responded to me, and how I synthesised meaning out of these encounters. I have endeavoured to be as transparent as possible about this fundamental limitation of my conclusions, which nonetheless would have been limited by *any* single gendered positionality. Another major challenge has been to remain sensitive to the intersectionality of gender with other contextual factors while continuing to highlight gender as a core factor determining entitlements to food. I frequently pointed to the problem of gendered mobilities to demonstrate the link between space, food, and gender, but this powerful concept is circumscribed by context; for example, when children are old enough to take over the housework (rather than be the cause of additional work) a husband and wife can usually both enjoy the economic benefits of mobility. The potential for intersecting factors to exacerbate or mitigate the effects of gender are infinite, including but not limited to:

- age;
- marital status;
- income;
- length of time in town;
- age(s) of children;
- genders of children;
- where one resides (proximity of markets, places to pursue livelihood strategies);
- support available at home from other relatives;
- partner's attitudes about gender roles;
- class;
- health;
- health of other family members;
- education level;
- type of land tenure system in one's home village;
- position in birth order.

The challenge of sorting out the effects of intersectionality without losing sight of the central importance of gender is exciting rather than daunting. The puzzle of how gender norms can be so different depending on time and place, and yet consistently at the heart

of issues around poverty and food insecurity, is a vast project to which I hope I have made a small contribution.

The concept of 'practising *gender*' served to help me in conceptually separating gender discourses from gender in practice. Because I aimed for such diverse types of information about public spaces and what people thought about food security and gender, it was difficult to adequately address the question of what people were actually doing within their homes. At first, it seemed as though there was a fairly equal division of household labour, especially among younger heads of households. After combing through the interview transcripts on NVIVO (Appendix H) and critically reflecting on what women and men were saying, it became increasingly clear that the rhetoric was divorced from the reality. This analysis made it possible to demonstrate that household food-related responsibilities were typically a woman's domain (not a surprising finding), which allowed me to link gendered mobilities to gendered food entitlements. Moreover, it opened up a rich field of insights into the conceptual relationships between urbanism, *gender,* globalisation, and knowledge. Practising *gender* was controversial among men, but it was also desirable in that it signalled an affinity with urban cosmopolitanism. The fact that many people identified themselves as urban in these terms, particularly when discussing urban society in opposition to rural society, helps to qualify the idea I put forth in the third conceptual thread in that urban and rural are difficult to distinguish from *my* point of view, but not necessarily from the points of view of residents themselves. Following the serendipity that always imbues qualitative research, my interest in *gender* was a crucial window for me to understand what *being* urban meant to people in Blantyre.

8.4. What *is* "urban" about urban food security in Blantyre?

It is fitting that practising *gender,* which was normally a hollow or at least a token gesture, was equated with being urban, since the urban life in Blantyre often bore little resemblance to conventional notions of urbanism. I am not arguing that there is a problem with the way people in Blantyre are *being* urban, but rather that I share the opinion of postcolonial geographers of urban Africa that conventional notions of urbanism need to evolve in order to reflect the lived realities of urban residents beyond the West (Robinson, 2006; Myers, 2011; Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Unrealistic thinking about cities in Africa has real implications for food security as evident in cases such as *dongosolo* and the eviction of urban farmers from the Ndirande Forest Reserve. These events were partly rooted in a commitment to "modernising" the city by developing it along the lines of conventional urban form, which simultaneously weakened urban livelihoods for the poor and demonstrated crudely that the urban poor were not part of the conversation about how urban public spaces ought to be used. Such policies reinforced the bifurcated geography of the city, which consists on one layer of low-density suburbs connected to the city's main commercial centres, and on another layer of informal settlements with distinct economic and social networks. As a visitor, the difference between these types of places was obvious. I moved easily through the former, where most people spoke English and rarely worried about finding money to buy food. I was more conspicuous in the latter, where I needed a translator for basic conversations and it took me longer to understand people's circumstances. The informal areas do not display the hopelessness implied by the word "slum." As I described at the beginning of Chapter 2, they are host to a variety of lifestyles and circumstances, but nevertheless these areas

were far more challenging for me to navigate and to understand, to the extent that it is difficult to speak of a single "Blantyre," as every level of analysis presents challenges in the aggregation of different places and groups.

Focusing on the places that were relevant to the people I interacted with in the field made it impossible to overlook the fundamental importance of urban-rural linkages for urban food security, and urban livelihoods more broadly. The importance of urban-rural linkages is far from a new contribution to the understanding of urban livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa (Flynn, 2005; Frayne 2005; Lynch 2005; Tacoli, 2007), but several processes that emerged within my case study reinforced the idea that urban and rural areas are not only linked, but that there is a blurred distinction in the first place. Certain "rural" characteristics of Blantyre were precisely what allowed many low-income households and women to be food secure in spite of the lack of money to buy food. The option of going to the rural village to farm, particularly for women with matrilineal land rights, often mitigated their historical disadvantages in the urban labour market. Those with access to customary land in the city could fare even better. These advantages are under threat by the same forces that are threatening the viability of rural smallholder farmers, such as climate change, declining soil fertility, and declining plot sizes because of population growth. The investment of time and money in farming is becoming riskier and several households who used to farm said they had discontinued the practice. The continued efficacy of traditional authorities in town also seemed to be beneficial in some places, such as the "unofficial" informal markets like Makata, Quarry, and Manje, where food was cheaper and more convenient for households nearby.

8.5. Messy devolution: governance issues and urban food security

The successful aspects of the informal economy and governance make the shortcomings of the formal economy and governing institutions even more glaringly obvious. The cases provided in this dissertation showed that the DPP Government derailed the devolution process, which was a crucial component for giving people more control over policy decisions that shape their everyday lives. This deeply troubling trend has directly impacted urban food security, which has gone beyond "political invisibility" in some cases, such as the reconstruction of Ndirande Market, to an issue that strikes at the heart of deeper political tensions between the informal and formal sectors, the haves and have-nots, and other types of affiliation. The editorial commentary I quoted in Chapter 5, in which the author wrote that those who cannot find a job in town should go to their home villages, articulated a pernicious attitude that the city is meant for educated "civilised" people and not the poor. I frequently encountered this attitude while I was in Malawi and explained my research project to people; when middle class people heard about my research, they often said that anyone who is hungry in town should go back to their home village and farm. According to this line of reasoning, by residing in town the poor are being stubborn and greedy, willing to watch their children suffer rather than adhere to the normal social order and return to the village. The existential question of the urban poor evoked moral commentaries with clear precedent in colonial attitudes toward indigenous Africans in town (Iliffe, 1987). For reasons rooted deeply in Malawi's history of urbanisation, the issue of urban food insecurity baffled many middle class residents, who could easily point to the ample food available in town, and yet those living on the margins were often eager to tell their stories of bare cupboards while there were multiple

demands on their meagre and inconsistent incomes for rent, school fees, and rural

remittances. There was little recourse for the hungry, except to turn to neighbours, friends,

and informal employers and moneylenders to put food on the table.

Following recent events in Malawi, I can conjecture that many of the people I

encountered in my fieldwork are even more food insecure in 2013 than they were in 2010.

The centralisation of power and growing authoritarianism of the DPP Government came

to a head in July 2011 when police opened fire with live ammunition on protesters in

Malawi's major cities, killing 18 people (Dugger, 2011). The authoritative and

centralising inertia in Malawian politics, a legacy of repressive colonialism and

subsequent dictatorship (Englund & Mapanje, 2002; Englund, 2006; Lwanda, 2006;

Power, 2010) had led to increasing levels of corruption, nepotism, and human rights

violations following the DPP's majority victory in the 2009 elections. Against an already

contentious backdrop, a diplomatic dispute between Malawi and its major aid donors,

especially the United Kingdom, led to the withdrawal of aid in 2011 and the loss of a

significant portion of state revenue (Cammack, 2012; Resnick, 2012; Wroe, 2012). The

Minister of Finance announced a "zero-deficit budget" couched in the rhetoric of self-

sufficiency and overcoming dependency (Wroe, 2012). The zero-deficit budget imposed

consumption taxes, including taxes on food, to increase revenues in the absence of

budgetary support from abroad.

The dispute began when President Mutharika used donor funds to purchase a

presidential jet in late 2009 (Wroe, 2012). This purchase, along with the Government's

refusal to devalue the currency and the high cost of the fertiliser subsidy program, led to a

national shortage of foreign exchange that had catastrophic consequences when donors

withdrew aid in 2011. The "forex crisis" created shortages of imported commodities, further driving up the cost of imported food, but more crucially it drove up the prices of fuel and fertiliser (Cammack, 2012). The dispute had reached a stalemate in 2012 when Mutharika died suddenly of a heart attack (Malawi president, 2012). His successor, Joyce Banda, immediately began negotiating to reinstate aid. Banda's decision to float the currency in line with donor demands has failed to stabilise the economy and inflation is now rampant (Mzale, 2012; *Urban poverty*, 2013). These macroeconomic crises have raised imported food prices, but also concerning, given the importance of mobility identified in my research, is the dramatic increase in the price of fuel. The increase in fuel costs have made it more expensive for people to go to rural markets to buy food, to go to their rural villages to farm, and to source food to sell in their informal enterprises. Moreover, it would have increased the cost of transporting maize, raising the cost of maize in the markets, which would have also been elevated by the rise in the cost of fertiliser. Although most households in my study were unable to afford fertiliser at market prices, there would have been many middle-income households who relied on purchased fertiliser, who would have been directly affected by the spike in fertiliser prices.

8.6. Post-colonial reflections on urban poverty in Malawi

The magnitude of these events from the perspective of the people I encountered during my research is not as easy to conjecture because it is only one of many setbacks for the people of Malawi through its history. The shortcomings of the DPP Government's policies in terms of reducing vulnerability to food security in town is hardly novel in the context of Malawian politics; the UDF oversaw rampant corruption, the uncontrolled

spread of AIDS, rising insecurity, and an attempt to change the constitution to allow

Muluzi to serve a third term. When I first visited Malawi in 2007, there was a high degree

of optimism about the developmentalist path the DPP was forging, particularly in regards

to the fertiliser subsidy programme. The MCP Government that preceded the UDF was

responsible for innumerable atrocities and the deepening impoverishment of Malawians

(Chirwa, 2007; Power, 2010). A long view of Malawi's political economy shows that it

has been a constant struggle for rights, democracy, and freedom from hunger. This legacy

does not excuse the current generation of leaders who abuse the poor by disrespecting

their rights to democratic representation, even while decisions are being made that

directly influence whether they will be able to feed their children. Holding local elections

will not solve the problem of urban food insecurity, but it is a prerequisite to working out

ways to improve markets, manage the use of open spaces for sustainable farming, and

reach a fair consensus about where informal vending can take place.

In wrapping up the postcolonial reflections, it is necessary to take a wide view as

well as a long view of the issue. I have consistently referred to colonialism as something

in the past rather than something that continues to exert pressure on Malawi's political

economy. Malawi's political economy is inextricable from the global political economy.

The Government of Malawi is highly dependent on aid, as evident in the consequences of

aid withdrawal in 2011, and this dependence profoundly influences policies. Structural

adjustment reforms were a case in point (Chirwa & Chilowa, 1999; Harrigan, 2001). To a

great extent, poverty in Malawi stems from the country's vulnerability within the global

economy because of import dependence and the structural unevenness of global financial

flows (Harrigan, 2001; Herod & Wright, 2002). I raised some of these issues, for example

in reference to the introduction of Shoprite and the demise of the DWS textile company, but I did not give them the analytical attention they would have rightfully received had I posed similar questions under a different epistemological framework. The contemporary external factors that continue to shape the "spaces of vulnerability" (Watts & Bohle, 1993) in Blantyre should be the subject of further research, emanating from my observations about what people are eating, how and where they are accessing their food, and what factors create vulnerability, to understand the spatially broader set of factors influencing household food security.

8.7. Final reflections

The postcolonial feminist epistemology guiding my qualitative methodology allowed me to draw insights into people's subjective experiences of gender identities, urban identities, and food insecurity that were prerequisites for the more generalisable political economic observations in later chapters. The examples of Operation *dongosolo,* the cancellation of the Ndirande Forestry Stewardship Programme, and the mismanagement of markets resonate with similar issues in other postcolonial cities where the needs of the majority are subordinated to the interests of middle class lifestyles, business investment, and cities that showcase a country's "development." Their broader significance is apparent in light of Maxwell's (1999) argument that urban food security is politically invisible, and hence particularly challenging to address through normal policy channels. Because Malawi is not alone in having a highly centralised political system, the insights I drew in terms of the importance of good governance at the local level were broadly relevant to urban development studies and south-based urban theory-building. My mapping of Blantyre's food landscape also made an important empirical contribution

to the understanding of daily life in urban Africa from multiple perspectives, several of which are often opaque in urban development narratives. For example, the reframing of the informal sector as containing its own internal variety of commercial places and linkages provides much needed detail about the food landscape.

I hope that my research can also provide an entry point for further research on gender roles in urban Africa from postcolonial feminist perspectives. Gender and development encompasses a broad range of possible approaches, and a limitless number of possible topics of inquiry. I have attempted to demonstrate the richness of food security studies as an entry point to understanding gender change in urban areas from multiple dimensions. Three of my central conclusions in particular offer promising direction for future research. First is the need to distinguish *gender* and gender as a way of grappling with the multiple understandings of the terminology that emerge especially in cross-cultural research. Second, the link between gender, mobility, and household food security requires further research in different contexts, particularly in places where women's movement in public space is highly circumscribed (or proscribed). The recognition of this link in Blantyre provides an impetus for thinking about mobility as a core development issue. In Malawi, the sharp rise in fuel prices has dramatically reshaped the cost of mobility, and my conclusions help to demonstrate the link between macroeconomic policies and increasing household vulnerability to food insecurity. Third, the key importance of gender roles for straddling urban and rural spaces contributes to a broader understanding of urban-rural linkages as a gender issue, insofar as these livelihood opportunities appear differently for men and women. These trends could serve as useful entry points for research on gender and food security in other urban contexts.

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Appendix A: Observation

Ward	Marketing Place	Description
Ndirande North Ward	Ndirande Market	Public facility; various household goods; serving low income
	PTC Chinseu	Groceries, range of prices
Nkolokoti Ward	Khama Market	Informal roadside low income
	Mkwepu Market	Informal, some stalls, selection of meat
Limbe West Ward	Angelo Goveia Federation Housing Main Road Stalls	Informal, roadside, limited selection
	Kanjedza Superette	Small scale general store; some frozen meat; serves police compound housing
	Limbe Market	Public facility; renovated; good selection; part of large market complex
	Chinyonga Superette	Small general store; middle class neighbourhood; produce, refrigerated foods
	Quarry Market	Informal; roadside; various items
	Manje Market	Informal; traditional area; stalls on roadside; live fowl; various other goods
Soche East Ward	Kambe Market	Informal market with stalls; maize market; butchers
	Chitawira Road Shopping Centres	Small supermarket; butchery; expensive produce; dry goods
Soche West Ward	Manja Superette	Small scale general store; Hilltop community; expensive produce
	Zingwangwa Market	Full service market; clothing, butcher, dried fish, dried groceries; produce; in disrepair
Likhubula Ward	Chemussa Market	Informal market with stalls facing inward; mostly produce and dried fish
	Mbayani Market	Full service market specialising in clothing; butcher, dried fish, dried groceries; produce; very close to CBD
Other	Central Business District	Various formal stores; butchers, PTCs,

	Shops	Metro (food wholesaler)
	Blantyre Central Market	Public facility; walled in; produce; adjacent to market for clothing and other goods
	Chichiri Shopping Centre (Shoprite)	High-end international grocery store; wide selection at higher prices; imported foods; bakery in-house

Appendix B: In-depth interviews

Interview #	Ward	Pseudonym	Gender	HH Type *	Occupation	Home District
1	Likhubula	Mrs Mwanza	F	A	Vendor	Nsanje
2	Likhubula	Mrs Kachere	F	A	Vendor	Lilongwe
3	Likhubula	Mrs Kalinga	F	C	Vendor	Thyolo
4	Likhubula	Mrs Kamba	M	D	Vendor	Blantyre
5	Likhubula	Mr Lubani	M	C	Maize Miller	Mangochi
6	Likhubula	Mr Kalambo	M	B	Sheik	Mangochi
7	Limbe West	Mr Dzimbiri	F	A	Vendor	Nsanje
8	Limbe West	Mrs Mwale	F	D	Vendor	Rumphi
9	Limbe West	Mrs Tengani	F	C	Housewife	Lilongwe
10	Limbe West	Mrs Dambo	F	C	Vendor	Chiradzulu
11	Limbe West	Mr Moyo	M	C	Builder	Rumphi
12	Limbe West	Mr Silo	M	C	Accountant	Mzimba
13	Ndirande North	Mrs Chilobwe	F	A	Piecework	Zomba
14	Ndirande North	Mrs Chipeta	F	C	Piecework	Mangochi
15	Ndirande North	Ms Johnson	F	C	Piecework	Ntcheu
16	Ndirande North	Mr Tembo	M	C	Catechist	Thyolo
17	Ndirande North	Mr Chilowa	M	C	Pensioner	Ntcheu
18	Ndirande North	Mr Chirwa	M	D	Security guard	Dedza
19	Ndirande North	Mr Chirwa (Jr)	M	C	Student	Ntcheu
20	Ndirande North	Mr Msiska	M	D	Piecework	Chiradzulu
21	Nkolokoti	Mrs Lamba	F	A	Vendor	Balaka
22	Nkolokoti	Mrs Mlanga	F	A	Vendor/ student	Mulanje
23	Nkolokoti	Mrs Bwanausi	F	G	Unemployed	Thyolo
24	Nkolokoti	Mrs Ntochi	F	D	Office worker (NGO)	Thyolo

25	Nkolokoti	Mr Longwe	M	C	Security Guard	Thyolo
26	Nkolokoti	Mrs Malenga	F	A	Unemployed	Blantyre City
27	Soche East	Mr Kadzamira	M	C	Piecework	Chiradzulu
28	Soche East	Mrs Kabula	F	A	Unemployed	Blantyre City
29	Soche East	Mr Kondwani	M	C	Business	Karonga
30	Soche East	Mr Kaunda	M	G	Piecework	Blantyre Rural
	Soche East	Mr Kaunda (Jr)	M	G	Unemployed	Blantyre Rural
31	Soche East	Mr Banda	M	C	Pensioner	Zomba
32	Soche East	Mr Zaleza	M	C	Pensioner	Mzimba
	Soche East	Mrs Zaleza	F	C	Teacher	Mzimba
33	Soche West	Mrs Jere	F	A	Unemployed	Karonga
34	Soche West	Mrs Mapoya	F	A	Vendor	Mangochi
35	Soche West	Mr Nyirenda	M	C	Vendor	Chiladzulu
36	Soche West	Mr Phiri	M	B	Vendor	Mulanje
37	Soche West	Mrs Ngwira	F	A	Hostess	Mzimba
38	Soche West	Mr Mponda	M	D	Builder	Chikhwawa

*The AFSUN survey adopted the following system of classification for household types:
A: Female centred: No husband/ male partner in household, may include relatives, children, friends
B: Male centred: No wife/ female partner in household, may include relatives, children, friends
C: Nuclear: Husband/ male partner and wife/ female partner with or without children
D: Extended: Husband/ male partner and wife/ female partner and children and relatives
E: Under 18-headed households female centred
F: Under 18-headed households male centred
G: Other

Appendix C: Participative diagramming sessions

Ward	Number of Participants
Soche East	3
Nkolokoti	6
Ndirande North	5
Nkolokoti	5
Limbe West	7
Likhubula	5
Soche West	4
Soche West	8

Appendix D: Key informant interviews

Director of Parks, Recreation & Environmental Affairs, Blantyre City Assembly • Interviewed him about the links between urban land use and food security in Blantyre • Obtained electronic planning documents for the City of Blantyre
Director of Town Planning and Estate Services, Blantyre City Assembly • Obtained formal letters from Blantyre City Assembly giving permission to ask for assistance from ward-level City employees
Director of Social Welfare, Blantyre City Assembly • Obtained some contact information for local Community-Based Organisations
Representatives of the Ndirande Farmers' Association (Malaysia, Ndirande North Ward) • Discussed the Forestry Stewardship Programme and its benefits to their households
Professor of Political Science, Chancellor College • Discussed 2009 Urban Food Security survey in which she was involved • Identified key differences and consistencies between survey results and my preliminary results
Programme Director, Blantyre Synod Development Commission • Discussed livelihood programmes in the Blantyre area • Discussed the impact of urban-rural linkages on rural livelihoods
Traditional Authority of Kapeni Village (Limbe West/Misesa Ward) • Discussed the role of traditional authorities in the urban context • Discussed the politics of being a female traditional authority
Representatives of Chifuniro Community-Based Childcare Programme (Quarry, Limbe West Ward) • Discussed the problem of feeding orphans • Discussed their urban farming initiatives
Representatives of Angoni Lonjezo Community Based Organisation (Nkolokoti) • Discussed the food security problems in their community • Discussed the challenges and successes of their CBO
Representatives of Nzothekandi Manja Community-Based Childcare Programme (Manja, Soche West Ward) • Discussed the food security problems in their community

Appendix E: In-depth interview guide

Topic	Main Questions	Probing Question
Household characteristics (~10 minutes)	How many members of your household?	Who are they? Describe their relationships to you? Are there any members living away from home?
	How long have you been living in Blantyre?	What kind of links do you maintain to rural areas? Why did you come to Blantyre? Is life here what you expected it to be?
Food security (broadly) (~5 minutes)	Do you think there are many people in Blantyre who cannot get enough food?	Is it getting worse these days? What things are making it worse? Can you share some of the stories you've heard about other people who can't find enough food?
	Do you think it is tougher or easier to have enough food in the city compared to the rural areas?	
Daily food security (~10 minutes)	Where do you usually get your food?	How often at the . . . grocery store? Food stall? Self-grown? Rural source? What are the challenges you/your household face in procuring adequate food?
	Who in your household buys food?	Who cooks? Who serves? How much time did it take you yesterday to buy and prepare food?
	Have you or someone in your household experienced food shortages in Blantyre during the past year?	When? Under what circumstances?
	Who helps you when you are short of food?	Is there a community leader who can help you? What about politicians?
	(If the HH has a single adult head widowed/divorced/ separated)	

	How did things change when your spouse/partner left/died?	
Gender and intra-household food distribution (~10 minutes)	Do all members of your household eat the same food? The same amount?	Who eats differently and why?
	Do all members of your household usually eat together at the same time?	
	Who allocates food in the household?	Why this person? Is there usually a discussion about food allocation?
	I have read that in some places women go hungry even when their husbands have their fill – does this sometimes happen in Malawi?	Why do you think that is? Is it more likely to happen in the villages than in Blantyre? Why?
Gender and HH decision making (~5 minutes)	Who usually decides what food to buy?	Is this the same person who makes other decisions, such as what school to send the children to, where to live, etc.? If not, what makes food unique?
	Do members of your household ever discuss issues of budgeting, especially food budgeting?	
Gender and livelihoods (~10 minutes)	Who earns money for the household?	If multiple people, is the money pooled? Is the person who makes the most money also the person who makes decisions about how to spend it?
	In general, is it more difficult for a woman in Blantyre to earn a living than a man?	Can you provide some examples?
	What difficulties do men face in earning a living/supporting a household?	
Gender in general (~10 minutes)	Do you sometimes discuss gender roles and relations with your friends? Your spouse? Your children?	What are people's opinions on this topic?
	Do you think gender roles and relations are different in the city than in rural areas?	In what ways? Why? Give examples

	Are gender roles and relations changing in Malawi?	Can you give some examples comparing things today with how they were in the past?
	Do you think it is helpful to think about gender to understand issues of inadequate food?	

Appendix F: Information letter

I am Liam Riley and I am a student from Canada. I study at the University of Western Ontario in Canada although in Malawi I am working with the Centre for Social Research in Zomba.

I want to know more about food in Blantyre. It seems that there can be many reasons for people to go hungry and these reasons are different in the city than in rural areas. It also seems that men and women make different contributions in feeding their households and I want to know more about these differences. If you agree to participate, I will ask you several questions about where your food comes from and how food-related decisions are made in your household. I will also ask about people in Blantyre in general. I hope that you can tell me honestly what you think, and tell me about other food-related issues that I forgot to ask you about. The interview will take about one hour. You may end the interview at any time.

With your consent, I would like to record the interview with a digital audio recorder. The only person who will hear this is the one who will write down what you say and the one who will put it in English for me to understand. They will be instructed not to share any part of our discussion with others. When I write about what I have learned I will never use your name. I will tell your age, gender, and neighbourhood only.

There are some risks you should be aware of. You might lose time by participating that you could have spent working. You might also find that people are jealous that you are participating because they think you will be compensated. Because of this problem, I will not provide monetary compensation. I will try to make the research time as convenient as possible for you so if you want to end the interview or must do something while we are talking please feel free. You should also know that some of the questions may be embarrassing; if a question makes you uncomfortable please ask for a different question. You may also end the interview at any time. Also remember that your responses will be confidential.

I will be happy to keep in touch and provide you with details as my research progresses. You can reach me by telephone in Malawi at XXX or in Canada at XXX or by email at XXX. If you would like to know more about the research project or feel you have been treated unfairly, please contact Dr. XXX at the Centre for Social Research at XXX or XXX or Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, XXX. You may also contact the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Western Ontario in Canada XXX@uwo.ca or XXX.

Sincerely,
Liam Riley

I have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant (print name)

_____

(Signature and date)

_____

Person obtaining consent (print name)

_____

(Signature and date)

_____

I consent to digital recording of this interview (check)

☐

Dzina langa ndine Liam Riley ndipo ndikupanga maphunziro aukachenjede ku univesite ya Western Ontario mudziko la Canada. kuMalawi kuno ndiugwira ntchito ndi bungwe la Centre for Social Research ku Zomba.

Ndikufuna kudziwa zambiri za nkhani ya chakudya kuno ku Blantyre. Zikusonyeza kuti pangathe kukhala zifukwa zambiri zomwe zimapangitsa anthu kukhala ndi njala m'madera omwe siakumidzi ndipo zifukwazi ndizosiyana ndi zomwe zimadzetsa njala kumadera akumidzi. Zikusonyezanso kuti amayio ndio abambo amkhala ndi udindo osiyanasiyana pakudyetsa mabanja awo ndipo ine ndikufuna kudziwa zambiri zakusiyanaku. Ngati mwavomela kutenga nawo mbali pakafukufuku ameneyu ine ndikufunsani mafunso angapo okhudzana ndi komwe mumapeza chakudya ndinso ndi m'mene maganizo alioonse okhudzana ndi nkhani ya chakudya amapangidwira m'banja mwanu. Ndikufunsaninso zina ndi zina zokhudza anthu a kuno ku Blantyre. Ndili ndi chikhulupiliro kuti mutha kundiuza maganizo anu mwachilungamo komanso kundiuza zina zokhudza nkhani ya chakudya zomwe ndaiwala kukoufunsani. Kucheza kwathu kutitengera pafupifupi ola limodzi ngakhale kuchezaku kungathe kuthetsedwa ndi inu panthawi ina iliyonse.

Mukandiloleza, ndikufuna kucheza kwathu ndikutape pgwiritsa ntchito chintapamawu chomwe ndili nacho. Munthu amene azamvele kucheza kwathu ndiyekhayo amene adzikalemba komanso kutanthauzira kucheza kwathu muchingerezi kuti ine ndikathe kumva bwinobwino. Iwo azalangizidwa kuti asauze munthu wina aliyense zazokambirana zathu. Ndikamadzalemba za zomwe ndamva ndinso kuphunzira kuchokera kwa inu, sindizalemba dzina lanu koma ndizalemba za msinkhu wanu, komwe mumakhala komanso kuti ndinu mwamuna kapena mkazi.

Pali ziwopyezo zina zomwe zingadze mukucheza kwathu ndipo muyenera kuzidziwa. Mungathe kuonong nthawi imene mukanamagwirira ntchito zina potenga nawo mbali pakafukufukuyu. N'kuthekanso kuti anthu ena azikupangirani nsanje kuti mukucheza ndi ine poganiza kuti mukulandirapo kangachepe. Pachifukwa chimenechi ine sindikupatsani ndalama iliyonse. Ndiyesetsa kuti nthawi yakucheza kwathu isasokoneze zintchito zanu kotero ngati mukufuna kuthetsa kuchezaku kapena kuchita kaye ntchito zina pamene tikucheza, chonde muli ndi ufulu kutero. Dziwaninso kuti mafunso ena angathe kukhala ochititsa manyazi; ngati funso likukuchititsani manyazi ndipo simuli omasuka kuliyankha, tiuzeni kuti tifunse funso lina. Mungathenso kuthetsa kucheza panthawi ina iliyonse. Kumbukirani kuti mayankho anu azakhala achinsinsi.

Ndidzakhala okondwa kupitiliza kulumikizanananu ndinso kukudziwitsani zambiri zakafukufukuyi pamene ntchitoyi ikhale ikupitilira. Kuno kuMalawi ungathe kundipeza pa XXX ndipo ku Canada pa XXX kapena urbanfoodblantyre@gmail.com. Ngati mufuna

kudziwa zambiri za kafukufuku ameneyu komanso ngati mwalakwilidwa munjira ina iliyonse chonde awuzeni a XXX aku Centre for Social Research pa nambala iyi XXX kapena pa XXX kapenanso lemberani kalata ku Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi, XXX. Mungathenso kulankhula ndi akuofesi ya Research Ethics ku University of Western Ontario ku Canada pa +XXX kapena XXX@uwo.ca.

Ndine Liam Riley.

Ndawerenga kalatayi, ndafotokozeredwa za kafukufuku ameneyu ndipo ndavomela kutenga nawo mbali. Ndine wokhutira ndimayankho amafunso onse omwe ndinali nawo.

Dzina la wotenganawo mbali _____

*Siginetchala*_____

*Tsiku*_____

*Dzina la wotenga chilolezo*_____

*Siginetchala*_____

*Tsiku*_____

Appendix G: Pamphlet for observation/initial meetings

My name is Liam Riley and I am a doctoral student at the University of Western Ontario in Canada. I am conducting research on urban food security in Blantyre. I would like to know more about how food is traded in the city; in what places, by whom, in what quantities, and at what price. I am especially interested in how these processes are different for men and women. Please be assured that if I speak to you I will not ask you your name. Your interaction with me is completely voluntary and anonymous. There will be no compensation for your time. For further information or if you have further questions please contact me at XXX or urbanfoodblantyre@gmail.com.

Dzina langa ndine Liam Riley ndipo ndimaphunzira ku univesite ya Western Ontario mu dziko la Canada. Kuno kuMalawi ndikugwira ntchito ndi a Centre for Social Research ku Zomba. Pakali pano ndikupanga kafukufuku yemwe angathandize kumvetsetsa za m'mene anthu amapezera chakudya kuno ku Blantyre ndinso m'mene ndondomekoyi imasiyirana pakati pa amayi ndi abambo ndinso anthu ena m'madera osiyanasiyana. Zotsatira za kafukufuku ameneyu ndizazigwiritsa ntchito pothandiza anthu kumvetsetsa mavuto omwe anthu amakumana nawo tsiku ndi tsiku ppeza chakudya chokwanira kun u Blantyre. Chonde dziwani kuti ine sindinabwere kuno ngati m'modzi mwa ogawiora anthuo chakudya kotero sindipereka chakudya apena chithandizo chilichonse kwa inu kapena banja lanu cifukwa choti mwacheza nane. Ine ndikungofuna kumvetsetsa m'mene zinthu zilili kuno. Ngati mwasankha kupitiliza kucheza nane, lero ndicheza nanu kwa ola limodzi. Dziwaninso kuti kutenga nawo mbali kwa inu sikoumiliza kotero muli ndi ufulu wokana kuyankha mafunso ena kapenanso onse panthawi ina iliyonse. Mafunso ena angathe kukhala okhudza za moyo wa inu monga zokhudza ndalama komanso   ubale anu ndi ena. Ngati mwaona kuti kuchezaku sikukukusangalatsani mungathe kukuthesta nthawi ina iliyonse. Mayankho onse omwe mungandipatse adzakhala achinsinsi ndipo dzina lanu silidzatchulidwa muzokambilana zathu komanso muzomwe ndidzalembe kuchokera pa zomwe inu mwagawana nane. Ngati mungakhale ndi funso lililonse lokhudzana ndi kafukufuku ameneyu mungathe kulumikizana nane kapena a Centre for Social Research kudzela pamanambala omwe ali pakapepala komwe kakunena zambiri za ine ndi kafukufukuyi.

Appendix H: NVIVO Nodes

AGRICULTURE: CULTIVATE IN TOWN

AGRICULTURE: DECLINING YIELDS

AGRICULTURE: BARRIERS TO RURAL FARMING

AGRICULTURE: CULTIVATE IN RURAL

AGRICULTURE: NDIRANDE MOUNTAIN

BLANTYRE CBD

BLANTYRE MARKET

BVUMBWE MARKET

CHICHIRI SHOPPING CENTRE

DONGOSOLO: BEAUTIFICATION

DONGOSOLO: CLASS WAR

DONGOSOLO: DEFIANCE

DONGOSOLO: DIFFERENT IN DIFFERENT AREAS

DONGOSOLO: EVICTION METHODS

DONGOSOLO: GENDER

DONGOSOLO: HYGIENE

DONGOSOLO: MARKETS

DONGOSOLO: PRESS TRUST

DONGOSOLO: PUNISHMENTS

DONGOSOLO: RIGHT TO MAKE A LIVING

DONGOSOLO: SAFETY

DONGOSOLO: TAXES

FOOD ACCESS: INVISIBLE HUNGER

FOOD ACCESS: IMPORTS

FOOD ACCESS: SEASONAL

FOOD ACCESS: QUALITY

FOOD ACCESS: HUNGER IN TOWN

FOOD ACCESS: BY GENDER

FOOD ACCESS: ADMARC

FOOD ACCESS: FAMINE

FOOD ACCESS: GETTING WORSE OR BETTER

FOOD CONSUMPTION: SACRIFICE FOR CHILDREN

FOOD CONSUMPTION: MEN'S APPETITES

FOOD CONSUMPTION: STRENGTHEN SOCIAL BONDS

FOOD CONSUMPTION: WIFE GOES HUNGRY

FOOD CONSUMPTION: TIME TO PREPARE MEALS

FOOD CONSUMPTION: EAT OFF SAME PLATE

FOOD CONSUMPTION: EAT AT SAME TIME

FOOD CONSUMPTION: EAT THE SAME FOOD

FOOD CONSUMPTION: INTRAHOUSEHOLD DISTRIBUTION

FOOD CONSUMPTION: EAT SPARINGLY

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: PARENTS PROVIDE

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: LAND ACCESS

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: WORKPLACE

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: GENDER

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: CITIZENSHIP

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: CASH

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: FERTILISER SUBSIDY COUPONS

FOOD ENTITLEMENTS: CLASS

FOOD PREFERENCE: TASTE VS COST

FOOD PREFERENCE: RURAL/REGIONAL FOODS

FOOD PREFERENCE: WESTERN FOOD

FOOD PREFERENCE: NUTRITION

FOOD PREFERENCE: CHILDREN

FOOD PREFERENCE: MAIZE

FOOD PREFERENCE: GENDER

FOOD PREFERENCE: WILD FOODS

FOOD PREFERENCE: VEGETARIAN

FOOD PURCHASING: TRAVEL FAR FOR DEALS

FOOD PURCHASING: STREET FOODS

FOOD PURCHASING: WHERE TO GET IT

FOOD PURCHASING: WHO DECIDES

FOOD PURCHASING: WHO BUYS

FOOD PURCHASING: MAIZE

FOOD PURCHASING: RELISH

FOOD PURCHASING: STORAGE

FOOD PURCHASING: RELATIONSHIP WITH VENDOR

FOOD PURCHASING: NDOOR-TO-DOOR VENDORS

FOOD PURCHASING: PER PURCHASE AMOUNT

GENDER: RELATED TO FOOD SECURITY

GENDER: MEN'S DRINKING

GENDER: MEN DOING WOMEN'S WORK

GENDER: WOMEN WORK HARDER

GENDER: WOMEN DOING MEN'S WORK

GENDER: MEANING

GENDER: COMMUNICATING IT

GENDER: CLOTHING

GENDER: CHANGING

GENDER: MASCULINITIES

GENDER: DISCUSS OR NOT

GOVERNANCE: POLITICAL ISSUE - URBAN POVERTY

GOVERNANCE: TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

GOVERNANCE: SINGLE PARTY RULE WAS BETTER

GOVERNANCE: MARKET MANAGEMENT

GOVERNANCE: BLANTYRE CITY ASSEMBLY

GOVERNANCE: ADMARC

GOVERNANCE: LOCAL ELECTIONS

GOVERNANCE: LAND RIGHTS

GOVERNANCE: CORRUPTION

GOVERNANCE: BLANTYRE WATER BOARD

GOVERNANCE: CONFLICT OVER URBAN LAND USE

GOVERNANCE: *DONGOSOLO*

GOVERNANCE: HUMAN RIGHTS

GOVERNANCE: POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN TOWN

GOVERNANCE: POLITICS OF FOOD

HOUSEHOLD DUTIES: CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

HOUSEHOLD DUTIES: DOMESTIC HELP

HOUSEHOLD DUTIES: GENDERED RESPONSIBILITIES

HOUSEHOLD DUTIES: HOUSEWIFE

HOUSEHOLD DUTIES: WOMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILDREN

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES: BUDGETING

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES: NON-FOOD EXPENSES

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES: STARTING A HOUSEHOLD

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES: WHO DECIDES HOW TO SPEND MONEY

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES: WHO EARNS MONEY

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS: RELATIVES STAYING WITH HH

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS: SINGLE PARENT

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS: STEP PARENTS

HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS: SUPPORTING OTHER PEOPLE

LIMBE MARKET

LIVELIHOODS: AGRICULTURE

LIVELIHOODS: BUSINESS LOAN

LIVELIHOODS: CASH FLOW AND INVESTMENT

LIVELIHOODS: DEBT AND LOAN SHARKING

LIVELIHOODS: EDUCATION

LIVELIHOODS: EMPLOYMENT

LIVELIHOODS: *GANYU*

LIVELIHOODS: GENDER DIFFERENCES

LIVELIHOODS: HARD WORK AND LAZINESS DISCOURSES

LIVELIHOODS: HOUSING

LIVELIHOODS: ILLEGAL VENDING

LIVELIHOODS: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

LIVELIHOODS: LABOUR ISSUES

LIVELIHOODS: PROSTITUTION

LIVELIHOODS: RESORT TO CRIME

LIVELIHOODS: SHORTAGE OF CASH

LIVELIHOODS: SMALL BUSINESS

LIVELIHOODS: STARTING A BUSINESS

LIVELIHOODS: STRUGGLING TO GET BY EXAMPLES

LIVELIHOODS: TRAVEL FOR A LIVING

LIVELIHOODS: UNEMPLOYMENT

LIVELIHOODS: URBAN-RURAL INTERACTION

MANJA

MANJE MARKET

MARRIAGE: BACHELOR'S LIFE

MARRIAGE: CONFLICT OVER GENDER ROLES

MARRIAGE: COOPERATIVE MARRIAGES

MARRIAGE: FAMILY PLANNING

MARRIAGE: FEAR HUSBANDS

MARRIAGE: LOVE POTION

MARRIAGE: MATRILINEAL

MARRIAGE: MONOGAMY

MARRIAGE: NEED HUSBAND'S PERMISSION TO WORK

MARRIAGE: NEGLECTFUL HUSBAND

MARRIAGE: POLYGAMY

MARRIAGE: RELIGIOUS FOUNDATION

MARRIAGE: SECRETS

MARRIAGE: SEPARATION

MARRIAGE: SUPPORTIVE HUSBANDS

MBAYANI MARKET

METRICS: ALLOWANCES

METRICS: BAGS OF MAIZE

METRICS: COST OF GOING HOME

METRICS: COST OF WATER

METRICS: FOOD PRICES

METRICS: HOUSING COSTS

METRICS: MEAL PORTIONS

METRICS: NUMBER OF VENDORS

METRICS: RENTING FARMLAND

METRICS: TRANSPORT

METRICS: WAGES AND INCOMES

NDIRANDE MARKET

OTHER: ASPIRATIONS FOR A BETTER LIFE

OTHER: COOKING FUEL

OTHER: DEVELOPMENT (GOVERNMENT DOING A GOOD JOB)

OTHER: ENVIRONMENT (CLIMATE CHANGE)

OTHER: HEALTH (DISEASE AND SANITATION)

OTHER: WATER ACCESS

OTHER: WITCHCRAFT

QUARRY MARKET

SUPPORT: FROM CBOS

SUPPORT: FROM CHURCHES

SUPPORT: FROM GOVERNMENT OR
POLITICIANS

SUPPORT: FROM NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS

SUPPORT: FROM RELATIVES

SUPPORT: NO SUPPORT

URBANISATION: COMMUNITIES OF PEOPLE
COMING TOGETHER FROM ALL OVER

URBANISATION: EXPECTATIONS OF
BLANTYRE

URBANISATION: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

URBANISATION: MOVING BACK TO RURAL

URBANISATION: REASONS FOR COMING TO
BLANTYRE

URBANISATION: SLUMS

URBANISATION: URBAN ENCROACHMENT

URBANISATION: WHY STAY?

URBRUR: BEING CLOSE TO HOME VILLAGE

URBRUR: GENDER DIFFERENCES

URBRUR: PEOPLE IN RURAL DEPEND ON
CASH FROM TOWN

URBRUR: PEOPLE IN TOWN DEPEND ON
RURAL FARMERS

URBRUR: RURAL URBAN SOCIAL LINKS

URBRUR: STRETCHED HOUSEHOLDS

URBRUR: TOWN BETTER

URBRUR: TOWN VS VILLAGE LIFE

URBRUR: VILLAGE BETTER

URBRUR: VISITING HOME VILLAGE

VULNERABLE GROUPS: BEGGARS

VULNERABLE GROUPS: CHILDREN

VULNERABLE GROUPS: ELDERLY

VULNERABLE GROUPS: ORPHANS

VULNERABLE GROUPS: SICK PEOPLE

ZINGWANGWA MARKET

Office of Research Ethics

The University of Western Ontario
Room 4180 Support Services Building, London, ON, Canada N6A 5C1
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Website: www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. B. Dodson	
Review Number: 16789S	**Review Level:** Full Board
Review Date: February 05, 2010	**Approved Local # of Participants:** 170

Protocol Title: Food security, gender relations, and urban space in Blantyre, Malawi

Department and Institution: Geography, University of Western Ontario

Sponsor: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Ethics Approval Date: March 09, 2010   **Expiry Date:** August 31, 2012

Documents Reviewed and Approved: UWO Protocol, Letter of Information and Consent (Key Informants - Interview), Letter of Information and Consent (Literate Subjects - Interview), Letter of Information and Consent (Mapping / Group Discussions), Confidentiality Agreement.

Documents Received for Information:

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of monitor, telephone number). Expedited review of minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered. Subjects must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation.

Investigators must promptly also report to the NMREB:

a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to this office for approval.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

Chair of NMREB: Dr. Jerry Paquette
FDA Ref. #: IRB 00000941

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information			
☑ Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	☐ Janice Sutherland (jsutherl@uwo.ca)	☐ Elizabeth Wambolt (ewambolt@uwo.ca)	☐ Denise Grafton (dgrafton@uwo.ca)

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.   cc: ORE File

Curriculum vitae

Name	Liam John Riley
Post-secondary **Education &** **Degrees**	McGill University Montréal, Québec, Canada 1999-2003 B.A. (First Class Honours) The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2006-2008 M.A. The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2008-2013 Ph.D.
Honours and **Awards**	2012. Africa Institute Student Mobility Fund Award (UWO, $2,500) 2008-2011. Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral (SSHRC, $105,000) 2009-2010. International Development Research Centre Doctoral Research Award (IDRC, $18,888) 2009. Canada Graduate Scholarship - Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement (SSHRC, $6,000) 2009. Graduate Thesis Research Award (Western, $400) 2007-2008. Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's (SSHRC, $17,500) 2007. The E.G. Pleva Prize for Excellence as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (UWO, $450) 2007. Graduate Thesis Research Award (UWO, $1,200) 2006-2012. Western Graduate Research Scholarship (UWO, $25,000) 2002. Japan Studies Prize (McGill, $25) 1999-2003. James McGill Scholarship (McGill, $12,000)
Related Work **Experience**	Lecturer 2012. *Africa South of the Sahara* (UWO) 2011. *Geography of Gender* (Co-instructed with Dr Mireya Folch-Serra) (UWO) Teaching Assistant 2013. *Geography of China* (UWO) 2012. *Geography of Hazards* (UWO) 2012. *Geography of China* (UWO 2011. *Russia & Former Soviet Union: The Legacy* (UWO)

	2008. *Russia & Former Soviet Union: The Legacy* (UWO) 2008. *Geography of Canada* (UWO) 2007. *Society & Nature* (UWO) 2007. *People, Places &* Landscapes (UWO*)* 2006. *Society & Nature* (UWO)
Publications	Peer Reviewed Journal Articles Riley, L. (forthcoming in 2013). Orphan Geographies in Malawi. *Children's Geographies.* Book Chapters Riley, L. and Lupafya, E. (2011). The impact of community resilience on the daily lives of orphans in northern Malawi. In Maclure, R. and Denov, M. (Eds.) *Children's rights and international development: essays from the field*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 221-240. Published Reports Dodson, B., Chiweza, A., and Riley, L. (2012). *Gender and food insecurity in southern African cities.* Cape Town: African Food Security Urban Network. Available online at: http://queensu.ca/samp/afsun/files/AFSUN_10.pdf Peer Reviewed Working Papers Riley, L. (2012). The political economy of urban food security in Blantyre, Malawi. *The Africa Institute Occasional Paper Series* 1:2. London, Ontario: Western University. Riley, L. (2008). Understanding the lives of orphans in Malawi. In Montsion, J. and Sabra, S. (Eds.) *Global tensions, global possibilities: everyday forces of conformity and contestation*. Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University. Book Reviews Riley, L. (forthcoming). Review of "Nowhere to turn: blackmail and extortion of LGBT people in sub-Saharan Africa," edited by R. Thoreson and S. Cook. *Canadian Journal of African Studies.*
Conference **Presentations**	Riley, L. and Dodson, B. (2012). Navigating Blantyre's food landscape: gender, mobility, and food security. *Migration, Urbanization, and Food Security in the Global South Conference.* Cape Town, South Africa. Riley, L. and Legwegoh, A. (2012). A comparative analysis of food security in Blantyre and Gaborone: urban form. *Canadian Association of Geographers Conference*. Waterloo, Ontario.

Legwegoh, A. and Riley, L. (2012). A comparative analysis of food security in Blantyre and Gaborone: consumption. *Canadian Association of Geographers Conference*, Waterloo, Ontario.

Dodson, B. and Riley, L. (2012). Gender and food security in southern African cities: a comparative perspective. *Canadian Association of African Studies Conference*. Quebec City, Quebec.

Riley, L. (2012). Urban poverty and the regulation of informal vending in Malawian cities. *Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting*. New York, New York.

Riley, L. (2011). The politics of urban space and urban food security in Blantyre, Malawi. *North Eastern Workshop on Southern Africa*. Burlington, Vermont.

Riley, L. and Dodson, B. (2011). Gendered geographies of food insecurity in southern African cities: a case study of Blantyre, Malawi. *Canadian Association of African Studies Conference*. Toronto, Ontario.

Riley, L. (2011). Place, mobility, and gendered food access in Blantyre, Malawi. *Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting*. Seattle, Washington.

Riley, L. (2009). Orphans' experiences of place in Malawi. *Society of South African Geographers Conference*. Centurion, South Africa.

Riley, L. (2009). The impact of community resilience on the daily lives of orphans in northern Malawi. *Canadian Association of African Studies Conference.* Kingston, Ontario.

Riley, L. (2008). Poverty and health from the perspectives of orphans in Malawi. *Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting*. Boston, Massachusetts.

Riley, L. (2007). Understanding the lives of orphans in Malawi. *Global tensions, global possibilities graduate student conference.* Hamilton, Ontario.

Riley, L. (2007). Exploring the lives of AIDS orphans in Ekwendeni, Malawi. *Canadian Anthropology Society and American Ethnological Society Joint Conference*. Toronto, Ontario.