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LIMITS TO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE IN AN
OPEN AIR MARKET - THE CASE OF THE
ALABA-SURU MARKET, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Since its introduction into the literature over ten years ago, the concept of the community of practice has been prolifically employed in a range of different disciplines. A community of practice is regarded as denoting a set of relations through which a group of actors mutually learn and share knowledge in order to produce innovative outcomes in a particular activity. Many authors who have adopted the term have however primarily restricted evidence of such communities to very formally organised contexts that are characterised by relatively homogenous and collaborative events. This thesis therefore examines the activities among market traders in an open-air market and seeks to understand whether evidence of a community of practice can be found in settings that are characterised by actors involved in self-employment and competitive contexts as opposed to the previous contexts that have shaped evidence of the community of practice.

From a qualitative ethnographic study of the Alaba-Suru market in Lagos, the thesis proposes a multiscalar representation of the practice of market traders that considers practices of traders as being much more than certain shared and communal ties that permit market trade to be conducted in the midst of intense competition. The thesis uncovers how competing everyday activities of buying and selling displayed by individual traders, their organisation and interactions with other traders, customers and suppliers are further linked with wider systems of regulations operating through cultural, economic and other political linkages which are continually being reordered, contested and renegotiated in ways that defy easy categorisation into a community of practice.

The thesis acknowledges that concepts such as the community of practice are potentially useful for understanding how a heterogeneous set of market traders, in competition, are able to accommodate one another in conflictual cooperation. It however is made apparent in the thesis that the scales at which practice is occurring in and through traders in a market, require a flexible and more open relational approach to conceiving the community of practice. The thesis concludes from a geographical perspective that the continued application of the community of practice must accommodate and incorporate the changing structure of events in space and time.

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Notes

₦: The Nigerian currency, Naira is represented by the symbol of ₦. Conversion: The currency conversion of the Naira to the Great British pound is rounded off to ₦250.00 to a pound (December,2011).

Alaba-Suru: The Alaba-Suru market is employed in this research as opposed to the longer version of the New Alayabiagba market, as customers and traders more commonly refer to the market using the former term.

Baba-Oja: The male head of a market.

Baba- Eja: The title given to the male head of the butchers in any market. The Iyaleja is his female counterpart

Brokin: Vernacular English

Egusi: A type of seed ground to make soups. It is also known as melon seed.

Fisi: The Yoruba word means to add extra portions to an item offered for sale often during quantity bargaining

Iyana-Oja: The outskirts of the market bordering the road from the main market and where itinerant traders can sometimes display their wares.

Jale: a Yoruba word which means to ask for a reduction in the asking price of a commodity during periods of price bargaining

LASTMA: The Lagos State Traffic Management Authority.

LAWMA: Lagos State Waste Management Authority.

Kpomo: A type of meat which is obtained from the skin of a cow.

Ororo: The local name for vegetable or groundnut oil.

Seriki: The designation of the leader of the market in the Alaba-Suru market.

Shaki: A type of meat that is obtained from the stomach of a cow

Ugwu : A type of vegetable used in soups and sauces.

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Chapter 1

Practices, Geography and the Community of Practice

1.1 Introduction

Human geographers have for some time now considered how practices which feature as the routine, everyday and ordinary actions of individuals, shape contemporary socio-economic outcomes occurring at a variety of levels. Such studies have become concerned with understanding practices as the “stabilised, routinised or improvised social actions that reveal the complexities, contingencies and meanings within which diverse actors produce, consume, reproduce and give meaning to the world” (Jones and Murphy, 2010, pg. 303). Jones and Murphy (2011) perceive that the attraction to practice-oriented studies in geography reflects a much broader concern with the desire to understand how higher order processes (occurring at the global, regional, national level for instance) are brought about by and performed by people living and labouring in the everyday economy.

Geographers have embraced and focused on how practices stabilise and reproduce social order, particularly focusing on the sort of norms, routines and rules that reveal the institutional factors that coordinate, direct and make regions more competitive (Storper, 1997; Hodgson, 1999). There has also been a concern with the Foucauldian-inspired literature on governmentality and how practice-oriented research might reveal how governmental practices create and constrain given spaces where actors can coordinate and conduct certain activities (Murdoch, 2004). Concern with livelihoods practices have also been prominent, with particular attention focusing on the sort of relations that drive class, inequality and other forms of everyday activity

that allow people to sustain their livelihoods (Lee, 2006). Added to these concerns is the growing attention for relational accounts that focus on how practices of various economic activities hold communities together within certain geographic contexts (Amin and Cohendet, 2004; Bathelt and Gluckler, 2003). The concerns with practice-oriented literature in geography all have as a central focus understanding how the social relations that emerge out of actors and their interactions shape social phenomena.

The growing interest in practice-oriented studies in general has been linked to the dissatisfaction with how concern for structuralist and institutional frameworks suppress the dynamic and organic evolution of change that brings about social order. In this way, paradigms of individualism or any form of collectivist means of grouping people together have been assumed by social theorists as focusing explanations for the occurrence of social phenomena on individuals and relations among them. These studies rarely regard the sort of agency behind the events within which such relations take form (see Schatzki, 1997). Practice-oriented studies on the other hand are perceived as more sensitive to emphasising the agency informing relations because of their attendant desire to accommodate non-routine, tacit, accidental and improvisational activities that influence activity better than structuralist and institutionalist accounts (Schatzki, 2005).

More importantly, it can be argued that the turn to practice-oriented studies by geographers draws its inspiration from the community of practice literature which has gained increasing momentum in several other disciplines (Wenger, 1998*b*). Studies of the community of practice have been considered in organisation and management studies (Brown and Duguid, 2001), anthropology (Lave and Wenger, 1991), linguistics (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999), gender studies (Paechter, 2003, 2006), computer science (Hildreth et al., 2000) and in international development (Johnson, 2007), to mention a few examples. All of these disciplines in one way or the other address how communities of practice act as a platform for enabling collective learning, knowledge sharing and innovative outcomes in the interactions of a variety of groups of individuals.

By acting as a source of coherence and repository of tacit knowledge, many geographers have begun to embrace the need to examine the implications of studying communities of practice as part of a wider concern to highlight the potential relationship between the geography of growth and success and the interactions among individuals and communities that stimulate such occurrences (see Howell, 2002). It is argued that by seeking to make evident the presence of a community

of practice, it becomes possible to investigate how the practices of complex organisations manifest in the everyday actions of workers and managers, thereby playing a key role in driving the success of communities, firms, industries and regions (Gertler, 2001).

Simonsen (2001) suggests that the study of communities of practice presents a fruitful intellectual engagement for social and cultural geography. This she argues is because such concepts help to reconnect the performance of economic practices to the identities and meanings that people constantly produce as part of their ways of creating meaning through their actions. Jones (2008) has similarly argued for geographers to embrace the study of communities of practice in relational and topological terms in order to capture the various types of social linkages generated by actors and their actions which produce and sustain economic activity. In embracing the rich potential of such a concept, geographers have however also raised a number of limitations with the community of practice argument and the framing of practice-oriented research in general.

Key challenges have been posed with regards to the lack of a clear epistemological and methodological framework of what practice means, how best practice can be studied, the role of power in structuring practice, the scale issues involved with deciphering practice and how a study of practices might inform theory (Sunley, 2008; Jones and Murphy, 2010, 2011). Amin and Roberts (2008) have mounted similar criticisms about practice-oriented studies and more specifically with regards to the concept of the community of practice. They argue that an umbrella term of a community of practice may be unhelpful in describing significantly different varieties of professional, creative epistemic and craft practices. Amin and Roberts (2008) go on to suggest that the diverse spatial and social contexts within which various situated practices are generated in different professions and activities are far too complex in relation to forms of interactions to be adequately grasped and assembled within a community of practice.

Taking into account these preceding comments regarding a community of practice, I examine in this thesis the specific challenges that allow the evidence of a community of practice to emerge. To inform this decision, the thesis takes as its starting point the question of how to conceptualise the existence of a community of practice and its specific application within the context of market trading. Employing the context of a market as the focus of this study is meant to facilitate the argument of how multiple, competitive and heterogeneous interpretation of practice occurring and originating from a variety of scales, challenge the limits of designating such a context

as a community of practice. By specifically paying attention to the interaction and linkages among market traders in the Alaba-Suru market Lagos, Nigeria, the thesis examines the specific challenges of operationalising the community of practice in an open-air market with the intention of shedding light on how the institutional, cultural and specific path conditions of trade compete to define what is practised and consequently the limits of the community of practice in such a context. The thesis explores how the variety of competing meanings originating from multiple practices transpiring, such as everyday buying and selling and other regulatory systems, within which traders conduct trade in the face of a variety of economic, social and political forces challenge the boundaries of a community of practice.

This introductory chapter is set out under four major headings. The first section of the chapter provides an overview of what the concept of the community of practice means, its origins and particular direction with regards to its application in this thesis. This overview is then followed by the second section of the chapter that provides a statement of the problems to be addressed regarding the concept of the community of practice. The third section of this chapter discusses the justification for the research in employing the context of a market for advancing evidence of the community of practice. The outline for the rest of the seven chapters of the thesis concludes this introduction to the thesis.

1.2 Background to the study

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to discuss the origin of the term community of practice and some of the contrasting views of the concept that are necessary in order to provide analytic grip to the rest of the thesis. In particular, this section of the chapter acknowledges that discussions about communities of practice have been developed fairly well in the situated learning theory literature and in that context the concern has been with how individuals participate, learn and develop peculiar identities in relation to membership in certain collective orders (see Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998*b*). These aspects of the community of practice literature are not the prime concern of this thesis and are therefore not centrally explored in this thesis. The discussion in this thesis concerns itself with how the activities of market traders limit or facilitate evidence of a community of practice to be described in the first place.

As mentioned in the introductory comments of this chapter, much of the practice-oriented literature has evolved from the dissatisfaction between individualist and structural approaches to explaining social phenomena. This in turn has led in-

creasingly towards emphasising the role that practices play in describing patterns of various socio-economic activities (Schatzki, 2002). Practice-oriented studies have been described as being concerned with how groups collectively adopt, learn and conduct a practice and in so doing establish and perpetuate social order (Corradi et al., 2008). Practice-oriented studies have come to encompass a range of terminologies including modes of learning, a recurrent way of doing things as well as the process of socialising into an occupation, field or activity (Corradi et al., 2008). Consequently, concepts that tend to be part of the practice-oriented literature tend to emphasise different aspects of practice.

An example of a concept that employs the practice approach for is the term collectivities of practice, which describes temporary groups concerned with knowledge exchange (Lindkvist, 2005). Another concept, networks of practice, describes loose relations among groups of people who may never come to know each other on a face-to-face basis (Brown and Duguid, 2000). Gherardi (2006) also proposes the concept of community of practitioners to refer to a type of community realised through the discursive practices of members in professional or occupational activities. Finally, Boylan (2010) proposes the term ecologies of practice to encompass the combination of formal and informal practices whose importance, extent, meaning and situatedness shift from moment to moment.

Collectively, all practice-oriented studies have as a focus how heterogeneous groups of subjects pursue similar goals as a linking issue. However studies on the concept of the community of practice (Wenger, 1998*b*) have acted as a vanguard for the burgeoning field of practice-based studies. The concept of the community of practice has been hailed as a significant contribution to informal learning situations, identity formation, understanding the flow and stickiness of knowledge and a basis for adjudging interactions and building up competence. There are three broad ways to conceive what a community of practice means.

The first meaning of what a community of practice denotes is traced to the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) from their concern in anthropology and education studies. In their study of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation, both authors proposed that a community of practice could be defined as:

“A set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice”
(Lave and Wenger, 1991, pg. 98).

This original concept of the community of practice was developed as an approach

in situated learning theory through the empirical investigations of the activities of butchers, naval officers, obstetricians, tailors and alcoholics anonymous (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The emphasis on referring to these activities as a community of practice was to primarily describe a process of social learning where apprentices as legitimate peripheral participants socialised into full members of a profession. The term legitimate peripheral participation as employed by Lave and Wenger (1991) described how newcomers as novices to an activity, learnt from more experienced practitioners in that activity until a time when they developed full mastery of the activity. Legitimate peripheral participation was therefore a process of co-participating and growing into the responsibilities and capabilities that come with the position of a full member in a community of practice (Lave, 1996; Lueg, 2000). As such, the original intention for the community of practice was to describe the process of legitimate peripheral participation through which apprentices could socialise into each of the aforementioned professions to become full members of the community.

In a broader description, Wenger identified a second way of describing a community of practice. Wenger (1998*b*) lists three essential features as a precondition for the existence of a community of practice based on a study of an insurance claims processing office. These features include mutual engagement (everyone knowing everyone else's expertise), a joint enterprise (being accountable to each other), and a shared repertoire (renegotiating meaning of various elements, routines and artefacts) (Wenger, 1998*b*). For Wenger, a community of practice may refer to a relatively small tight knit group where the construction of identities, learning and participation occur because of these three characteristics (Wenger, 1998*b*). Wenger's emphasis on a community of practice is premised on the notion that participants are involved in the process of learning and simultaneously taking on the identity that comes with being a member of a community of practice, such as being a claims processing officer. In addition to mutually engaging, sharing repertoires and aligning jointly with others are doing in such a community, (Wenger, 1998*b*) proposed additional characteristics of the community of practice based on this study (Table 1.1).

Following from these characteristics, Wenger notes that it is also in these communities of practice that people define each other, determine what they are competent in and doubling as the context where people develop an understanding of an enterprise well enough to be able to contribute to it in a meaningful way (Wenger, 2000). Wenger suggested that people were able to contribute to a community of practice according to the level of participation they attained in that community, depending on whether they attained peripheral or marginal positions. He also suggested that participants possessed multimembership traits by belonging to more

Table 1.1 The characteristics of communities of practice

| Key characteristics of a community of practice |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained mutual relationships harmonious or conflictual • Shared ways of engaging in doing things together • The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation • Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process • Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed • Substantial overlap in participants descriptions of who belongs • Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise • Mutually defining identities • The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products • Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts • Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter • Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones • Certain styles recognized as displaying membership • A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world |

Compiled from Wenger (1998*b*, pg. 125-126). Source: Roberts (2006, pg. 625)

than one community of practice at a time (Wenger, 1998*b*). As a result, Wenger claimed that individuals may experience identity conflicts by participating in multiple communities of practice by being peripheral members in one community and marginal members in another.

According to Wenger (1998*b*), peripheral members are thought to be participants who have a strong likelihood of becoming full members of that community and who possess all the knowledge required to be legitimate in that practice. Marginal members on the other hand, are participants who would not be able to become core or full members of that practice because of certain illegitimacy issues. The intention behind discerning multimembership opened up the possibility of making linkages to other type of communities of practice and other important relationships and identities, not only in one community but also across many related practices. However these linkages are only mentioned in passing and no evidence to justify this latter point of the links to several competing practices is made by Wenger in this work. Little research has been conducted as to how interactions may be constituted in a number of communities of practice simultaneously and the implications this poses for conflict or integration in a given context.

Many of the latter uses of the community of practice have not been quick to take on all the elements described in either Wenger's arguments on identity formation or his previous work with Lave on apprentice style of participation, possibly because of

the limitations of their possible application to most modern day work environments. For instance, the distinction between newcomers and experienced professionals may not always be precise or obvious enough as suggested in the concept of legitimate peripheral participation argued by Lave and Wenger (1991). It is possible that newcomers to a new setting may even possess unique experiences drawing on experiences derived in other settings that far supersede existing participants' knowledge in that new setting. Similarly, Wenger's concern with communities of practice as a central aspect for identity formation has been criticised for the narrow sense of fixing forms of marginal or peripheral participants (Gourlay, 1999; Handley et al., 2006). Moreover since different communities are most likely to develop around and overlap different practices, it is important to consider where and why practices are common and where and why they are not before attempting to define how participation is accessed and conducted (Brown and Duguid, 2001).

The third and much more common view of the community of practice comes from the managerial and organisational literature. A number of the definitions in this literature do borrow some of the elements of learning from the other two versions of the term proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998*b*) with a slight variation stressing the additional value of knowledge sharing and outcomes in the workplace, which is typically a firm. In this literature, communities of practice have been employed to make sense of the different learning and knowledge sharing between members of groups and project teams within and across organisations (Fox, 2000; Brown and Duguid, 2001).

While the two previous formulations of the concept of the community can be said to dwell on face-to-face interactions and a local character of occupational activities, authors in organisational studies present a community of practice mainly as groups within and outside workplaces who regularly engage with sharing knowledge and learning from one another to facilitate work. Gourlay (1999) refers to a community of practice as groups inside workplaces and elsewhere through which individuals learn a practice, simultaneously develop their identities and reproduce the practice. Fox (2000) defines communities of practice as groups in which individual members learn from each other by participating in a shared activity. Lesser and Storck (2001) define a community of practice as a group whose members regularly engage in sharing and learning based on their common interests. Nickols (2003) refers to communities of practice as forms of social organisations in the workplace, possessing the capabilities to share knowledge and negotiate the identities of members.

In recent years, a variant of this third view of the concept of the community of

practice has been promoted from the managerial literature whereby some authors have suggested that environments for sustaining the emergence of communities of practice can be cultivated by organisations to foster cooperation, innovation and learning (Wenger et al., 2002). This latter attention has focused on how managers can bring about environments in organisations and workplaces, where communities of practice can be cultivated to harness improved firm efficiency. The ability to successfully harness and cultivate the community conveys the possibilities to leverage such organisations successfully into a broader system such as a region, industry or consortium (Wenger, 2000; Brown and Duguid, 2001; Wenger et al., 2002). Wenger and Snyder (2000) therefore affirm that communities of practice therefore “can drive strategy, generate new lines of business, solve problems, promote the spread of best practices, develop people’s professional skills and retain talent” (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, pg.140).

Geographers who have focused on the community of practice, particularly within economic geography, take to this managerial version of the community of practice and are in agreement that such entities do drive innovation and growth because they act as a source of competence and containers of knowledge and learning possibilities (Amin and Cohendet, 2004; Amin and Roberts, 2008). However, geographers have been wary of reifying communities of practice as groups, preferring instead to refer to them as a relational and topological set of associations. In so doing a community of practice is not linked to any particular type of realistic entity but a sort of probabilistic analytical tool for tracing the possible sets of relations that allow interactions and socio-economic phenomena to manifest (see Jones, 2008). Communities of practice in geography may therefore be viewed as the set of traceable connections that can be relationally associated to the production of a particular outcome. These traceable relations do occupy a spatial form but are not reducible to any form of physical entity or location.

For geographers, the study of communities of practice indicates an interest in understanding all the possible agencies that exist spatially and otherwise that enable the outcomes of any activity to occur. Geographers have been interested in how such relations might extend beyond spatially co-located entities that cut across local, national, regional and international boundaries. However this theoretical argument for tracing relational ties in order to ascertain the evidence of the community of practice has been criticised for aiming to over abstract or make wrong generalisations about practices without empirical investigation (Sayer, 2001; Sunley, 2008). In today’s increasingly globalised world with faster means of communications and the growing internationalisation of activities, the outcome of activities may be as

a consequence of numerous relations occurring at a variety of scales which may contribute to making an essentialised notion such as a community of practice in geography a largely abstract, relational and theoretical object of discussion.

There are very few original empirical contributions to date informing on how a community of practice as a relational concept might work, how its workings are identifiable in a particular context or what purpose it serves (Jones' 2008 work is however a slight exception to this generalisation). Some geographers have argued that without seeking to inform these theoretical arguments on the relationality of a community of practice with actual empirical delineation of what sort of practices allow such a concept to be obvious, the relations that are suggested as being a community of practice can only be at best a partial and incomplete representation of only a selected part of the wider norms that constitute the complex behaviour of any society (Sunley, 2008).

The concept of a community of practice is indeed a potentially useful way to capture and analyse the complex factors and processes that bring about social order. Despite these criticisms, such a concept, if clarified conceptually and methodologically, can indeed become a fruitful avenue for understanding how a diverse range of outcomes are brought about through the connectedness of specific agencies in the midst of many competing meanings. Therefore, the question remains how to capture all forms of everyday manifestations, structural inequalities, macro institutional factors and other competitive economic dynamics coherently but without over reifying these features unreflexively into a singular entity of practice (also see Sayer, 2001; Peck, 2005). I therefore seek to engage with understanding how, where and why a community of practice exists amidst the variety of practices that are competing for meaning at any moment in time in a marketplace.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The concept of the community of practice, as made evident from the literature so far, suggests that it is a term that has been widely used outside the discipline of geography to refer to how groups of people interact, imitate and learn from other people with whom they carry out similar activities. Over a period, people who continually interact together are likely to develop relationships characterised by mutuality, shared ethics, trust, common languages, routines, certain procedures and styles (Alee, 2000; Hara and Schwen, 2006; Mutch, 2003). Communities of practice are therefore generally discussed as advantageous because they provide people within certain settings with the avenue and opportunity to learn, develop themselves, share, and acquire the

desired knowledge required in a particular context whilst socialising with others.

Since much of what is known about communities of practice emerges from the business management literature, the settings in which people are described as participating in a community of practice are often very close knit formalised organisations, typically described as the firm. While settings as the firm remain central to the investigation of a community of practice, other common examples have focused on educational settings in schools and classrooms (Boylan, 2005), sports teams (Owen-Pugh, 2003) and UK public house managers (Mutch, 2003) as equally appropriate contexts to explore the workings of the community of practice. However as many of these contexts tend to refer to coherent and homogenous activities where all the actors are engaged in a similar objective, it is common for a community of practice to often unreflexively seem to denote a functional group of co-located people doing the same thing together in a context.

Communities of practice have become quite prominent as structures within work settings that allow innovation and knowledge sharing to occur. Yet, because of the narrow emphasis of practice as almost restricted to face to face interactions and stable relations among specific occupational groups, the scope of a community of practice seem to under-specify the diversity of participants, actions and processes that allow practices to emerge (Henriksson, 2000). Gourlay (1999) has also added that the sort of activities that draw attention to evidence of the community of practice in such formal and homogenous settings are often deemed 'worthy practices'. As a result Gourlay (1999) notes that it is not common in the community of practice literature to consider perceived 'unworthy behaviours' such as workplace theft, deliberate sabotage and fiddling that may all equally feature as important relations that people do. In interpreting all of these concerns, it can be argued that in general little is known of the diversity and heterogeneity of the different agencies that may be occurring in bringing about the realisation of the outcomes of any activity when accounts of a community of practice are argued in very homogenous settings or take on a narrow view of practice. As a result, it is often unclear how the practices that are used to denote the community of practice emerge from the complex interweaving of social, spatial, historical, political and economic agencies.

This narrow focus on what sort of contexts as well as the activities in those contexts that are studied to generate the evidence of the community of practice is further reflective of a broader literature that provides a limited glimpse into possibly different spatial contexts shaping the emergence of practice. Most contexts within which community of practice arguments have been highlighted are often confined to a

relatively western view of organisational culture. Consequently, other types of economic activities occurring in other types of places that may cause a community of practice to function differently are ignored together with the challenges such contexts pose to the evidence of the concept.

Lave (1996), for instance, asserts that communities of practice are potentially least likely to occur in contexts dominated by capitalist relations of production because of the tendency for liberalist tendencies of individualism to dominate communal aspirations. She also suggests that more communal and less formally defined work settings may reflect new characteristics of communities of practice. Roberts (2006) has made a case for comparing the spatial variations of communities of practice. She suggests that a comparative investigation of the concept of the community of practice in very different socio-cultural environments would shed light on the impact of its broader context. She proposes that communities of practice are likely to be more successful in regions that have a strong community spirit, compared to those nations that have a weak community spirit. With particular references to the UK and USA, Roberts goes on to argue that neoliberalist tendencies may be less conducive to the formation of communities. While in places where close-knit community and family ties abound, communities of practice are likely to prevail (Roberts, 2006). Kimble and Hildreth (2004) also propose that many of today's modern globalised business and activities tend to be located in multiple spatial locations and as well as in virtual environments. They note that such environments that are dispersed and heavily reliant on virtual and computer mediated technologies may produce practices that challenge how the relations of a locally negotiated community of practice can be deciphered.

Cox (2005), like Kimble and Hildreth (2004), also questions more emphatically the specific types of practices that are put under scrutiny in any context when studying evidence of a community of practice. Cox (2005) goes on to question how the community of practice can be usefully applied to work environments that are characterised by heavily individualised work, competitive environments that inhibit collaboration, spatially fragmented work environments, time pressured environment; where there is not time for collective engagement and heavily technologically mediated activities such as call centres. The involvement of complex relations between the scale, spatial extension and diversity of practices in different socio-cultural contexts are compelling arguments to rethink the concept of the community of practice.

It is in highlighting these arguments that the context for engaging with conceptual-

ising communities of practice using the case of the setting of an open air market is presented. Open air markets and similar entrepreneurial systems elsewhere are not less important or inferior in conceptualising evidence of concepts like the community of practice. By specifically focusing on the interactions and relations generated by and in relation to the activities of market traders in the Alaba-Suru market in Lagos, I show that the agencies through which market trade is sustained owe much to the coordination of traders, customers, a variety of institutional actors, cultural assumptions, the particulars of the urban environment and expectations of earning livelihoods. All together in this particular context of market trading, these multiply occurring processes challenge the limits of the community of practice and present practice not as a fixed given but as a phenomenon that is structured in complex ways and relationally confined but yet connected to an always context specific nature.

1.4 The open air market in Lagos

The discussion in this section of this chapter sets up the context of the open air market as a space of trade where the exchange of goods and services takes place as well as a site that is interconnected and linked between other social, cultural and economic aspects of the urban context it is situated in. This discussion highlights the diverse set of relations that facilitate market trade and explains why a conceptual emphasis on the community of practice presents a useful way to understand this diversity in an ordered way.

According to a recent BBC report, the economy of Lagos state, Nigeria is thought to be worth around \$33billion (Cossou, 2010). Much of its economy is primarily and largely driven by the private sector, comprising many self-employed individuals including market traders who operate in a variety of open-air markets in the city. Lagos is Nigeria's economic hub and more than 40% of consumer goods sold in Nigeria go through Lagos ports, roads and then its markets, before reaching many of the other thirty six states of Nigeria. From Epe in the East of Lagos through to Obalende, Balogun, Oyingbo, Yaba, Ketu, Surulere, Oshodi, Ojo to Badagry in the West of Lagos, markets are the major sale points for locally manufactured produce and food crops, thereby providing a vital link between rural producing areas and urban areas as well as sustaining farmers and supporting the local economy. Unofficial statistics suggest that market trading makes up a significant aspect of the commercial relations and livelihoods of Lagosians as it is estimated that an estimated 65% of the current inhabitants of Lagos are involved in trading related activities (Rufus, 2006).

Markets, as well as being local propellers of the city's economy also pose attendant problems in Lagos, including acting as sites fuelling ethnic and religious conflicts as has been reported in Mushin and Agege and causing environmental pollution and constituting public nuisance (Gandy, 2006). Market traders' activities in Lagos markets have led to a range of environmental problems like overcrowding and traffic congestion because of the activities of traders and hawkers who sell wares along pedestrian walkways and road sides bordering areas of market sites. At markets like Oyingbo, Agege and Aswani the activities of market traders who spread wares along main roads and rail tracks have been a constant source of traffic congestion and obstruction to traffic. Huge wholesale markets like those of the Mile 12 markets in Ketu are notorious for the unsanitary conditions that dominate the area, with rotten fruits and cattle dung as permanent features of the area around these markets. Markets at Oshodi and Iyana-Iba have also been known for the massive traffic congestion they produce due to illegal dumping of waste along the major highways where they are located. To a large extent it can be said that these latter issues have negated the positive influences that markets play in Lagos. Instead of being seen as a viable economic activity, market trading in Lagos is increasingly seen as problematising clandestine activities (Lawal, 2004).

These issues notwithstanding, the importance of market trade as a viable livelihood for many Lagosians cannot be overemphasised. For the thousands of market men and women in the city, the primary aim is to earn a livelihood for themselves and their families. In order to compete favourably with other market traders a variety of procedures are employed by traders in order to carve their niche in a very competitive economic activity. Divisions by commodity specialisation, gender, hometown affiliation, religion, artisanal training, different locations in markets and varied scales of operation (for example as retailers or wholesalers) are used by traders to differentiate themselves from other traders in order to maintain customer patronage and profits. Even the customers who come to the market patronise traders who offer the best competing deals and prices. The nature of encounters between different actors in a market (e.g. customers and traders) also brings about the realisation of numerous forms of continually changing social interactions including friendships, business dealings and trust networks. In addition, the market as a place of trade is subject to the rules and regulations of a variety of structures operating within and out of the setting of the market, including activities related to the payment of levies to local governments officials, the transport system by which traders commute and purchase supplies, market opening and closing times regulated by the mechanism of the state, can all affect the set of relations that govern how traders operate and conduct themselves in a market.

The scope of practices in the market therefore must take into account not only that traders are competing in conducting business to attract different customers in the market but also that there is a range of distant and proximate activities competing to shape the incidence of interactions in the market. This range of competing meanings can both present a challenge to the sort of practices that can be pinned down to a community of practice. In extending the study of the community of practice to describe traders in what is often conceived as informal and haphazard market trading, this research reflects how the coordinated practices of trade emerge through the multiplicity of relations of various actors shaping practice (Jones, 2008), their specific temporal and geographic relationality (see Somers, 1994) and a recognition of the organised, intentional, and complex ways that traders manage and negotiate competing interactions of practice.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

This section of the chapter provides an outline of the rest of the thesis. The first section of the chapter has provided a brief overview of the concept of the community of practice. It has defined the term and mentioned some of its early origins and areas of applications from situated learning, through to the organisation studies and management literature. The chapter also provided a background and justification for the thesis and introduced the context of the market upon which the evidence of practice in this thesis is to be discussed. The rest of this outline section signposts the contents of the remainder of the seven chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides the background discussion on market trading. The chapter briefly considers discussions in market trade across different regions of the world before bringing the discussions specifically to Nigerian markets. The discussion of Nigerian markets focuses particularly on the history, development and function of markets in Lagos and subsequently, the Alaba-Suru market which is the study area on which discussions of practice and evidence of the community of practice are based. The aim of this chapter is to introduce and provide some familiarity to the context of the discussions that are weaved through the rest of the thesis. The chapter is also positioned in this section of the thesis, with the aim of providing some clarity regarding not only open-air markets but also their specific peculiarity in Lagos.

Chapter 3 is the conceptual framework of the thesis. The chapter provides a discussion on studies of the organisation of African markets from the angle of the literature on social capital and institutional approaches (Clark, 1994; Fukuyama, 1995; Chamlee-Wright, 1997; Fafchamps and Minten, 1999; Lyons and Snoxell,

2005). It suggests that these past conceptualisations of market practices justify the explanations of trust, norms and reciprocity in organising market practices among market traders without engaging with the particular practices giving rise to them. The chapter follows the discussions by Lesser and Storck (2001) who argue that the particular practices giving rise to such coordinated practices can be made evident by understanding communities of practice. However, the chapter goes on to admit that authors refer to different practices when delineating a community of practice. It therefore engages with different conceptualisations of the community of practice and more specifically the broad literature on practice theory to clarify what practices can be conceptualised in order to assemble concepts as the community of practice in ways that are relevant to the discussion in this research. Having considered this literature on practice, this chapter concludes with suggestions that emphasises a relational construct that embraces the multiple scales at which a practice occurs which may supercede much more than a 'local' community of practice and presents the three research questions guiding the empirical investigation of the thesis.

Chapter 4 operationalises the research questions of the thesis. It covers issues relating to the methodology of previous studies of communities of practice. It suggests in agreement with aspects of those studies that an ethnographic approach is most suited in this investigation of practice, specifically using the methods of interviews and observations. The chapter in most parts engages with how I operationalised these methods in the Alaba-Suru market during the six month ethnographic study. A further section discusses the limitations of the method of ethnography in the context of the conduct of the research in this market. These include issues surrounding the ethics of watching and observing happenings in the market, doing research in a familiar setting to the researcher, adopting a workable sampling strategy when studying interactions in a public setting and using limited supporting evidence to corroborate findings from primary sources.

Chapter 5 draws on the evidence of the ethnographic fieldwork to discuss the organisation of practices in the market. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how traders' practices are organised. These categories of practice are discussed as separate headings of boundary practices, cross communal practices and practices of non-participation. These classifications are treated as linked but autonomous systems occurring in the Alaba-Suru market. The view of organising practices as boundary practices, cross communal practices and instances of non-participation, is however only one way of viewing the practices of the marketplace. This is because collectively examining practices as categorical features glosses over the performance, doings, instantaneous acts, choices and acts of practice collated within

such groupings. These latter concerns, it is suggested, are captured better through examining networks of practice developed in chapter 6.

Chapter 6 continues with the previous argument of organising practices in chapter 5, but suggests that taking the performative context of practice on board it challenges the need to categorise market trade practices that are boundaries, cross-communal or non participatory. Instead, the chapter pursues a discussion on networks of practice borrowing from work inspired by Brown and Duguid (2000). The arguments in this chapter, using a number of vignettes to make its point, suggests that networks of practices allow for thinking about the heterogeneity and complexity of all actors and acts (not only traders) that make the practices of the market possible. Quite unlike the ways the term network of practice is employed by Brown and Duguid (2001) the purpose of chapter 6 is to highlight that the practices of Alaba-Suru traders are also connected to practices of customers that come to the market, suppliers who make goods available, the practices of load carriers, hawkers and transporters, among others. In making this network apparent, routines such as merchandising, displaying commodities, dispute settlements, pricing, product referral, and the various bases for trusting relations, among others, come to be explored as dynamic conditions of trading that are always in the making, never finite or static and capture real time gradual variation. A crucial contribution of this chapter is that relations in a network of practice present a way of also extending the confines of everyday performances in market trade that are brought about in part by contributions of customers, suppliers, transporters and a host of other relations that are constituted elsewhere outside of the market.

Chapter 7 takes forward the discussion from chapter 6 and extends it to consider the linkages and potential association of market trade in the Alaba-Suru market to occurrences outside the market. The central aim of this chapter is to query how the varying scale of practice influencing the happenings in the marketplace but occurring at other distant places disrupts defining market trade as a practice that is coherent and bounded. Building up on the theme of governmentality as practice, the chapter shows that what is practised as trade, embraces the local character of everyday performances within the market as well as practices operating beyond the boundaries of the market. Two case studies in Chapter 7 focusing on the transportation networks of food supplies and urban development initiatives that incorporate market demolitions in Lagos are singled out for further consideration of how governmental practice influence market trade. In exploring such a broad take on practice, the chapter suggests that when practices are examined as scalar occurrences, which also accommodate various networks of practices, together with

organised structures like traders' associations, various cultural practices of trade and varied governmental practices, a blanket term like a community of practice is probably unhelpful. This chapter therefore concludes with the need for a context specific appropriation of practice, but one that still remains flexible and captures practices as scalar and relational.

Chapter 8 reviews how the discussions in the previous chapters answer the three research questions posed in the thesis. In particular, it offers and reiterates the suggestions for understanding practice more broadly as a scalar and relational concept rather than in bounded and local communities of practice. A relational account of practice potentially involves an open, complex, dynamic and unfinished project as opposed to the more local context of previous arguments on communities of practice. A list of references and appendices listing the commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market, the interview schedule and a list of respondents are provided at the end of the thesis.

1.6 Summary

There is a generic understanding that communities of practice are structures for learning and sharing knowledge in order to facilitate optimal outcomes when people are engaged in shared activities. However the discussions in this introductory chapter have pointed out that there is often an absence of discussions about how people involved in heterogeneous practices that are not necessarily shared or co-located, challenge the evidence of a community of practice (Ludden, 2009). It seems that to explain how any practice comes to define something communally, one must understand the variety of power relations and competing forces among many possible heterogeneous forms that shape any activity's occurrence.

Focusing on the evidence of the community of practice in the context of market trade, I am interested in the competition that transpires among traders as they struggle daily to attract customers for their goods and service, coupled with the other key competing actions that occur because of a market trade may permit or limit evidence of a community of practice. Thus, I intend to show how the struggle over the boundaries of the market as a place for trade, regulation and laws underlying the operation of the market, the larger economy within which the market is placed, various cultural institutions that tie traders to certain dispositions, together with traders' daily routines of buying and selling, all compete to negotiate and reorder how any number of practices take shape in the marketplace.

My intention is to understand the variety of multiple rationalities that shape the activity of the market traders and how the concept of the community of practice might offer an insight as to how the different coalitions and interests brought about by the tensions and conflict occurring because of the market can be an organising device for coordinating diverse traders and aiding the sustenance of market trade. Often, a variety of conflicting processes are at work in allowing any one event to take form and shape the sort of occurrences that are possible to be grasped as designating practices. In focusing on the market and its diverse trader population I explore how the complexity of market trade, including the typically proximate personal ties involved in interactions of buying and selling as well as other distant forces informed for instance by culture or other institutional forms compete to bring about the practices that operate in and through a market. By admitting to the multiple scales at which market trade exists, the research engages with how interactions that are both negotiated locally in a market as well as those occurring elsewhere, continually remake and re-organise trade, and therefore challenges the limit of a community of practice as bounded and static entity.

Chapter 2

Markets

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the social, historical and demographic development of open-air markets with the intended emphasis on Lagos and the Alaba-Suru market that forms the central object of the thesis. The chapter pays particular attention to the discussion of Nigerian markets and clarifies terminologies concerning terms such as market periodicity, location and the classification of traders. The chapter explores how the cultural and historical context of the city of Lagos in Nigeria shapes the characteristics of market places and the traders in it. The chapter presents these arguments in five sections.

The first section of this chapter briefly introduces the concept of the market as distinct from the term; market principle. It goes on to justify the particular concern to study Nigerian markets and Lagos in particular and discusses types of market trading and types and location of markets in the second section of the chapter. The third section of the chapter examines the characteristics of the market trader, focusing on the literature of the gendered and ethnic connotations that are related to market trade in different parts of Nigerian society. The fourth section of the chapter examines the historical evolution of markets in present day Lagos. The emphasis on Lagos markets is further justified in terms of the need to update a dated and scanty literature of urban daily markets in major cities of Nigeria as Lagos, despite the contribution of markets to employment, food provision and being a significant component of the urban system. This discussion leads to a fifth section of the chapter which examines the Alaba-Suru market, the market that forms the context of this study.

2.2 What is a market?

In recent times one is most likely to associate the concept of a market to an abstract notion. Consequently, its existence is assumed to be based primarily on a principle of circulation and exchange (Berndt and Boeckler, 2009). The term ‘market’ therefore often conjures images of the privatisation of industry, stock exchanges, labour market and other macro-level systemic changes. Much of this attention on the market principle comes from the neoclassical economists’ emphasis on exchange and abstract price making mechanisms. The market principle based on this price making mechanism is presumed to capture all forms of meaningful events. Consequently, with the market principle there is little emphasis on meaningful interaction or any form of sociality besides pricing and exchange. By contrast, a marketplace for the purpose of this research is defined as “a site where sellers and buyers assemble on specific days to exchange goods and service” (Udo, 1982, pg. 190).

Economists have for long regarded market places as distinct from the market principle, preferring to reflect on the former as an outmoded institution of exchange. This evidence notwithstanding, the market principle operates within the market. A few economists have paid attention to these market places but have often tended to classify markets and their practices as informal sector activities (Harriss-White, 2003; Tripp, 2001; Sethuraman, 1998). As a result, rarely are markets discussed as places where meaningful social action and interaction occurs within the broad economic literature (Porter et al., 2007; Storr, 2008). Several studies have sought to bring the phenomena of market and market traders to the forefront.

In the UK, concern for the study of retail and wholesale markets has been piloted mainly by government and public sector (Smith, 2009). The main aim of such studies has been to investigate how markets contribute to regeneration of the economy, food and health, culture and tourism, community cohesion and the environment (Zasada, 2009). In North America, farmers markets as they are popularly referred to, have been seen as an important factor in building regional, local food systems, and a focus point for the healthiness and freshness of foods (Gillespie et al., 2007). In Eastern Europe, the expansion and acceptability of open-air markets has been linked with the era of post-communism. These markets are widely seen as an established mode of survival for many who do not get sufficient income from the formal state in countries as Bulgaria and Romania (Sik and Wallace, 1999). In Africa, studies of traditional markets have included studies of aspects of marketing systems in Nigeria (Surdakasa, 1973; Porter et al., 2007), Ghana (Clark, 1994), Mali (Harts-Broekhuis and Verkoren, 1987), Senegal (Perry, 2000), Zimbabwe (Chamlee-Wright, 2002) and Kenya (Lyons

and Snoxell, 2005). Despite the convergences of interest on marketing activities, the concentration on studies of African markets are quite uneven. In West Africa, where market studies have been particularly prolific, some countries and regions have a far better served market literature than others. One comparison will suffice to illustrate this point.

Ghana has one of the most detailed market literatures in West Africa. Some of the most influential and in-depth available studies on African markets have been carried out by economic anthropologists and economic sociologists in markets in Kumasi (Clark, 1994); Tamale (Eades, 1994) and Techimman, Sunyani and Accra (Lyon, 2003). In comparison, Nigeria, which is the most populous of the countries in West Africa, lags behind significantly in relation to recent studies of markets. Porter et al. (2007) capture this particular position when they note that:

“Nigeria, which has the largest urban population in Africa, has an especially rich marketing literature up to the 1980s, but has been less well served since. More recent material on Nigeria comes mainly from studies of urban and peri-urban horticulture which include very brief reviews of marketing. Subsequently, Ghana became the focus of much donor-supported research in West Africa and consequently is the subject of a substantial proportion of recent literature for the region” (Porter et al., 2007, pg. 117)

It is arguable to note that since the 1980s, published material on Nigerian markets has lagged behind but there have been a number of studies that have recently taken interest in marketing systems in Nigeria.

The literature on Nigerian markets is populated by a few studies on aspects of markets in specific regional contexts. For instance, Egbue (2006) has focused on textile trade in Onitsha market and Osinubi (2007) has focused on the role of women in the Bodija market trade, Ibadan. Porter et al. (2003) have focused on small-scale vegetable markets in Jos, while Ikporukpo (2005) has also discussed the role of ethnicity in fish marketing in the Ogbe-Ijoh market, Warri. More recently Udosen and Adams (2009) as well as Ehinmowo and Ibitoye (2010) have focused on the theme of market periodicity to examine the incidence of periodic markets in Akwa Ibom and Ondo state in Nigeria respectively. This literature is employed in part in the next section of the chapter to explore some of the basic characteristics of markets and marketing in Nigeria.

2.3 Market trading in Nigeria - Definition of terms

Trading broadly refers to the exchange of goods and services between buyers and sellers. In Nigeria, small-scale trading occurs in three main forms; home trading, street trading and market trading. Home trading usually involves selling items in front of or within residential compounds (Hill, 1971; Zakaria, 2001). Street trading involves hawking along highways and traffic (Lawal, 2004), while market trading which is the central focus of this study, concerns the buying and selling of goods and services among traders and customers who converge at a specific location. The central purpose of the market is often to act as a point of trade where goods and services are exchanged for money between buyers and sellers. For this discussion I classify Nigerian markets based on three broad features. These include the administration of the market, the periodicity and the location of the market. I shall examine these factors briefly one after the other.

2.3.1 Formal vs. informal markets

In terms of the administration of a market there are two types of markets; the formal and informal market spaces. The formal marketplace is a designated location managed by public organisations, such as the state or local government. Formal marketplaces generally support formal trading, characterised by the selling of legal goods and services within established premises and licensed businesses. Because of its formality, there is usually some orderly form of financial arrangements for payment of taxes and dues by traders to either local government institutions, market associations or the state (Langyintuo et al., 2003). In Southern Nigeria, many formal markets are run and administered by market associations who are often a group of elected officials who oversee dispute resolutions, the standardisation of trading techniques and maintain security within the market (Olukoju, 2006).

Informal marketplaces are markets that are not officially recognised by the state and therefore not subject to most government control (Langyintuo et al., 2003). This sort of market trade often involves the sale of legal goods and services taking place outside formally designated trading locations. It may also often involve non-payment of municipal or national taxes and is characterised by self-provision of shelter (Langyintuo et al., 2003). Examples of informal markets are street traders and hawkers along major highways and some forms of night markets.

2.3.2 The periodicity of the market

Another important element in categorising markets in Nigeria has been based on the periodicity and how frequently the market meets. Many of the markets that feature in the early studies of indigenous Nigerian markets in and around the 1980s were strictly periodic in nature, as they did not hold every day like the urban daily markets that dominate modern market trading. Rural periodic markets in Nigeria were held at differing intervals of four, five and seven days. The four-day market periods were common in Igala and Idoma (Armstrong, 1955) and among the Northern Edo people of Nigeria (Bradbury, 1957). The five-day market periods were common in Eastern Nigeria (Hill, 1966), and among the people of Tiv (Bohannon, 1953), the Nupe, the Agala and the Iyala people (Armstrong, 1955). The seven-day market week was prevalent among the Bornu people in Northern Nigeria (Hill, 1966).

It is suggested that the increasing population explosion that accompanied urbanisation, increased the need for more regular and daily markets. Thus, rather than simple periodic markets many urban centres possessed huge populations large enough to support market trade to occur on a daily basis (Mabogunje, 1964; Sada et al., 1978). This point is elaborated upon in the section on market location.

2.3.3 The location of a market

Related to periodicity, markets in Nigeria may be divided based on their location into five major types: urban daily markets, urban night markets, rural daily markets, rural periodic night markets and rural periodic day markets (Udo, 1982). As the name suggests, urban and rural daily markets are held every day from morning until about 6pm from Monday to Saturday in urban and rural areas respectively. The Moniya market in Ibadan is credited as a good, although not recent example of a rural daily market (Udo, 1982). Most of the discussions in this thesis on markets are discussed in the context of the urban daily market and examples include the Balogun, Oyingbo and Ebute-Ero markets in Lagos.

Urban night markets tend to feature in urban centres and operate from 6pm until about midnight (Kumuyi, Undated). Examples of such urban night markets are the Oshodi and Okokomaiko night market in Lagos. Rural periodic day and night markets used to be the most common type of markets as those described in the section on market periodicity. Many rural periodic day markets such as the Etaha, Edem etah, Fiong etok, Edere obo, Obo, Edem obo, Fiongaran and Edere etaha in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria as documented by Udosen and Adams (2009) are still largely periodic in nature, following a strict eight day cycle. The Fiditi market in Ibadan is an example

of a rural night market (Udo, 1982).

Rural markets in general, whether they were periodic or of daily occurrence were particularly useful for exchanging goods and services for a dispersed but sedentary population primarily involved in farming and crafts (Udo, 1982). The influence of urbanisation led to the evolution of periodic markets to acquire a more permanent, robust, daily component (Sada et al., 1978). The urban trader was able to remain fixed in one location because of the trend of urbanisation, which increased the demand density for goods and service and caused market meetings to occur more regularly (Odetoyinbo, 1970). For the rest of the thesis, the particular focus is on the formal urban marketplace that operates on a daily basis.

2.4 Market traders in Nigerian society

It would be appropriate to accompany a discussion on markets with a discussion on market traders. The discussion in this section is also relevant to give an understanding of how the position of the market trader in certain trade helps to explain some of the practices that I come to discuss in the later chapters of the thesis. In particular, aspects of the gender differences in market trade is presented as relevant to the discussions on the specific cultural practices that influence certain aspects of everyday interactions in trade in Chapter 5. Udo (1982) suggested a detailed classification of Nigerian market traders by scale of enterprise. These included professional petty traders, part time traders, hawkers and big African traders (Table 2.1).

Professional petty traders are the most numerous types of market traders and much of the market literature has noted the predominance of women in this class of sellers. This class of traders often requires limited and modest funds to start up trade and are most commonly referred to as 'Market mummies'. Market mummies are able to deal in a wide range of merchandise which they can display on the floor, on a table or in a rented shop (Udo, 1982). However, the growing number of male traders now challenges that traditional dominance of women in petty trading. Mintz (1971) has argued that the traditional predominance of female traders in much of Nigeria became threatened by the expansion of men's commercial activities, coming from the virtual exclusion of women from export commodity activity and cultural expectations occurring during the era of colonialism, which predated the 1960s. Agadjanian (2002) has suggested in a related study in Mozambique that the trend in which many men are increasingly pushed into low-income and low-prestige "women's" occupations, such as street commerce and trade is as result of increasing unemployment and informalisation of the economy and structural

Table 2.1 Trader classifications

| Trader type | Function | Characteristics |
|--|--|--|
| Part time traders, forestallers, peddlers | Sells one or two items to sell at slightly lower price than can be obtained in the market. They do not have affixed location in the market and can move between different markets at will. They may have other occupations | Mainly women |
| Hawkers | May sell one or more items, they do not have a fixed location in the market, but tend to be known within only one market and have hawking as a sole occupation. | Women, some men and young children |
| Professional petty traders also known as market mammy or petty traders | Most common traders. They deal in a range of merchandise. They have stalls in markets. | Mainly women but also male petty traders |
| The Big African traders | Long distance transfer of goods and specialisation in wholesale buying. Some are importers and may be involved in smuggling. Most have standing arrangements with transporters | Mainly men, organized associations. |
| Large exporting and Importing trading firms | Heavily capitalized importing and exporting firms | UAC (United African Company), John Holts |

Source: Modified after Udo (1982, pg. 197-198)

adjustment reforms that have undermined men's economic advantage.

Prior to the 1960s, colonial economic policy culminated in the privatisation of land for export crops, such as cocoa, rubber, and palm produce, favouring traditional male crops at the expense of female food crops (Berry, 1975). Ikpe (1994) suggests that since many indigenous customs in Southern Nigeria dating to the mid 1940s forbade women from inheriting land, there also arose discrimination between what was traditionally designated as women's crops and men's crop. Consequently it was common that food crops like cassava, maize and beans were left to the preserve of women while men became dominant in export crops like cocoa, timber and kola nuts. These sorts of actions restricted women to food processing and the marketing of

vegetables and spices that could be cultivated from the confines of their compounds, leaving men to concentrate on cash crops (Ikpe, 1994).

In addition to the designation of export crops to the exclusive preserve of men, which possibly played a major role in bringing men into specific forms of trade, various communities in different parts of Nigeria were able to establish ethnic dominance in the trade for specific goods through the influence of local climatic advantages deriving from rainfall distribution and peculiar mineral deposits (Lawal, 1997). For example, pottery and salt making, fishing, leather works, textile and brewing became associated with people from Afikpo, Itshekiri, Ogoja and the middle Niger Basin areas of Nigeria respectively (Thurstan, 1976). These factors combined to give particular monopolies over trade to the ethnic groups that populated such areas.

Hence, while it was largely considered shameful for men to sell women's food crops, Hausa men in Northern Nigeria entered the food trade because of the high profit margins associated with marketing food crops. More importantly, Hausa men obtained an upper hand in trade due to the suitable ecological conditions that made Northern Nigeria soils and climate more suited for the production of food crops and livestock. The Hausas possessed this advantage over the peoples of the forest belt of Southern Nigeria, whose humid conditions combined with the prevalence of tse-tse fly did not permit the breeding of livestock of any kind (Ikpe, 1994). Cohen's study of Hausa Migrants in Sabo in the late 1960s in Ibadan shows how the phenomenon of ethnic advantage helped to explain the dominance of Hausa men in the Cattle and Kola trade (Cohen, 1969). Hausa men also featured prominently in the cattle trade because of a profound food culture that had been influenced by North Africa in the years of intense Muslim contact with Arab traders, beginning in the 11th century. It must be noted that the aftermath of muslim contact further contributed to the confinement of muslim Hausa women to home trade and Purdah and this potentially restricted their involvement in market trading (Gbadamosi and Junaid, 1997)

Away from northern Nigeria, in pre colonial and colonial Western Nigeria (predating the 1960s), farming was traditionally a male affair. The cultivation of crops was a major source of wealth for Yoruba men, who rather concentrated in farming, and left trade solely to women. Yoruba female traders tended to be more prominent and independent than other female traders, not only because of Yoruba men's lack of interest in trade, but also because the custom and legacy of polygny in Yorubaland meant that older wives could be freed up for trading, leaving younger wives to solely care for domestic affairs (Johnson, 1982; Falola, 1995). As a result, Yoruba women contributed more to specialised markets, family income and control of their own

resources than other Nigerian tribes like, for example, Igbo female traders of Eastern Nigeria (McIntosh, 1999).

Market activity brought particularly significant wealth and political power for many Yoruba women. According to Adegbola (2007) the most popular Lagos trader of her time, the great Iyalode Efunroye Tinubu, (1805-1887) is known to have grown from her trade in Elewe-Omo (leaves and barks) to become a popular arms and ammunition supplier for the Egba warriors in the Egba-Dahomey war. Madam Tinubu, as she was popularly referred to, was known to have occupied the best land on the waterfront in Lagos covering much of Lagos Island and she had stalls in neighbouring towns as far as Abeokuta (Adegbola, 2007). Such was the dominant role of women in trade that market trading was largely seen as a feminine enterprise with traders consistently referred to as 'market women', even when both men and women traded (Mabogunje, 1961). Hodder and Ukwu (1969) argue that petty trading among Yoruba women in particular was regarded as much more than simply an economic activity but more in the light of a skill and an activity that played an enormous social function for the perpetuation of lineage rights and other kinship obligations. Yoruba women continued to dominate market trading in much of Southern Nigeria particularly for much of the nineteenth and twentieth century up until colonialism's interaction with the patriarchal indigenous culture, which resulted in the curtailment of women's roles as traders and authority figures (Johnson, 1982; Nolte, 2008).

Through the opportunities provided by European colonial administration in the latter half of the nineteenth century many Yoruba men were able to capitalise on their dominance in most aspects of farming in export crops to enter trading. European penetration into trade, in the form of the establishment of various trading firms, as is reported by Hodder and Ukwu (1969) favoured cash cropping in cocoa, rubber and Kola; crops that were primarily in the domain of Yoruba men. Through this access to trade, through the sale of cash crops, coupled with changes in road and rail networks as well as the introduction of a money economy among others, many Yoruba male traders were able to usurp and favourably establish themselves as traders since Yoruba women were disadvantaged in trading export goods.

Among the Igbos of South East Nigeria, trading became a core profession because in the Northern section of Igbo land, low soil fertility, made trading (rather than farming as was the case of Yoruba men) most attractive (Okafor, 1987). The poor fertility of soil encouraged long distance trade by Igbo men and this encouraged the dominance of the Igbo traders in imported goods as second hand items, cosmetic, electronics,

imported furniture, used cars and textiles. Hence, the culture of the Igbos was seen to confer a predisposition to trade (Morrill, 1963), as well as the development of one of the most sophisticated trade apprenticeship institutions in Nigeria.

This widespread institution of learning trade from an apprenticeship has been dubbed by some as the traditional Igbo business school (Agozino and Ayanike, 2007). The apprenticeship model requires a male apprentice to live in the same residence as his master (Oga) during the length of the apprenticeships, doing house chores and running errands. This trend of house chores is however seen as tantamount to slavery for a young woman by many Igbo families and further contributes to why many Igbo women are not allowed to follow this route to trade. Exceptions to these rules are a very few wives and widows usually above thirty years, who can undergo a form of loose training under husbands, relatives or family friends, on a part time basis due to women's home commitments (Egbue, 2006). As a result, the path to trade for many Igbo female traders is legitimised through the institution of marriage or widowhood, where this permits.

These discussions so far have sought to inform on a broader level, the peculiar character of heterogeneity and diversity of market trade in Nigerian markets. In present day markets, much of this historical trend among market traders continues. Many male Hausa traders dominate trade in cattle even in urban centres of Nigeria. In markets such as the Alaba-Rago, market in Ojo, Hausa men also dominate in fruit selling such as sugarcane and pineapple, which are crops that thrive well in Northern Nigeria soils. Hausa women are still however less visible in market trade. Similarly goods such as timber, building and construction materials, carpentry products and cocoa, until date, tend to be dominated almost exclusively by Yoruba men in many Nigerian markets. As these commodities tended to be the sort of export products Yoruba men had dominance in over Yoruba women. Also many Igbo women till date are not allowed to take on apprenticeships except in the rare cases when they are married or have undergone a modified apprenticeship, which I discuss in a subsequent chapter of the thesis. In all, the context in which this discussion has been presented is to explore the sort of cultural origins around the distinctive features of traders in market trading.

These classifications convey to some extent the form of difference evident among market traders, it is important to note that each form of ethnic, gender or trade specialisation of traders is part of a range of multiple differentiating factors that co-exist and relate to other socio-political systems that are brought together in any market. Harts-Broekhuis and Verkoren (1987) have argued that the characteristics

of the trader were also related to the transportation mode to the market, the amount of time spent trading (part time or full time), variation in capital investment and credit facilities available. It is important to treat all of these multiple differentiating factors including but not limited to commodity specialisation by ethnicity and gender, not as autonomous properties but as linked to systems occurring in relation to the differentiation in any trader population within a single marketplace. In the next section, the particular case of Lagos markets are explored taking into consideration how some of these characteristics of Nigerian markets are moulded in an urban context.

2.5 The evolution of markets in Lagos

In Nigerian society markets have existed for several purposes outside the economic character of exchanging goods for money. Many markets evolved from places where local spirits met, to being places of important social functions. These functions included marriages, burials, coronations of kings, places to mark the end of the confinement of childbirth and the main centre for the preaching of the gospel by early Christian missionaries (Bohannon and Dalton, 1962; Udo, 1982). Markets were also very important places for resting (Hodder, 1965), displaying political allegiance and defining the legitimacy of rulers (Cohen, 1971).

One observes that while there have been some relatively detailed studies of markets in some towns in Nigeria, there have been no recent studies of note on markets in any of the major Nigerian cities of Lagos, Kano, Port-Harcourt and Abuja. Concerning Lagos in particular, apart from the study of the periodic markets of Lagos by Sada et al. (1978) and work on the urban informal economic sector by Trager (1987) which mentions market traders in Lagos in passing, there are limited recent studies on the current state of markets in Lagos. This omission of the discussion on Lagos' markets is particularly striking as Lagos has and continues to be the economic and commercial hub of Nigeria.

According to data available from the Lagos State Government, Lagos is the most urbanised city in Nigeria and it is Africa's fastest growing city but the smallest of Nigeria's thirty-six states, accounting for 0.4% of the total land area of Nigeria. Of the 17 million inhabitants in the city, metropolitan Lagos, an area covering 37% of the land area of Lagos State is home to over 85% of the city's population. The rate of population growth is about 600,000 per annum with a population density of about 4,193 persons per sq. Km (Lagos State Government, 2004). In the built-up areas of Metropolitan Lagos, the average density is over 20,000 persons per square km. It is

estimated that at its present growth rate, Lagos state will be the third largest mega city the world by 2015 after Tokyo in Japan and Delhi in India. The implication is that the Lagos population is growing ten times faster than New York and Los Angeles with grave implications for urban sustainability (Lagos State Government website, 2011)

With such a booming population, commercial activities such as street trading and market trading have been central to the growth of this city. Markets have sprung up in streets, open spaces, landfills, all to cope with the demand of the teeming population of the city. Despite the modernisation of various aspects of urban life in Lagos including the rise of super malls and shopping complexes, markets remain a major feature of the social, political and economic landscape of the city. Given in Table 2.2 is an overview of the distribution of these markets in the eighteen local government areas of Lagos state (Figure 2.1). This data was obtained from the inventory available from the Lagos state government website in 2008.

Table 2.2 Number of markets in Lagos’ local government areas as at 2008

| Local Govt. Areas | Number of Markets |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Agege | 19 |
| Alimosho | 15 |
| Amuwo-Odofin | No available data |
| Apapa | No available data |
| Badagry | 10 |
| Epe | 13 |
| Eti-Osa | 10 |
| Ibeju-Lekki | 10 |
| Ifako-Ijaye | No available data |
| Ikeja | 12 |
| Ikorodu | 17 |
| Kosofe | No available data |
| Lagos Island | 21 |
| Lagos Mainland | 17 |
| Ojo | 20 |
| Oshodi-Isolo | 18 |
| Shomolu | 23 |
| Surulere | 12 |

Compiled from the Lagos state government website: <http://www.lagosstate.gov.ng/>.

Three broad factors have facilitated the development of markets in the city of Lagos. They include the development of markets in response to the decline in slave trade, unprecedented rural urban migration and religious functions. I briefly discuss each of these points and their significance to market development in Lagos below.

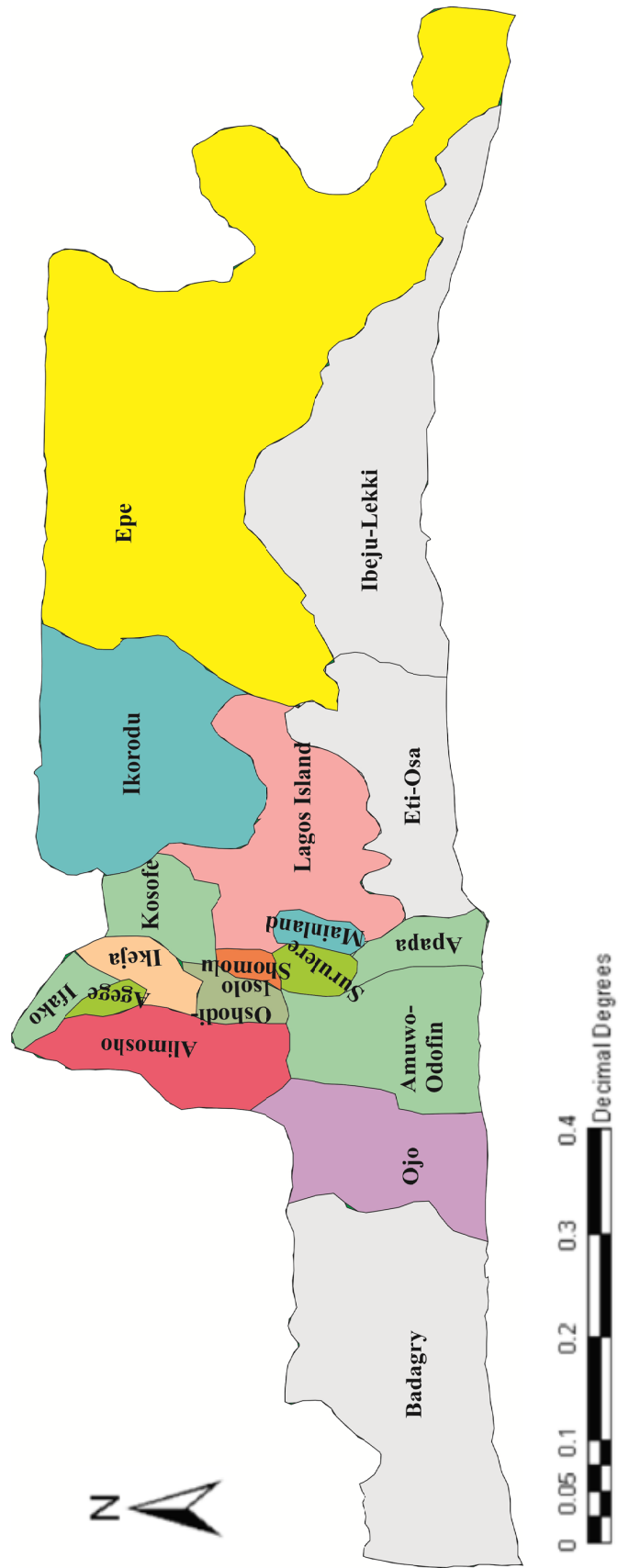


Figure 2.1 Local government areas in Lagos state (Compiled from the Lagos state government website <http://www.lagosstate.gov.ng/>)

2.5.1 The development of markets in response to the decline in slave trade

The early economic history of Lagos can be traced to the early trade in slaves along the coast of the city between the former kings of Lagos and European explorers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This viable trade established Lagos as a prominent trading port along the West African Coast and attracted Portuguese, Brazilian and later English travellers (Olukoju, 2004). The abolition of the slave trade notwithstanding, old slave ports remained as strategic exchange points and saw the gradual replacement of trade in slaves with trade in other locally produced commodities such as rubber, palm oil and maize among others. Markets like Agbalata International market, Hunto, Verekete and Ajara in Badagry, Lagos are examples of these markets. The Agbalata market, in particular, was a notorious and flourishing market where human trafficking thrived during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. It remains one of the few periodic markets in Lagos (Ajetumobi, 2011).

2.5.2 Lagos markets and religious functions

Apart from the slave trade, the formation of markets in Lagos was also associated with religious functions. Like other parts of southwest Nigeria, markets were often originally associated with socially with gods and the regular worship of gods was regarded as necessary in order to promote economic fortunes of trade (Ojo, 1966). Consequently because a local chief was often seen as the custodian of the gods, the chief was normally the head of a market and in some cases, it was common for many markets in Lagos to be sited at the compounds of a chief or king. Many of the markets of Lagos that developed in this way were mainly urban periodic markets. They often occurred at intervals of a four day period with each market day tied to one of four deities among the Yorubas (Hill, 1966).

Each of the market days were called the Ojo aja (market day), Ojo keji (market's second day) Ojo keta (market's third day) and Oja d'ola (market day is tomorrow) (Udo, 1982). The most important of these markets was the Obun-Eko market which was the oldest market in Lagos that was associated with the King of Lagos' palace. In this market, important ceremonial functions connected with the installation of the Oba (king) of Lagos were carried out from time to time. While religious functions did help to promote the development of markets in Lagos, in recent years, traders have abandoned the Obun-Eko because of conflict between traditional authority of the King of Lagos and modern political authority of the state. However a number of markets of similar religious origins still exist till date in Lagos, but have since taken

on the form of daily markets. They include the urban daily markets of Ebute-Ero, Oyingbo, Mushin, Iganmu, Apapa and Agege markets.

According to Hodder and Ukwu (1969), market places were also, apart from their linkages to fetishes, related to developments in Christianity and Islam. At Badagry in Lagos, the first Christian church is reported to have been built between two public markets. An interesting relationship between Christianity and market periodicity as noted by both authors was that if the market day fell on a Sunday, it was not often a very large gathering, however if the market was close to a mosque such a market day was called Honey Friday as greater trade was done. In present times, periodic markets in Lagos have almost all gravitated towards urban daily markets with the increasing urbanisation that has come to be associated with Lagos (Sada, 1968). The influence of rural-urban migration on the development of markets in Lagos was however occurring simultaneously with the processes of the abolition of slave trade and the religious functions I have discussed so far.

2.5.3 Lagos markets and rural-urban migration

Beginning around the late 1840s Lagos was already the capital of the Colony of the southern protectorate of Nigeria. This status facilitated the established colonial administration of that era in Nigeria to finance numerous public works and infrastructure in the city. The provision of social infrastructure such as housing, good roads, electricity and civil service jobs, facilitated large-scale rural-urban migration into the city from different parts of Nigeria and neighboring West African countries. The growth of the urban population of Lagos, in part, explained the intensified and rapid growth of markets in the city and sped up the degree of household participation in the marketing process (Lawal, 2004).

A great deal of legitimate trading was already going on side by side with the trade in slaves taking place in the early nineteenth century (Hodder and Ukwu, 1969). Mabogunje (1964) posits that stemming from this other legitimate trade was that of a few European traders who had settled on the shores of Lagos Island. Lagos Island had features that were conducive to the construction of piers and wharves. He goes on to note that this area grew to become the central business district, growing from a thin line of buildings in 1859 to include two major roads in 1861, which are still known today as the Marina and Broad street (Mabogunje, 1964). Along these roads were built factories which contained shops below and residences in the upper level, but these were all replaced by other shopping accommodation during the twentieth century, including numerous daily morning markets and night markets and four-day

periodic markets (Mabogunje, 1964).

From 1929, stall holders in Lagos had begun to exhibit goods for sale during the day and night as street traders. As a result, small but not well-developed markets, populated mainly by petty traders and squatters, began to spring up around new and some of the existing periodic markets. These included informal markets at Lewis Street, Oshodi street, Faji Street, Ereko Street, Egerton Square, Kano Street, Ereko Street, Ereko Market and Oyingbo Markets (Pedlar, 1974). This situation of trading on streets led to lower revenue generating ability and problems for the town councils of Lagos. The traders involved in trading at the time also paid no dues, indiscriminately spread rubbish, and sometimes sold contaminated food at low prices and obstructed main and side roads in the city (Lawal, 2004). To ameliorate these problems, in 1932, organised urban daily markets were for the first time purposefully established and built in Lagos by the state authorities. These markets were the Faji, Ereko, Araromi, Ebute Ero, Oyingbo, Idumagbo, Obada (Yaba), and Iddo markets (NAI, 1932).

By 1950, the population of Lagos had peaked at 250,000 from a modest 20,000 recorded in 1850 (Mabogunje, 1964). This sort of urban explosion meant that there was massive overcrowding of the existing markets. Furthermore, the markets established by the governments were located mainly towards the Lagos mainland. As a result, they could not cope with the growing demands of the population explosion of the other parts of Lagos; both in terms of the employment for traders as well as meeting consumers' needs. The combined incidence of market overcrowding and the rapidly increasing urban populace resulted in the continued problems of traffic congestion and unsanitary conditions. Consequently, the continued overcrowding of Lagos markets paved the way for the expansion of street trading and other types of informal market facilities.

In 1987, the then Lagos Market Development Board considered it necessary to locate new purpose built markets in Ketu, Ikosi, Abule Egba and Okokomaiko. Similarly, the board also established what were referred to as 'Big markets' in Daleko, Alayabiagba, Mushin, and Sura among others (MIC, 1987)). Markets numbers witnessed an exponential growth in Lagos from 30 in 1978 (Sada et al., 1978), to 300 by 1987 (Lawal, 2004) and presently it estimated that there are over 400 markets in 2011.

Sada et al. (1978) suggest that the wave of urbanisation was the most influential factor for the growth of early modern markets in Lagos. These authors agree with Stine (1962) to argue that the development of the then periodic markets of Lagos increased

progressively with population increase. The process of urbanisation increased demand density, disposable income and the demand for higher order goods and specialised full-time traders began to emerge with organised markets. Strong market associations who oversee disputes, the collection of market dues and represent the market at the state level regulate most of the present day markets established by the state government (Olukoju, 2006). Various commodities within each market also have designated commodity associations who regulate prices, membership and registration of new traders, and dispute settlement between commodity members.

These markets collectively provide employment for hundreds of thousands of traders, load carriers, hawkers, while sustaining the lives of related sectors such as transportation, retail, manufacturing and providing the basic consumables for millions of the city's populace. It must be pointed out however that the continued pace of urban population explosion in Lagos still presents many pertinent problems like overcrowding, traffic congestion and poor sanitation for markets. The next section discusses the particular case of one of these markets, the Alaba-Suru market, which forms the focus of this research.

2.6 The Alaba-Suru market, Location and Physical description

In this section of the chapter, an overview of the study area of the Alaba-Suru market is presented with the aid of the fieldnotes employed during the research period except where it is indicated as otherwise. The Alaba-Suru market is located in the Ajeromi-Ifelodun and Amuwo-Odofin local government area of Lagos state. Official statistics from the local government put it that of the one and a half million persons that reside in this local government area, 71% of women and 27% of the men in this area are traders by profession, making it one of the most populous trader communities in Lagos (Lagos State Government website, 2011).

The literature on markets in Lagos suggests that as far back as 1970, the Alayabiagba market was already the sixth largest market in Lagos after some of the other large markets at Jankara, Oyingbo, Awolowo and Agege, having nearly 1,892 traders (Odetoynbo, 1970). Upon a fire incident in the late 1970s many of the traders at the Alayabiagba market in the now modern day Boundary area in Ajegunle were relocated to the present site of the New Alayabiagba market in 'Suru' between 1979 and 1980, hence the abbreviated name; Alaba-Suru.

According to the market leader of the Alaba-Suru market, the market was located at

Suru by the Lagos state administration in 1980 on the site of what used to be a former electronic markets site. The electronics market was relocated to Suru from Alaka in Surulere, but because its growth had spilled to the expressway, causing traffic bottleneck, it therefore had to be relocated away from Suru (Field notes, 2010). By 1987, the New Alayabiagba was one of the 300 established and recognised markets in Lagos. Current estimates or official statistics of the number of traders in Lagos do not exist, but the market is thought to support between 7,000 to 10,000 traders, hawkers and load carriers according to the estimates of the market association officials (Field notes, 2010).

A major expressway, the Lagos Badagry expressway connects the market to the rest of the city of Lagos and the nearest international borders which Nigeria shares with Cotonou in Benin Republic. Frequent bus services along this road enable both traders and customers to make relatively simple and straightforward journeys (in the absence of rail services in much of Lagos metropolis). The market has two bus stops located along this expressway, the Alaba and Suru bus stops which connects both shoppers and traders by direct bus services to markets on Lagos Island, Ojo, Oyingbo and Oshodi.

Beyond the main expressway, a single secondary unpaved dirt road connects the market to this major expressway. Delivery trucks and the heavy pedestrian activity the market supports use this road. The road also serves the function of acting roughly as a physical boundary between the two main sections of the market selling perishable and non-perishable items. Unlike some of the other specialised markets in Lagos which either specialise in electronic sale, second hand clothing, textiles, fish, meat etc., the Alaba-Suru market is a general purpose market, combining both retail and wholesale activities and specialising in food and non food items and sundry services as hairdressing, sewing, chicken slaughtering and plucking, hair making and grinding services. One half of the market is dominated by perishable items and is made up of mainly open planned stalls and the other segment of the market specialises in the sale of non-perishable items (see Figure 2.2).

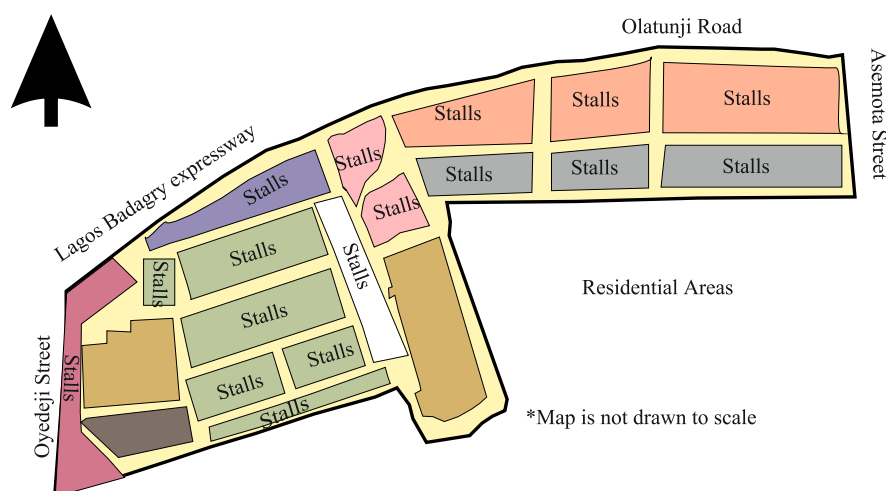
The non-perishable section of the market is the section of the market that accommodates traders that specialise in non-perishable food and non-food items. Items sold in this section of the market included clocks, home accessories like MP3s, plastic products as coolers, plates, spoons, water bottles and various home and kitchen accessories, followed by imported and locally produced textiles, such as Abada, Wax, and Java and so on. Baby items and baking ingredients were also merchandised in this section, alongside traders who deal in the sale of alcoholic drinks of both

local and imported producers. The rear of the non-perishable section was made up of retailers of plastic nylon bags, salt, sugar, hairpieces and women's cosmetics, wholesale Butter, gift items and imported packaged food items. There were also traders who dealt in small items of jewelry and many hawkers who sold items as candles, small snacks, packaged water, rat poison, local herbal remedies and second hand clothing items.

In the perishable section of the market, meat sellers (predominantly men) interspaced by young boys and girls who offered chicken killing and plucking services, yam sellers, traders selling condiments and ingredients for African salad, Vegetables as ugwu, spinach and bitter leaf, second hand clothing, shopping bags, fruits in season, which at the time of the research were mainly mango, oranges and pineapples, occupied a central part of this section of the market. Provision sellers, traders selling local ingredients as ground pepper, matchsticks, seasoning cubes, and traders displaying condiments for fried rice, fresh and dried pepper, various seeds as soya beans, locust beans, white beans, red beans, gari, potash among others were also located at the core of the perishable food section of the market. Parts of the perishable food section of the market that bordered the small road leading to the non-perishable sections of the market housed traders who specialised in the retail of smoked and dried fish and other edible seeds like ogbono, egusi and other local spices. Towards the rear area of the perishable section of the Alaba-Suru market were located cooked food sellers, kola nut sellers, traders in herbal products and ingredients for traditional concoctions and local snuff.

The physical pattern of the market is characteristic of the honeycomb layout of most markets in Lagos. The geographic location of stalls had a strong correlation with trader's identification with commercial roles and affected how traders effected pricing strategies, display techniques, bargaining etiquettes, soliciting of customers and membership of the relevant commodity association. Figure 2.2 shows that entire sections of the markets are marked for certain commodities and often this spatial organisation of commodities also correlated in many cases with the ethnic and gender character of traders, which I will expand upon in chapter five.

Each row of stalls is called a line and each line in Alaba-Suru market was a row of about 26 shops, with 13 shops on either side of this line. There were two types of lines in the market. Specialised commodity lines which displayed the same type of goods, while mixed specialty lines often had a mix of a number of commodities on display (see Figure 2.3). Most specialised lines also tended to be populated by traders in the same commodity association selling similar items at almost the same



- Pedestrian paths
- Factories
- Non-perishable items such as hair pieces, electronics and provisions
- Baking ingredients, confectionaries and cooked food
- Meat, tomatoes, ginger, pepper garlic and frozen food
- Yam, second hand goods and women's shoes
- Wholesalers
- Food items
- curtains and clothes
- Mini abattoir

Figure 2.2 Alaba-Suru Market (Source Field notes, 2010)

prices (Figure 2.3a). The purpose of the commodity line included facilitating price regulation, enforcing rules among traders in commodity associations, regulating display techniques and controlling the flow of customers. Furthermore because of the spatial and structural complexity of the market, individual stalls of traders did not tend to have particular names. The line was the easiest way to recognise and find

commodities and traders in the market. It was a common occurrence to hear labels like the cake line, cosmetics line, fish line, meat line etc. Many traders in the market are identified by their location in particular lines. Questions like “where can I get a chewing stick?”, would most often be answered by directing the individual through a description of a maze of lines and giving the person an exact location on a particular line where such a trader may be found.

Lines centrally located in the market core could be also be distinguished from lines located at the market frontage and close to the main expressway bordering the market. Stalls that were centrally located in core of the market tended to attract the more wealthy consumers who often did extensive shopping. The permanent nature of stalls in the market core allowed traders to accommodate an extensive display of a particular commodity in sufficient volume, ranging from large bags to basins and small heaps in their stalls and along walking paths (Figure 2.3b). This arrangement gave customers a wider variety of display patterns to choose from than what was offered at the market frontage since the market frontage with its array of umbrella stand and table tops only permitted a limited display of items (Figure 2.4). Furthermore, because of the more sheltered and relative permanent nature of these stalls in the centre of the market, weather disruptions did not tend to dislocate and interrupt the trader’s transactions as was common among traders who occupied open spaces and temporary locations at the market frontage.

However, traders of commodities that were located at the market frontage considered that closeness to the main road and bus stops provided them the added advantage of a strategic location at the market entrance to persuade both casual passers-by who could be coerced to grab quick bargains as well as the interested buyer. Although every line attracted its own clientele, the density of customers a line attracted tended to decrease the further away the stall or selling area of the trader was located away from the main road and entrance of the market. This could be explained in part for the reason that traders at the market frontage often removed the need for customers to make lengthy journeys through tight, crowded, muddy, and narrow inlets to make purchases.

These lines whether located at the market frontage or its core, were also suitable for phone card retailers and artisans like tailors, mobile hairdressers and hawkers who would find it hard to sell their items elsewhere in the market as buyers rarely made such purchases on impulse. Common items like candles, sachet water and small home baked snacks are sold in this way. The relationship between different commodities at different locations in a single market means that traders gain more



(a) Specialised line selling plastic wares



(b) Multispecialty line selling foodstuff

Figure 2.3 Market Commodity lines in the Alaba-Suru Market (Photographs by Faith Ikioda)

power to earn more by linking themselves to more than one favorable location. Meat sellers for instance may sell both at the butcher's stands as well as at the market frontage or Iyana Oja towards the close of day to finish their sales in order to get rid of meat to make up money for the next day's purchase from the abattoir. Traders who also had sales girls, apprentices or children who helped them out at the market could also send these assistants to sell some merchandise at or close to the Iyana Oja to shift goods faster. A trader's identification within a particular location in the market was therefore highly significant for attracting potential customers and Clark (1994) in this regard therefore argues that traders themselves needed to take these subdivisions of the market into consideration in order to maneuver effective transactions between the most lucrative market locations.

2.7 Alaba-Suru market and its organisational structure

The Alaba-Suru market is regulated by a central market association made up of about 15 officials. A *Baba Oja* who also doubled as the male market leader, the *Seriki*, and his female counterpart the *Iya Oja* headed the market association executive committee. A treasurer, *Iyaleja*, *Baba Eja*, secretary, and financial secretary, among other officials, assisted these two officials. The association was also comprised of the leader of each of the fifty-two commodity associations in the market (see Appendix A). The market association also had a sanitary committee that ensured that the market was clean, particularly on Thursdays, which was the weekly sanitation day for markets in Lagos. There was also a security committee outsourced to local vigilante groups whose job it was to make daily rounds to ensure that all traders had closed for the day, that there were no unscrupulous elements wandering around the market after closing hours, that all the shops were properly locked and that no electrical switches were left on to prevent fires.

Olukoju (2006) based on his study of Agege Market in Lagos corroborates this evidence by expressing that market associations carry out the following duties:

- Regulate just pricing
- Protect members by outlawing underselling
- Regulate methods and means of attracting customers
- Provide appropriate sanitation facilities
- Ensure sanitary conditions in and around the markets
- Ensure the security of life and property in the market



(a) Market frontage (Iyana Oja)



(b) Close-up view

Figure 2.4 Selling locations in the Alaba-Suru Market (Photographs by Faith Ikioda)

- Impose sanctions on defaulting members.

The leader of the Alaba-Suru market simultaneously held three of the positions in the market association, the Seriki, Baba Oja, and Baba Eja. This was in part because the market leadership was tied significantly to versatility in leading in various capacities in the market as well as having a very wide trader support network. He was well versed in the Yoruba language, which was one of the medium of conversations in the market as well as *Brokin* English. His duties included overseeing the proceedings of the weekly market council, which comprised representatives from the various commodity groups selling within the market every Wednesday. The Seriki's role also extended outside the Alaba-Suru market as he represented the entire market at the umbrella body of the Association of Market Men and Women in Lagos that was held every Thursday at the Lagos state's secretariat in Ikeja.

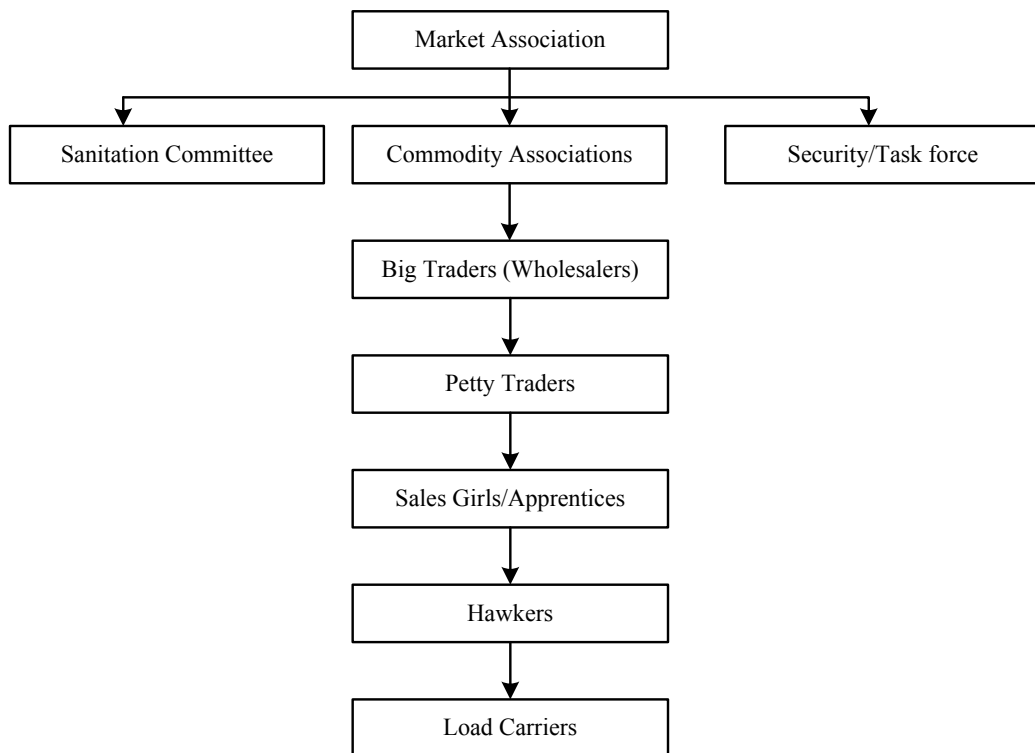


Figure 2.5 The hierarchical organisation in the Alaba-Suru Market

New members of the Alaba-Suru market association could only be selected or appointed upon the death of an existing member. As such, the market committee has largely remained the same since the inception of the market. While market association officials were not paid wages or salaries, the fines, and several dues contributed by traders through the different commodity associations were used by the association to fund salaries of cleaners and vigilantes employed. Fines and gifts of appreciation that traders brought in the wake of settled disputes by the association

also contributed to funds of the market association. For instance if the leader was to settle a dispute between two parties, the winning party upon settlement of the dispute may present a gift in kind or cash to the leader to show appreciation.

The market association is followed closely in its role of authority in the market by the various commodity associations (Figure 2.5). There are fifty-two of these commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market. Each commodity association also had a president, a treasurer, secretary and a provost. These members represented each of the commodity associations at the central meeting of the market association that was held every Wednesday in the market square. Membership of commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market was taken very seriously and failure to register with one or more of these associations meant that goods of traders were siezed by the relevant commodity association leaders, who themselves were very influential and well established traders. While a one off fee (registration due) was often paid to these commodity associations as a sign of commitment, these commodity associations also required that traders paid monthly dues to the coffers of such associations, which were held in account by the treasurer. In addition, attendance at fortnightly meetings of each association was compulsory for all traders. Care was taken to ensure that commodity association meetings did not clash, so that traders who were members of multiple associations could attend respective meetings.

One of the key roles of these commodity associations was resolving disputes between members of the same commodity association. When disputes occurred between traders who belonged to different kinds of commodity associations, the dispute was often referred to the general market association in the market. Besides this role of dispute resolution, commodity associations also played a welfare role by providing contributions towards the burial ceremonies of spouses of traders or traders themselves as well as making contributions towards the wedding ceremonies of children of traders. A delegation was often sent in addition to these monies to the homes of traders in the event of any of the aforementioned ceremonies.

Within these commodity associations, there were wholesalers who mainly stocked up on wholesale items. These types of traders also performed a variety of retail functions and are referred to in some texts as wholesaler/retailers (Dejene, 2001). In the Alaba-Suru market, wholesaler/retailers tended to congregate mainly in the sale of household items, confectionaries, fruit drinks, and provision items. This group of traders also acted as suppliers to the retailers and hawkers in the market.

The petty traders and retailers were the next level of traders and the most common, specialising in all kinds of products and services. The petty traders of Alaba-

Suru market also included providers of grinding, chicken plucking, sewing and hairdressing services in the market. Most of these service providers often combined some retailing functions to their services. For instance, hairdressers often also sold hair products and accessories. Both the wholesaler/retailer and the petty trader may have apprentices and sales girls/boys who assisted them in their stalls depending on the volume of trade. Petty traders were of diverse categories as some owned huge stalls fully stocked while some operated from a small table or umbrella stand.

Many traders who were buoyant enough, whether they were wholesaler/retailers or petty traders employed sales personnel or apprentices to assist with trade. Sales girls are personnel who usually kept accounts and made sales for some of the more established traders in the Alaba-Suru market. These young girls were employed on a part time basis and were often secondary school leavers trying to earn extra money to finance further education (Field notes, 2010). Most sales girls were not interested in taking to trade as an occupation and often left for tertiary institutions where they were likely to study non-trade related programmes (Egbue, 2006). Apprentices on the other hand, spent considerable periods of time learning to trade from a master. After a specific period ranging anywhere between two and six years, they also become fully fledged traders. I shall discuss more on this subject in chapter five.



Figure 2.6 A hawker (Photograph Faith Ikioda, 2010)

Hawkers in the Alaba-Suru market did not have fixed stall locations but moved around particular routes in the market and catered to both customers and traders

alike. Hawkers sold items such as soft drinks, recharge cards for mobile phones, candles, sponges, small snacks, cotton wool, rat poison, and items of second hand clothing. They often used head trays or wheelbarrows to conduct their businesses and often obtained the goods they sold on credit from petty traders or wholesalers in the market (Figure 2.6). However not all hawkers operated on this level. Some hawkers were employed by traders to shift goods faster such as was the case of very perishable items such as daily cooked food, locally made snacks, cold drinks and meat. Traders also often enlisted the services of apprentices or younger children to hawk items around the market. (Clark, 1994) and Lawal (2004) have both argued in separate texts that hawking allowed potential traders to master the art of haggling with potential buyers, detect fake currencies, master mental arithmetic, give correct changes, keep simple accounts, and provided good knowledge to potential traders of their way in and out of a huge market.

Load carriers, popularly called *Kaya-Kaya* were also an essential part of this market (Figure 2.7). These Hausa men from Northern Nigeria assisted traders and customers alike with portage services for a small fee. Unlike traders, hawkers and load carriers in the Alaba-Suru market were not subject to rules of associational membership. Despite this lack of collective framing, the *Kaya-Kaya* operated a uniform price regime for carrying goods for traders and charged ₦250.00 (£1.00) for a big bag of and ₦130.00 (£0.52) for a small bag of items like beans and gari (Field notes, 2010).

Figure 2.5 suggests that these different classes of persons make up the trader population in the Alaba-Suru market and this arrangement reflects that although quite diverse in character, the marketplace is still a typically well ordered and stratified setting. In particular it reflects, with regards to the nature of relations between these various actors in the market, not a necessarily hierarchical relationship where hawkers can work their way up to sales girls or where commodity association leaders, after gaining enough legitimacy can simply become members of the market association. As has already been mentioned these offices of the market association are often quite static, and new members almost impossible to find except through the death of an existing official. This notwithstanding categories like apprentices may go on to become petty traders or big traders while categories like sales girl may venture, especially as is the case, into non-market trade related occupations.



Figure 2.7 A load carrier (Kaya-Kaya) (Photograph: Faith Ikioda, 2010)

2.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to address the peculiar nature of open air markets in Lagos, with specific reference to the Alaba-Suru market in order to set up the discussions on practices and traders in the chapters that follow in the rest of the thesis. I have discussed that in major Nigerian cities like Lagos, markets are linked with several urban development policies, sustaining local agricultural production,

providing employment for traders and providing goods sold in a market. It has also been discussed that traders overall were more likely to be female. However when that discussion is adjusted taking into account ethnicity, colonial policies and growing urban unemployment, a sizeable proportion of men trade as do women.

The intention of this chapter has been to highlight that when assessed at the level of a single market like the Alaba-Suru, market traders are a diverse entity. The characters of the different market traders have connections to varying historical accounts, gender roles, ethnicity, government regulations, stall ownerships, commodity line arrangements and regulations by market officials. The discussion in this chapter has sought to place the Alaba-Suru trader at the centre of this diverse, competing and complex intersection of ethnic division, associational life, scale of operation, location and other socio-cultural factors that might come into the picture in characterising market trade.

Porter et al. (2010) have presented arguments elsewhere that suggest that the characteristic nature of the marketplace as a meeting point for diverse ethnic and social groups coupled with the nature of social and economic exchanges that take place in it may transform the market at times to a flashpoint for conflict. Ettliger has posited elsewhere that little has been examined with respect to how such diversity and difference might impact competitiveness and vice versa because of the tendency to assume that diversity may at times be a liability instead of an asset, as its presence may threaten cooperative social relations and prompt undesirable outcomes to occur (Ettliger, 2001).

Given this diversity in marketplaces there is a considerable potential for communities of practice for understanding the coordination that is present and responsible in some ways for ordering and understanding what sort of practices are harmonised, contested, coordinated and challenged in the marketplace. The next chapter considers the theoretical implication of conceiving practice across such a heterogeneous possibility and for conceiving markets and the interactions in them as communities of practice.

Chapter 3

Conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has highlighted that market traders' engagement with trade is linked to diverse historical, social, economic and location antecedents. The presence of such diversity in a competitive setting, coupled with traders' interests in individual gains as opposed to communal practices, may inform conflictual practices rather than shared and jointly negotiated practices. It is important in the midst of such competing strategies to evaluate what both sustains that diversity among traders, whilst still permitting some sort of coordinated effort to take place in a market. Studies of market trading in Nigeria have shown that the diversity and plurality of traders has the potential to promote both cooperation and conflict (Porter et al., 2005). Despite this possibility, traders still carry out their seemingly competing activities in a market in a mutually coordinated manner, thereby allowing for the continued sustenance and existence of the market. Although not referring specifically to settings as diverse as the market, studies of complex organisations show that the presence of communities of practice enables diverse work groups to sustain cohesive and collective action (Wenger, 1998*b*; Amin and Roberts, 2008). Following from this suggestion, the concern of this chapter is to explore and conceptually frame how the practices of market traders might be understood as a community of practice through four broad arguments.

The first section of the chapter discusses the central ideas of the community of practice. The second section of the chapter examines why an attention to communities of practice may present a potential avenue to frame the limits of market relationships better than the prevalent discussions around social capital and trust

networks that have dominated the trade literature. Having established the prerequisite for linking the market and the community of practice, the third section of the chapter considers that the practices of market traders can only begin to be defended as a community of practice when what is practised is analytically identifiable. This discussion therefore leads this section of this chapter to take on an overview of the practice literature and the different interpretations of practice. The fourth section of the chapter concludes with a conceptual framing that suggests that practice itself does not produce a singular and coherent account of a theory. Instead, practice represents a phenomenon linked to varied structures and instances. This variable nature of practice challenges the bounded notion of the community of practice as a structure or grouping. This admission presents with it important implications for the methodological enquiry for what one sets out to look for, if such an object as a community does not exist as a visible entity. Hence the place of this chapter within the thesis is to offer a sort of critique of existing discussions on the community of practice with the aim of exploring how an incorporation of the multiple scalar occurrences of practice redefine where the boundaries of the community are drawn.

3.2 Communities of practice

A community of practice is originally an idea developed by Wenger (1998*b*) based on his extensive conceptual and empirical scholarship on social learning and identity. According to Wenger, the socialisation that takes place in a community of practice results in “mutual engagement”, “joint enterprise”, and “a shared repertoire” among the members of that community (Wenger, 1998*b*). Consequently such communities of practice are the containers of competency (Wenger, 2000), the source and medium of socialisation (Corradi et al., 2008) and the setting for effective knowledge sharing (Lueg, 2000). Since its introduction into the literature over ten years ago, the community of practice has been a prolific concept in a range of different disciplines. This includes but is not limited to situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), organisational culture (Henriksson, 2000), development (Johnson, 2007), knowledge economy (Brown and Duguid, 2000; Lesser and Storck, 2001; Duguid, 2005) and schooling and education (Paechter, 2003; 2006).

Depending on the school of thought that drives the researcher’s investigation, often present is a different emphasis on what it is that a community of practice conveys in meaning. It is common to observe that many contributors to the community of practice literature do not set out from the onset what practices they refer to as practices before attempting to demarcate the community. Some researchers present communities of practice as representing a grouping with certain static boundaries

and established behavioural norms attached, without much regard for the practice that defines the community (Gherardi et al., 1998). This elusiveness of practice has encouraged almost any workplace group to suffice as a community of practice and this has led the concept to be almost bleached of any meaning (Ross, 2003). Consequently, one finds that across the several texts that refer to communities of practice, the examples of what serves as the community of practice is not uniform.

For instance, Wenger's concern in discussing communities of practice is identifying the forms of marginal, peripheral and non-participation identities that are taken up as part of membership and socialising into a community (Wenger, 1998*b*). Hildreth et al. (2000) focus on how communities of practice may function across international boundaries in the activities of international companies. Their preoccupation is with how employees of international companies, with branches in different parts of the world, link up with other co-workers in different locations doing the same work, to learn and share ideas with one another. Johnson's interest in communities of practice in international development focuses on how communities of practice can be applied as a social theory of learning for international development. The sort of practices that Johnson is concerned with are the practices of greater inclusion and coherence for disadvantaged groups in development projects (Johnson, 2007).

In the bid to accommodate practice, the community of practice has become many different things to many different people. Practice oscillates from being knowledge, innovation, identity, membership and skills used in organisations by employees to tacit expertise that is inexpressible as part of a wider range of everyday doings and acts. This wide span of the concept of the community of practice has its own advantages. At the centre of these varied definitions, a key central characteristic of the community of practice, and particularly one that comes from readings in organisation studies, is that it is assumed to be a sort of structure or entity that people can belong to, to gain legitimacy, identity, competency, and membership. Communities of practice can therefore be applied to a variety of contexts in society, from basketball teams (Owen-Pugh, 2003) to schools (Gee, 2005), grassroots organisations (Johnson, 2007) and video gaming (Robertson, 2008) to name a few examples of its applications.

However, this wide application and variability of what a community of practice denotes has its shortcomings as it makes absent any applied theory that explicitly spells out a standardised framework that other researchers attempting to replicate studies of communities of practice can refer to, to use, test, and adapt when investigating other versions of the community of practice elsewhere (Storberg-

Walker, 2008). The clustering of meanings of various forms of practice into one undifferentiated form of a community of practice has been deemed as most unhelpful (Amin and Roberts, 2008). This lack of differentiation makes absent the sort of power relations that inform what phenomena are suppressed and which ones are amplified to define practice in the community. In many regards the community of practice is often likened to some sort of occupational group where the goals and purposes of those involved are uniform and relatively homogenous (Ludden, 2009). Handley et al. (2006) have however acknowledged that different forms of behaving such as those based on gender, ethnicity, class, occupation, spatial groupings and work location may affect differently how practices are interpreted in any community of practice. This importance of power relations in defining what is perpetuated as practice in any community has also been mentioned in some studies of the community of practice and gender (see Paechter, 2006). For instance, Paechter notes the following:

“Within any one community of practice, particular knowledge will have particular status. However, in relations between communities of practice, it is masculine- claimed knowledge that is most important. What these are has varied over time, but there has been a tendency in the West since the Enlightenment to valorise decontextualised and disembodied knowledge as masculine” (Paechter, 2006, pg.22).

However, the workings of power are assumed rather than affirmed in Paechter’s quote above, as ‘the instability and inner contradictions of practice are all but missing’ (Engestrom, 1999, pg.12). What Paechter denotes as masculine claimed knowledge is subsumed under the heading of decontextualised knowledge, which can widely vary and the specific processes and actions that cause the practice to transpire are not spelt out (Engestrom, 2000). Fox’s (2000) study on the relationship between communities of practice and Actor Network Theory (ANT) also shows that different actants learn different things depending upon the artefacts which they employ in any practice. Eraut (2002) for instance has discussed that the activity structure, such as the physical design of work contexts can go a long way in facilitating commonly understood practices. Eraut (2002) goes on to suggest that spatially fragmented work settings, where there is no common forum to associate communally, may encourage independent practices. On the other hand, open unsupervised space may present opportunities for interdependent practices. Since different persons positioned differently imprint their own interpretations to practice in relation to objects, social positioning, and embodiments, there is never a uniform appreciation of practice in the community (Eraut, 2002).

Because of this tendency to homogenise practices of all kinds, the term community

of practice has almost erroneously come to suggest some sort of homogeneity where encounters of conflict between different types of practices are suppressed in favour of a warmly persuasive community (see William, 1983). In the community of practice literature, one often encounters a lack of conceptual clarity on the precise nature of practices to which the community responds (see Duguid, 2005). As a result, the examples one gets from reading the community of practice literature are references to predefined structures that often removes the novelty that is associated with the designation of the term. The absence in the rigor of attending to practices has made some scholars question whether communities of practice add any new knowledge or value for researchers (Eraut, 2002; Handley et al., 2006; Gherardi, 2009).

In such instances, the practice in the community vanishes, leaving a romanticised version of identity formation, marginal and peripheral participation and legitimacy, as the object of discussion. While these other terms are likewise as important to understanding the workings of the community, they are nevertheless problematic concepts to grapple with if the practice that defines the very existence of the community that informs what is participated in or identified with, are unknown. The central focus on learning by socialising into a practice in communities of practice and taking on a type of identity, means that there is a lack of attention to accounts of practice as an active 'doing' (Tennant, 1997). The desire to conceive of the community as a bounded entity often means it is considered as a structure or category that individuals aspire to mould themselves into.

Community of practice scholars rarely consider practice as mutable and changing in accounts that focus mainly on socialisation into a group. As a result, the routines, actions, languages and objects that make the practice possible are underexplored as against accounts that seek to explain membership and participation in the community. This ambiguous and complex relationship is aptly summarised by Gee (2005) who goes on to note that:

“if we start with the notion of a community we cannot go any further until we have defined who is in and who is not, since otherwise we cannot identify the community, yet it is often the issues of participation, membership and boundaries that are problematic in the first place’ (Gee, 2005, pg.215).

While Brown and Duguid (2001) do not suggest that practices in a community of practice be necessarily viewed as specific actions brought about by specific activities like Engestrom (2000), they nonetheless imply that there are different sub-units of a practice (Brown and Duguid, 2001). Brown and Duguid (2001) suggest the term

network of practice as opposed to the somewhat rigid character of the community of practice. Unlike the community of practice, Brown and Duguid express that any practice can always be broken down into much smaller specific oriented subsets. In so doing, both authors acknowledge that there are different interpretations to any account of practice. This admittance makes it possible to see how individuals or groups collectively or differently access and interpret what they do, while acknowledging their actions are simultaneously bound up in different wider relations of behaving. In this sense for Brown and Duguid (2001), a community of practice is a much looser than expected phenomena where relations are held together by networks of practice. The suggestion for accounting for the term network of practice by Brown and Duguid (2001) is intended to destabilise the grouping and locatedness of particular communities of practice. They further acknowledge that there is diversity in the community of practice and suggest it be thought of as possessing sub-units (Brown and Duguid, 2001).

The concept of the network of practice is in many ways reminiscent of strategies in network relations in relational economic geography, which focus primarily on the ways in which socio spatial relations of economic change are intertwined at different geographic scales (Yeung, 2005). This awareness of relationality in practice therefore does not limit practice to a locality or physical territory but locate it in varied associations and looser relations of practice. Relationality stresses that network resources, alliances, affiliations and other type of relational assets are essential to understanding economic activity outcomes. According to Jones and Esnault (2007), networks cover both those relations that are near and far but do not have the same degree of cohesion as one finds in a community of practice. In extending this to the work of Brown and Duguid (2001), relational links to wider ways of behaving such as a focus on networks, may contribute to an appreciation of the variety of effects that institutions and formal structures possess in constraining and limiting practice.

It is worth contemplating in this light that within settings where individual goals are the uppermost concern, and centrally determined targets are not available, such as one finds in entrepreneurial settings, the approach of the community of practice may seem problematic. Cox (2005) has implied that the application of the concept of the community of practice to modern heavily individualised and tightly managed work may be questioned. Henriksson (2000) has also voiced the concern that often absent from arguments in communities of practice is how the individual members exhibit conflictual understandings of what makes sense in their day-to-day activities and the implications this may have for defining the community. To illustrate the usefulness of these arguments, an overview of market relations is considered in the next section

of this chapter with the aim of highlighting the implications for describing market traders (whose practices are individualised, multiple and linked with a variety of distant occurrences) as a community of practice.

3.3 The market as a site of practice

In this section of the chapter, the discussion seeks to justify the linkages between a community of practice and markets given the market's character as a place of exchange that is sustained and maintained based on a principle of competition and self sustainability. It attempts to understand how practices might be conceived and the potential use of communities of practice in such a setting.

According to Storr (2009) a popular critique of markets is that they destroy practices that are communal or ethical. This critique owes its origins to studies in neoclassical economics that have suggested that capitalist tendencies of the market principle present in the market tend to promote selfishness, self-interest, rivalry and greed (Gray, 1998; Sacks, 2002). Since autonomous traders' priorities in a market are to pursue their own ends and maintain self-employment strategies, the nature of competitiveness most likely sustains practices that are constituted by difference rather than anything that is communally defined. As a consequence of this evidence Gudeman (2001) notes that the 'communal' may be personified in a single person as practices of authoritarianism. Through such authoritarian motives, Gudeman (2001) expresses that the market may encourage practices doused in alienation and increasing disapproval for engaging in communal practices in order to protect a trader's self-interest. Such lack of communality that may characterise relations in markets heightens the need for traders to be freed of lasting interdependent commitments as the desire to compete to outdo colleagues may become the uppermost consideration for traders. This situation may diminish the value accorded to social ties and collective relations of identity and practice in a market place.

On the other hand, there are suggestions that the competition in markets notwithstanding activities of markets may facilitate cooperative practices among traders. This argument is based on the studies that have shown that the commercial relationships in a market may encourage social connections in certain forms of communities (Zelizer, 2005). In competing with one another for survival strategies in the market, traders are likely to engage in coordinated effort to promote genuine friendships and alliances, caring for children, looking after each other's stalls and sharing food among others things (Clark, 1994; Chamlee-Wright, 1997, 2002; Storr, 2008). In this light, Gudeman puts it that the market and the community are in a

dialectical relationship and that both:

“Complement one another, conjoin and are separated in acts, institutions and sectors. No trade or market system exists without the support of communal agreements, such as shared languages, mutual ways of interacting, and implicit understandings. Communities are also inside market, as households, corporations, unions, guilds, and oligopolies, and contain them as nation-states that provide a legal structure for contracts and material infrastructure” (Gudeman, 2001, pg.11).

Gudeman has suggested that it is difficult to think that any market exists without the support of communal agreements. Factors such as shared languages, mutual ways of interacting and implicit understandings of what sort of practices are possible or impossible, are present in markets despite the attendant characteristic of traders trying to usurp one another (Gudeman, 2001).

The economic sociology literature, in particular, has shown that market traders build interpersonal relations, trust and norms of reciprocity through their commercial activities (Storr, 2010). Economic sociologists, whose work in large part employs a considerable part of the social capital literature, have championed the view that markets act as socio economic phenomena where meaningful relationships apart from those of pure commercial purposes of buying and selling are possible. These authors suggest that in markets where imperfect information and tacit enforcement of rules exist that there are several possibilities that facilitate friendship, trust and other associational character (Fukuyama, 1995; Chamlee-Wright, 1997; Lyon and Porter, 2007). Three variants of this literature will suffice to illustrate this point.

Fafchamps and Minten (1999) in their study of agricultural traders in Madagascar, showed that trust displayed between traders lubricates the informal machinery of credit, permitting the effective movement of information, the development of interpersonal relationships between traders, efficiency of trading flows and the mitigation of risk. Both authors therefore conclude that:

“Successful traders owe much of their success not so much to individualism but rather to relationships. If anything, the evidence indicates that it is those who can create and nurture relationships who prosper as traders” (Fafchamps and Minten, 1999, pg. 31).

Lyon (2003) has used institutional theories of associational activity to study how certain groups of market traders sustain themselves better than others. Lyon’s study focuses on the benefits of traders’ associations in agricultural markets in Kumasi,

Sunyani, Techiman, Central Region and Accra, all in Ghana. Lyon concludes from that study that the socialisation of economic activity amongst traders was important for ensuring welfare, settling disputes, controlling prices and regulating demand and supply. Lyons and Snoxell (2005) also use the sustainable livelihoods approach to study relationships between traders in the Kenyatta and Westlands Craft market in Nairobi, Kenya. Similar to Fafchamps and Minten on Madagascar and Lyon's study of Ghana, Lyons and Snoxell (2005) reveal that despite the intensely competitive environment of markets, traders still formed complex networks of interdependence and friendships with one another. Some of these relationships they suggested were vital for accessing credit, borrowing and lending money to one another, guarding stalls and exchanging information on trading-related matters.

In these aforementioned studies and irrespective of the model that is applied, central to the preoccupation of the authors is the emphasis placed on the role of relationships often overlooked in standard economic models that emphasise profit and capital accumulation and labour of markets. Each of the studies mentioned above suggests that there is a social dimension to the economic nature of market trading. The three studies mentioned provide examples of how economic ties among market traders become embedded in social relations of trust, extension of credits and loans and a variety of other favours among others. There is however less emphasis on how social relations emerge from economic situations (Storr, 2008). This is because the structural patterns of economic situations are rarely revealed, making it complex to understand how social mechanisms like trust, credit transactions, friendships are initiated and maintained between market traders. These sort of wider inferences are necessary to provide a rounded picture of the practices that are taking place in a market and what sort of situations facilitate such sociality.

There is a need for an understanding of the particularities of the links and contexts that inform which traders and to what extent and purpose they enter certain relationships and not others. Bourdieu (1990) suggests that it would not be beneficial if relationships are taken at face value while failing to consider the structure and the specific functions of practices generating them. Fine (2003) has also noted that discussing the relationships between individuals may be limited, meaningless and problematic where the entities underlying such relationships are based on incompatible practices. In order to explain relationships like trust, norms, reciprocity, and social capital, one must consider the objective conditions and practical purposes generating the relationship of interest.

The discussions in this section have so far shown that despite the possibility that the

competitive nature of the market and the individual pursuit of survival among traders may threaten cooperative social relations, traders mix close-knit relations with the struggle for independent survival together in the market. However, the latter point regarding the particularities of specific practices is that it is not possible to simply generalise that all traders automatically enter potentially ominous interactions and relations simply because of some sort of coordination that exists in the market. For instance, Lyon (2003), following the suggestions of Ostrom (1999), notes that despite the collective actions and associational character of traders' relationships, there are always possibilities that there are free riders whose actions may not follow a group's collective objective. This point is not to counter the coordinating rapport evident among traders but rather it reflects that when competing demands are at stake and the particularities of situations, individual traders may be selective in aligning with interactions that provide the most benefits. A few examples from two of the earlier illustrations make this point quite clearly.

Lyons and Snoxell (2005) in their comparative study of relationships between two markets in Kenya (Westlands and Kenyatta) note that after controlling for ethnicity and the types of goods traders sold that there were marked differences in the types of relationships present between market traders. They go on to note that traders of the same Kikuyu tribe who sold similar products in the Westlands market, were more likely to accept money on each other's behalf and exchange information when compared to similar Kikuyu traders in Kenyatta market. Lyons and Snoxell (2005) suggested this was the case because apart from ethnic similarity, people traded in similar products such that traders were armed with extensive knowledge of each other's business. As a result, it was easy to gauge cheating and lying thereby facilitating collaborative relationships in Westlands market. In comparison, in the Kenyatta market, their other study area, where traders' businesses were diverse and information was not as ubiquitous, the proportion of social relations was less evident because traders did not have as much knowledge about other people's businesses to gauge whether they were lying or telling the truth when sharing information.

Fafchamps and Minten (1999) also show that in Madagascar, traders who were wholesalers relied more on trust networks than itinerant traders and small assemblers. They suggested that this was because wholesalers maintained closer relationships with suppliers and clients. Smaller traders in contrast, for fear of being cheated, were not as trusting. Fafchamps and Minten (1999) also found that smaller traders were less likely to help others in need because of the size of the operation of their businesses. This meant that most small traders set most money aside for difficult times personal circumstances and were less likely to have reserves like wholesalers,

who could use their savings to help others in bad times. In contrast, both authors note that wholesalers and semi wholesalers were most likely to assist one another in times of trouble. As such, they conclude that individualism tended to pervade the practices of small-scale traders. They however note that large traders were less individualistic as they were more likely to enter solidarity networks, not so much to 'deal with negative shocks, but to take advantage of especially lucrative opportunities' (Fafchamps and Minten, 2002, pg. 30).

These latter arguments show that practices such as friendships, trust and doing each other favours are present in a market but are not generic traits of all traders in all cases. Whilst the presence of certain social relationships still permits some sort of coordinated effort to take place in a market, the diversity among traders is not suppressed. What sustains the diversity among traders, whilst still permitting some sort of coordinated effort to take place in a market, is not however solely differences between traders but what they do together. Lesser and Storck (2001) have suggested, in trying to understand how coordinated effort is brought about, it might be worth thinking of what similar interests people, irrespective of diversity, engage in collectively. Once individuals identify others with whom they have a shared interest, Lesser and Storck (2001) argue that such individuals would collectively develop a particular way of doing things which will in turn facilitate relationships. It is this type of structure that has been referred to as a community of practice.

For markets, thinking of market traders as a community of practice in this way seems useful in informing on how an otherwise very diverse group of traders come to understand what trade and its attendant relations means in a coherent way and for the purpose of how diversity of market trade is negotiated into a coordinated effort. Furthermore, employing the context of the market as an entry point into these investigations enriches the literature, because scholars on communities of practice have rarely considered contexts where competition underlies the organisation of practice. Added to this complexity is not just the subject of the competitive nature of trade, but also the type of competition of meaning that arises when multiple possibilities defining a practice converge in one single place. Not only are the market traders competing with one another for business, they do so employing their varying ethnic ties, gender and relations to artefacts such as space, capital, stall allocation, scale of enterprise, as well as all the possible sorts of regulations that accompany doing business in an urban context.

In the midst of such heterogeneity, including the role of the individual trader and the complex processes of power relations that inform practice, it is reasoned that

there is some valuable evidence to explore how the context of the market can be described as a community of practice. This linkage however can only be made first by employing the right theoretical approaches to delimit practices. This discussion forms the content of the next set of discussions in this chapter

3.4 Practice theory

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is an absence of analytical rigor associated with defining what practice comes to describe the community of practice. Consequently, in employing it to specify what market traders do it is important to spell out what aspects of practice are referred to before attempting to delimit the evidence of a community of practice.

The study of practice is not a unified piece of work as it covers a wide spectrum of discussions. A practice is a routinised type of behaviour that consists of several elements, interconnected to one another ranging across routinised mental activities through to bodily activities enacted in everyday life (see Reckwitz, 2002). Rouse (2006) adds that practice encompasses material culture, linguistic forms, experience and those aspects of human life that are hidden, tacit, inarticulate and inexpressible. Brown and Duguid (2001) have also referred to practice to mean what is entailed in undertaking or engaging in a task, job or profession. As a result, a practice can be said to encapsulate those aspects of human activities that are tacit and inexpressible in language but are nonetheless present in everyday interaction and doings.

For Schatzki, a practice occurs as a form of site that is composed of the material arrangements comprising of human beings, artefacts, other organisms and things, which collectively reflects a practice-arrangement bundle (Schatzki, 1997, 2005, 2010). Using the example of a horse farm touring company as an example that demonstrates the possibilities of a given practice arrangement bundle Schatzki (2010) posits that:

“A tour company for instance is a bundle of practices such as those of scheduling, accounting publicly, conducting tours, and making arrangements with horse farms that are carried on amid the layouts of and connections between such material arrangements as offices, barn interior, horse barns, country and horse farm roads, horse park kiosks and country eateries” (Schatzki, 2010, pg.73).

Schatzki expresses that there must be some sort of action and purposeful cooperation that would bring about a practice to be meaningful, irrespective of its several related linkages to other components and processes. The site that Schatzki describes above

reflects what otherwise seems a complex practice arrangement that comes to carry all the possibilities that provides the means of identifying what participants are able to perform within a field of horse touring. In however bringing all of these components of the practice arrangement together as something that is meaningful Schatzki argues that the action necessary for a practice to have meaning may be considered in three ways (Schatzki, 1997, 2005, 2010). These include actors who possess a practical understanding of the practice, an array of explanatory rules that guide the act of those actors and a collective common goal that all participants in the practice work towards, in bringing about the realisation of that practice (Schatzki, 1997). Furthermore, in breaking down a practice into these components, one also observes that a practice of itself is incapable of producing meaning unless it is tied to actions that expand an understanding of how the knowledge of the practice comes to be learnt and acquired in that field (Sfard, 1998; Knorr-Cetina, 1999).

Schatzki throughout his work presupposes that practice is an already existing social arrangement in the absence of which what people undertake as an activity would not exist. Schatzki suggests that the site of a practice exists as some sort of predefined entity that generates the rules that participants can then follow to realise some sort of overarching communal endeavour. Schatzki (2005) supposes that practices develop into a communal endeavour as result of groups who develop mutual engagement. These groups tune their enterprises to reconcile different interpretations of what that practice is all about in response to the rules afforded by the practice arrangement bundle in a given field (Schatzki, 2005). On the surface, similarities exist between how Schatzki considers the realisation of practice as a communal endeavour with the literature on community of practice, which emphasises shared practices. However, some fundamental issues with Schatzki's suggestion of how practice actions are commonly achieved warrant some further critique.

Given that there are no centrally determined goals in the self employment context of market trading, in the aim to describe traders' potentially diverse actions as a possible community of practice I take each of Schatzki's (1997) points mentioned already separately. Instead of thinking of actions as points in a sequence that bring about the realisation of a common practice, each feature in Schatzki's three point agenda of realising practice, I suggest, points to a different type of practice. I therefore consider three levels to conceive of practices in order to address the relationship between the community of practice and market traders. In the site of a practice, human beings, artefacts, other organisms and things, collectively reflect a practice-arrangement bundle. Yet, if different artefacts, organisms, things and human beings make up an arrangement, there are also different forms in which a practice-arrangement bundle

is structured. For instance, it has been established that different traders sell different things in different ways because of different origins and training.

These different structures mean that for each site of practice, there are particular meanings for those different individuals and groups to follow and perceive which may not necessarily be collective. The rules guiding actions may be conformed to, deviated from and even changed by individuals who are situated and positioned differently. As Orlikowski (2002) points out, people manage new practices as they devise, slip into or discover new ways of interpreting and experiencing the world. In competing with one another to outdo colleagues for clientele and profits, traders are likely to manipulate or conform to rules very differently. One must also question what informs the initial practice arrangement bundle to exist, and what sort of wider forces or regulations permit it to be experienced in the first place. Trading practices go beyond the interactions that transpire between trader and their actions in the marketplace and may also include farming, distribution, wholesaling, importing and transport practices. Any practice therefore is a combination of forces that is not just merely the product of collectivities, individuals and their interactions (Garavan et al., 2004). I turn to this discussion and the implications for the destabilisation of practice as a composite entity below.

3.4.1 Understanding practices as structures

Following Schatzki's suggestion, in order for subjects to understand a practice there must be a clear recognisable structure that allows people to make out what a practice is in a given field. For instance, whether the field is trading, horse riding, cooking or farming, there must be clearly defined arrangements of artefacts, actors and other organisms that compose how that practice is structured. Such structures, according to Giddens are what produce and reproduce society via the application of generative rules and resources (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Following Giddens' arguments on structuration, actors are able to make practices visible because of the presence of certain structures that spell out particular rules and resources. According to Berard (2005), Giddens work on structuration is interpreted to mean that structures set the time and spaces where human agents can construct and experience practices. As a result, society is seen as pre-existing the individual and solely defines the practices of actors (Berard, 2005).

Bourdieu (1987) centres his own version of practices and structures around the notion of habitus, which touches on the issue of the complexity within structures. Bourdieu argues that practices are maintained by a system of dispositions that produce relations

and the structural condition of being (Bourdieu, 1987). Therefore he contends that habitus is the primary explaining variable for why practices occur. Bourdieu subscribes to the argument that routinised practices become a system of relationships and predispositions to social codes, which are responsible for understanding how society is produced and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1977). The habitus is the fundamental division of the social world, delineating groups or classes in the system. In general, the habitus can be discussed as comprising:

“The conditions associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations” (Bourdieu, 1990, pg. 53).

Accordingly, Bourdieu maintains that individuals by means of habitus carry out a myriad of interactions as defined by age, nationality, race, and geographic area (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Practices are therefore secondary roles that are generated by dispositions, which are determined by structures of habitus in classes or practices of group making (Bourdieu, 1987, 1989). However, Bourdieu admits that naming or representing a group or class usually comes with a debate on the power of representation that is bound up in the contest between the pursuits of individual versus collective interests (Bourdieu, 1987). He therefore acknowledges the micro context of practices by admitting to the presence of divisions, power struggles, leadership and the objective difference within population (Berard, 2005).

King citing the work of Wittgenstein (1953) and Kripke (1982) posits that irrespective of the structure of rules that allows practices to proceed that rule following may not always be self evident. Following a critique of Wittgenstein’s (1953) rule following in particular King (2009) also implies that no matter how self-evident rule following may appear to be in a structure, individuals could always theoretically follow even the most inflexible rules to perform an action (King, 2009). King’s argument is that because rule following may be modified accordingly to the different ways individuals choose to follow a rule, the attempt to explain social order from the basis of the rational and autonomous individuals would not amount to coordinated order.

King, largely basing his arguments on the work of Parson’s (1966) Utilitarian dilemma, expresses that when individuals are rational and possibly autonomous in their dealings, the greatest dilemma is that individuals are always free to act guided by their own rationality (King, 2009). King (2009) follows suggestions from

Parson's utilitarian dilemma to convey the point that if society really consisted of individuals who were genuinely rational and independent, each individual could choose at any moment an alternative course of action to bring about practice (King, 2009). In King's assertion, predictable and repeatable actions that are acted out as a response to Bourdieu and Giddens' classification of structures suggest, would be impossible. For King (2009), individuals would continually consult their own subjective judgments, pursuing their own independent interests in their own ways. Therefore, independent individuals would define their interests differently, pursue diverse interests autonomously in any number of alternate ways and mere randomness would dominate cooperative gestures and coordination (King, 2009).

Yet for King, the dilemma is that social order and institutions exist in the midst of rational and autonomous individuals and goes to add that even if it must be admitted that actors are free to choose to do as they please, King yields to the fact that they do so in the midst of limits set by institutional factors and other structural conditions. However, he also suggests that the shared understanding of structural factors do not just get imposed on individuals (King, 2009). Instead it is King's view that individuals come to recognise common goals through what they understand and can commit themselves to. These common values as is often credited to Parson (1966) refer to concrete social actions constituted by shared understanding and not mere ideals or norms.

Coulter (2001) conceives of a similar argument in relation to the discussion on actions by suggesting that it is best to work out the sayings and doings of individuals and how these in turn show on what occasions particular practices are relevant. For Coulter, the actions that bring about a practice may not always fit into an attempt to map, classify and generalise models of practice through which individuals and society conduct themselves. Coulter (2001) for this reason suggests that rather than conceiving of practices as products of structures, that it is important to focus on ordinary practices observed in how people do specific things. It is therefore considered in the next section how a more active form of practice as a performance can be presented.

3.4.2 Practice as a performance

While it has been established by Schatzki that a practice cannot exist outside its doing and is sustained in the saying and doing of practices or its practising (Martin, 2003, 2006), many argue that practices are done as a response to previous routinised happenings of that practice (Nash, 2000). Examples of such arguments posit that

performances bring about practice through such occurrences that are for instance manifested as embodied in bodily practices like gender, race, and class (Butler, 1993; Martin, 2006; McDowell, 2008), quite similar in some ways to Bourdieu's notion of habitus. The discussion on market traders particulars has suggested for instance that men and women were able to gain certain access to particular types of trade because of the various ways gender in Nigerian society interacted with systems of trade.

Kaprow (1993) however suggests that what is practised is not always a response to explicit elements like gender, identity, dance or language. Rather, Kaprow (1993) expresses that performances are often much more than what one is normally attentive to. For instance, being a woman or man is not simply a biological given, rather individuals must actively assert their masculinities and femininities in different ways and at different times. Similarly, simply learning and knowing the techniques of a dance are quite different from actually dancing. Kaprow (1993) would argue that the latter performance of exhibiting one's gender at a particular time or dancing is what allows the practice to emerge. Like Kaprow (1993), Shome (2003) goes on to note that people's politics and actions cannot be located solely in particular structures of regulated activities, because individuals are differently situated in relation to others. As such, categorising structures and practices in various forms of embodiments and identities leaves out the crucial issue of the implicit choice of how individuals and groups experience even the most regularised classes of practices (Conquergood, 2002).

Kirkby (1965) has previously argued that performances are happenings that need not be tied to the requirement to represent anything. Schechner (1985) goes on to note that performances are about the everyday world and refer to something that is both active and unconscious and occurring primarily because of specific forms of tacit expertise. Nigel Thrift's work on non-representational theory has focused particularly on this type of practice that concerns performing the tacit and not easily spoken off conventions. Thrift concerns himself with how people come to know the world without knowing it, how they come to express the inarticulate understanding of a practice or display the practical intelligibility (Thrift, 1996, 1997).

The problem with performing the tacit nature is that without specifying the consequence of what that the performance does and in what context what is performed matters to the individual or the collective, it is difficult to understand or describe what is performed and for what reason practice occurs. Moreover, it is difficult to comprehend how one can perform or do a practice without considering what is involved in doing it as an ongoing activity of interaction (West and Zimmerman,

1987). Since the practice is hidden and tacit, the apparent question is how do individuals transmit the content of the practice that enables others to sustain it (Zhok, 2009). Tacit knowledge for instance, is often invisible and incapable of being expressed or transmitted. A resultant implication is therefore that no two actual experiences of a performance are likely to be the same because actors would display different skills in acting out a performance (Ferree, 2003). Accordingly, there is no convincing mechanism that explains how different individual habits become transformed into social practices (Turner, 1994).

Loxley (2007) however puts it that what individuals display as a performance need not be understood as any specialised form of representation because practice is always a tacit gesture that may often not be expressible. Loxley takes the view that what is performed as practice is simply what is signified in everyday ordinary life and need not be portrayed or analysed in any systematic way. His argument imitates the work of Goffman who predicts that people play out roles that are not produced in response to a product of something like a structure, but as something that they simply do all the time. Goffman claims that there are no prior established scripts, rules or norms to acting out what one performs in ordinary life but that people understand what they should do when the need arises (Goffman, 1959).

Millikan (2004) also notes that practice need not be followed by any sort of intentionality when accounting for everyday occurrences and need not be placed or limited as a function of some complex structure. Practice that evolves from everyday life is acknowledged as varied and does not simply add up to a single easily assailable idea, structure, class or category. As such “invoking performance does not bring the safety of an answer but the ongoing pressure of a question” (Loxley, 2007, pg.166). A practice therefore becomes a product of a series of networks of non-routinised performances which are not necessarily confined to an explanation that arises from particular categories, structures or classes but displays a constant movement of configurations where there is a disappearance of stable centralised norms and structures (Engestrom, 2000). While accepting that the continuities and intentions of practice may not always be fully expressed as a structure or a response to conscious appeal in order not to give in to a theory of mere randomness, Foucault (1972) suggests locating practices in governmental agencies that are external to a range of subjectivities rather than solely focusing on the instrument of structures and individuals themselves which is discussed next.

3.4.3 Practices and regulation

The structures and actions that give rise to practices cannot be explored in isolation from a system of institutional regulations. This does not mean that structures that inform practices are not important or that the doings that make up practice are not significant. Instead, the point of this section of the chapter is to suggest that a practice can also be a response to institutional complexities that make people's sequence of actions accountable, while at the same time making present the form of institutional work beyond the set of practice arrangements that Schatzki suggests. It is not always the case that it is possible to make out the particular set of arrangement bundles that makes up the site of a practice. For instance, the role of corporations, government, professional bodies may not always be evident as a practice arrangement with a set of discernable actors, objects or organisms. Such features of life are often dispersed and beyond forms of immediate reification but are still very active in that they organise the various ways people express practices. It is suggested that social order is exhibited in forms such as institutions and traditions which emerge as discourses that are not always reducible to people but are nonetheless present as major social institutions that compel individuals to act in certain ways (Bhaskar, 1991; Holmwood, 2006).

Foucault's (2003) work on governmentality has focused on how diverse relations that are sustained by a variety of institutions including the state organises the practices of persons through various schemes, projects and modes of political calculation. Foucault (2003) argues that while such institutions as the state may not be reified as such, their existence nonetheless has implications in the local practices of the everyday (Foucault, 2003). Foucault's concern however is to destabilise the sense that the role of state is not a universal and autonomous source of power wielding its force of domination. Rather Foucault is interested in how struggles and confrontations at a micro level operate as part of something called the state (Foucault, 2004). As such, to study governmentality as a practice from Foucault's point of view is to study how different state and institutional regulations take shape and are shaped by the actualities present in the everyday life of individuals, without assuming that the state has a universal or general essence (Jessop, Undated).

The thesis of governmentality offers the possibility to argue that neither the state, nor the individual, nor structures of organised activities, performances and interactions or any one cultural institution, singularly presents a holistic perspective of practice. Foucault's main preoccupation with the notion of governmentality is also aimed at dispelling and rejecting any form of hierarchical view of power. Instead he

contends that different forms of power are connected to produce dispersed practices that have their own impact on society. His interest is therefore to understand how multiple relations of institutional control are used, transformed, displaced and extended as practice (Foucault, 2003). Foucault's work on governmentality reveals that any practice is realised without conforming either to reducing its macro necessity or to seeing everything as something that can be explained by individuals, their performances or organised activity. Foucault's aim is to demonstrate that the particular agency of power in directing what particular practices are practised does not lie in the possession of people who wield it over others despite the fact that society is composed of random and free individual choices and objective socio-historical contexts. Instead power is relational, nested in how various agents operate in society and not contained in the overall domination, whether this is the law, state or any other principle (Foucault, 1984).

However in admitting to the role governmentality plays in facilitating practices to emerge, only certain aspects are picked out in expanding the affairs that are involved in representing the lived reality of practices by people. According to Smith (2005) those selected aspects which may be policies, laws, plans and theories that operate to govern what come to inform practices are best thought of as frames. As Smith argues "frames established from positions of power in the institutional regime, control facticity, they control and are specified as the categories and concepts that come into play at the front line of building institutional realities" (Smith, 2005, pg. 191).

Important contributions for considering governmentality as practice have sought to shed light on how actions employed by government and other regulatory bodies, as one frame of governmentality, maintain and prescribe spaces where capitalism extends into everyday life (Larner, 2005; Hudson, 2004). Particularly such studies have focused on how power in a Foucauldian sense, sheds light on how states, as one example, control particular kinds of capitalist behaviour (Hughes, 2001). In these examples, instead of dealing with the complexity of how to represent governmentality, the state is used to frame the opportunity to explore how resistance and domination are built into how people experience institutional regulations in their everyday lives. Although one cannot see the state, particular policies or regulations enacted by it can be explored in order to understand how institutional realities are experienced. Such a narrow focus on the state as framing governmentality in many ways tends to obscure other possible modes of governance.

Jeffreys and Sigley (2009) highlight the ways that governmental practices may be framed in quite different ways in the post colonial state contrary to the view of the

freedom espoused in the predominantly neoliberal view of governmentality. Dean (1999) has argued more broadly that governmentality should embrace “how we think about governing others and ourselves in a wide variety of contexts” (Dean, 1999, pg. 212). This argument is meant to reflect on the fact that the way Foucault intended for government to act as a source of practice was not meant to be solely limited to the accepted wisdom of political or administrative structures of the modern state in neoliberal societies. As a result, “to analyse government is to analyse those mechanisms that try to shape, sculpt, mobilise and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups” (Dean, 1999, pg. 12). For Dean therefore, the term governmentality must refer to government in terms of the state, but also to the idea of mentalities and various attitudes that are part of any society’s culture (Dean, 1999). Hence it is about paying attention to how conduct is governed not just by governments but also by people themselves.

3.5 Conceptual framing

In the section just discussed the point is made that the organisation of practice embraces not only the micro-scale of individuals and their actions but also maintains valid links between everyday practices (including relations with artefacts) and higher-order phenomena (e.g., institutions, class structures (Jones and Murphy, 2011)). In translating this outline of conceiving practices to market traders in the Alaba-Suru market, I have taken into consideration that traders may maintain different understandings in realising their livelihood outcomes. Consequently, they are likely to follow and act upon rules differently as they carry out their practices act upon their own requirements to perform acts of trading in ways that they say fit in order to earn a living. In so doing, they may also be influenced in how they carry out their activities as a result of certain kinds of regulation that may come to bear on trade. As a result, the quest for self-seeking motives of profit are maintained through multiple forms of occurrences that are neither proximate, local nor bounded but relational in outlook and occurring at multiple levels of interaction.

These ideas based on relationality of practice may not necessarily be new ideas and specifically in relation to describing communities of practice, being relational concepts that are informal in nature and based on tracing networks and routine everyday practices and facing everyday problems, have been given some mention by some authors (Amin and Cohendent, 2004; Osterlund and Carlile, 2005). It has been suggested that the community of practice be viewed as a probabilistic construct that bears no semblance to reality or visible structures but still features as a fluid set of relation (Osterlund and Carlile, 2005). Such relational elements

are justified on the basis that a community of practice is the container of tacit knowledge that is incapable of being expressed, displayed and transmitted (Duguid, 2005). The suggestion of a relational concept of the community of practice that avoids essentialising groups of people based on a singular undifferentiated character of practice means that practices are not presented in terms of absolute categories and essentialised discourses but as decentred phenomena that are socially constructed, porous, unstable and realised as moments that are more extensive than tight-knit units (Emirbayer, 1997; Amin, 2002; Coe and Bunnell, 2003).

In many ways, this conceptual argument is also in part a methodological endeavour and also an admission to a methodology of practices that does not aim to seek groups out and then mention the practices they are involved. Instead it pursues a careful investigation of the variety of agency of activities possible occurring from the scale of the everyday to elsewhere, with the intention to account for how practices actually occur and why they may be interpreted as a community of practice. Osterlund and Carlile (2005) suggest that relationality is in itself not simply a method but a framework and scaffolding within which practices can be framed. Thus, instead of starting from attempting to make out communities of practice as groupings who partake in similar activities, if anything, this conceptual framework goes the other way by first seeking to identify practices.

For market traders, examining practices means exploring the negotiation between types of structures, performances and governmental practices that inform what appropriately describes the outcomes of market trade. What matters becomes attending to the multiple and different practices between people and their changing relation to the material world rather than paying attention to stabilised and normatively sustained communities (Gherardi et al., 1998; Contu and Wilmott, 2003; Roberts, 2006; Corradi et al., 2008). As the discussions in the coming chapters will highlight it is not so much a designation to a community of practice that is lacking, but a contemplation of practices as relational, dynamic and flexible concepts that need not be aggregated into categorical descriptions. Such latter categorical descriptions of practices may erroneously convey rigid and static events which are analytically imprecise.

Discussion on scale in geography in particular support that there are complexities that underly the various ways that practice can be manifested. Much of that literature argues that the world and events therein are increasingly globalised, dispersed and connected to many other possible processes and events. This relationship means that understanding of what is 'local', 'urban', 'global' or 'national' are designations that

are open to contestation and negotiation and therefore ought not to be reified in social thought as essential and natural entities.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) using the example of the designation of nation as a category for instance, argue that denoting the term nation as a particular category means that the practice of nationalism inherent within a grouping is then unreflexively reified as a real community and erroneously “makes the category central to the theory of nationalism” (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, pg.5). They argue in a latter work that the designation of a specific category of the term nation to denote all forms of practices of nationalism is problematic because nations as categories “are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world not ontological but epistemological realities” (Brubaker et al., 2004, pg. 45)

Geographers therefore now consider fluidity and change as an essential part of relations of any kind and this has consequently led to a greater interest in debates surrounding the processes of scale making, rescaling and the politics of scale. Consequently, interest has shifted to explaining the processes through which people produce and reproduce their own accounts of practice as opposed to understanding groupings of practices (Moore, 2008). Following this logic of the scale standpoint, a community of practice may not simply correspond to an independent geographical and local entity but most likely encompasses both the material processes and structures, events, performances and spatial formations that go beyond simple coherent community boundaries. In chapter seven, this concept of scale is expanded upon and is applied to the multiple and possible set of relations that cause market trade to transpire as a result of processes that manifest in and through distributed transport networks and fragmented and multiple urban legislation.

3.6 Research questions

The purpose of this chapter within the rest of the thesis has been to understand how practice might be grasped as a conceptual entity that can then be taken forward as something that can be studied as an empirical object. Tracing practice-oriented thinking back to any singular origin is however a complicated and complex task. In moving from structures, performances, individuals and notions of governmentality, the chapter has argued that practice is a complicated notion that does not lend itself to a simple ontological position. Consequently, the research questions posed in the thesis can be summarised thus:

1. What are the practices of market traders? How are these practices reflections

of structures, individuals, performances and the state?

2. How can a community of practice be interpreted from these practices?
3. What are the advantages and limitations of the application of practice to the market?

In transforming these theoretical discussions into empirical discussions that show what and how practices are demonstrated through traders in understanding evidence of the community of practice in the Alaba-Suru market, the next chapter focuses on the research design and methods used to answer these research questions and fulfill the central aim of this thesis.

Chapter 4

Research design

4.1 Introduction

It has been presented that practice as a theoretical term can be understood through a variety of structures, performances and relations afforded by various institutional regulations. The central objective of this chapter is to explore how such a practice constituted at multiple levels among market traders, can be investigated through the research questions posed in this thesis, which are as follows:

1. What are the practices of market traders? How are these practices reflections of structures, individuals, performances and the state?
2. How can a community of practice be interpreted from these practices?
3. What are the advantages and limitations of the application of practice to the market?

In answering these questions the acknowledgment in the previous chapter that practice features can be often subtle, instantaneous and unconscious suggests that evidence of practices may not easily be documented by way of quantitative techniques such as questionnaires, surveys or content analysis, because what is practised may not always possess intention (Connell, 2003). Therefore, in admitting that practice is a tacit feature, the nature of this research required keen and careful methods of investigation that took into account the minute yet important routines and the intricate ways Alaba-Suru market traders conducted themselves as part of their everyday life (Maynard, 1994). For that reason, the empirical investigation of practice sought to describe what was going on in the market, what traders and other actors (customers, load carriers, suppliers) were doing in the market, who was doing

what in the market, and when they did it. Only when these practices are accounted for can the evidence of a community of practice be considered.

Qualitative techniques were deemed the most appropriate approach because they took into account the meanings, experiences and the details of the everyday life of the subject under investigation (Holloway, 1997; Flick, 2006). Of the many qualitative research techniques available, the methodology that was employed in this research was ethnography. An ethnography as a particular type of qualitative research has as its central focus an attention to accounting for the mundane life of respondents, where the researcher's self-reflexivity in addressing the interpretations of the acts of respondents are highly important and where the ability to describe people's actions in their naturally occurring environment is paramount (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Most ethnographic studies have been employed where hypotheses, samples and surveys are inappropriate and have been better suited for encountering research where the intention is to encounter the world first hand in order to understand what people actually do (Agar, 1986; Hammersley, 1992; Silverman, 2006). Ethnography was further considered appropriate for this research as previous studies that have methodologically framed evidence in investigating the concept of the community of practice suggest a qualitative study of an ethnographic nature comprising narratives, observations and interviews, to study communities of practice (Boggs and Rantisi, 2003; Hara and Schwen, 2006).

In the following section the research design of the ethnographic approach that was employed in the Alaba-Suru market is discussed. The discussions presented spell out the particulars of this design through the observations of traders' activities, informal interviews with traders and some evidence of related marketing activities based on secondary data sources. Most of this evidence while relying on the study of the Alaba-Suru market also included some data gathered during shorter visits to the Mile 12, Balogun and Shobatex markets, also in Lagos. Having accounted for the data collected, this chapter considers the process of analysing the information gathered. Central to the analysis is how a community of practice can be said to be evident (or not) in the practices of market traders described. The limitations of ethnography in examining the peculiarities from which to trace the community of market traders' practices are also highlighted in the course of the chapter.

4.2 Practice and methodology

From a methodological perspective, studies of communities of practice can be said to lack in-depth empirical rigour as scholars who have studied the concept of the

community of practice have not often expanded explicitly on what practice they refer to in delimiting the concept (Osterlund and Carlile, 2005; Bou et al., Undated). Some previous studies have employed the approach of delineating the community of practice as a locatable entity and then proceed to describe its practices. Common examples of what represents a community of practice have been an insurance claims processing office Wenger (1998*b*), an environmental action group (Johnson, 2007), boys' and girls' groups in schools (Paechter, 2003, 2006), urban service specialists (Lesser and Storck, 2001), IT Support groups (Hildreth et al., 2000) and alcoholics anonymous groups (Hodges, 1998).

These examples when examined closely often proceed first by highlighting the community of practice as a locatable affiliation that resembles an existing functional unit, that is often synonymous with a group, project team or predefined entity, rather than a concept that comes through an assessment of empirical data on practices. Authors who claim to be studying the evidence of a community of practice, often feel obliged to name the community of practice as a visible entity and then attach certain characteristics of shared practices to the entity they label. As a result, it is often the selection of the group that designates a community that first comes to light, before describing the practices that the group is mutually engaged in, the nature of shared repertoire and what constitutes joint enterprise of practice. Although Wenger (1998*b*) mentions that identifying mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire can make a community of practice evident, he also suggests these characteristics do not necessarily confirm the presence of a community of practice. These three properties are likely to be the characteristics of teams, networks, and many types of interactions found in work settings.

Wenger (1998*a*) further cautions that the phenomenon of a community of practice, may not be reified by members and that the subsistence of the community of practice may not be obvious to the very members thought to constitute it. This claim is furthered on the account that the nature of practices may be tacit and not easily expressible, such that what is practised may occur non-reflexively and without awareness or what Polanyi (1966) has termed subception. As such, those participating in the practice are often not aware of the fact that they are consciously practising it (Martin, 2003; Mathieu, 2009).

Because of its tacit nature, scholars often omit any detailed accounts of practice and simply assert the presence of the community of practice without affirming it through any rigorous empirical investigations. Eckert and McConnell-Ginnet (1992) have suggested that the experience of practice may be tacit but that it still manifests

through other subtle forms of material culture and symbolic systems such as dress, body adornment, ways of moving, gaze, touch, handwriting style and so on. Duguid (2005) therefore notes in this regard that “most citations have focused on community and ignored practice. Yet it is practice that makes the community of practice, the social locus in which a practice is sustained and reproduced overtime, and a distinct type of community. Practice is thus critical to community of practice analysis” (Duguid, 2005, pg. 109).

Consequently, if practice does appear in subtle and probably intangible ways both to the researcher as well and to the participants in that setting the challenge is to make practice and not the community in the first instance visible (Alee, 2000). As a result, the methodology of this study in adopting an ethnographic approach does not attempt to locate groups of traders and name them by particular labels as representing a community of practice. Rather it aims to account for practices by focusing on what traders were actually doing in Alaba-Suru market and how those practices were coordinated.

In assessing practices of markets, Clark’s (1994) study of the Kumasi market in Ghana in the mid 1970s, which combines a survey with an in-depth ethnographic account provides some salient points worthy of note in describing the research design in the Alaba-Suru market. Clark notes that in the desire not to disrupt traders’ business dealings and cause them to lose income, observation, participation and short remarks in between transactions were the most important elements for documenting the everyday happenings in a market (Clark, 1994). I incorporated these techniques into my ethnographic approach and its execution forms the discussion in the next sections of this chapter.

4.3 Research design of the study

The purpose of ethnography is often to get the researcher as involved as possible with the subjects under investigation, in the hope that participating directly in the activities in that setting would allow the researcher to collect data in a systematic manner (Brewer, 2000). As a result, most traditional ethnography tends to suggest that the researchers “go and look” and attempt to bring back accounts of “how it is” as much as is possible by immersing themselves into the naturally occurring events (life, routines, and rituals) that are ongoing in that research setting (Campbell and Gregor, 2004; Cramer and McDevitt, 2004).

Although some authors suggest that to comfortably conduct ethnography that the

researcher acknowledges their partiality in order to display transparent reflexivity (Rose, 1997), it is difficult as Holloway (1997) terms it to be a pure 'cultural stranger' in a setting one is familiar with. For one of the key advantages that researchers can count on in enabling themselves to be fully immersed in an ethnographic setting in order to get a much better understanding of the subjects they are studying, is when they have some sort of prior and situated knowledge about their research setting. When that setting is the home of the researcher and not some exotic culture, the easy access to one's own society may present a departure from the sort of expertise that is required in gaining field experience in a culture foreign to that of the researcher (Messerschmidt, 1981; Ginkel, 1998).

With particular regards to the studies of market institutions, some of the most comprehensive studies on Nigerian markets have been done by Western scholars (Bohannon and Dalton, 1962; Hill, 1966; Trager, 1987; Porter et al., 2005) and recently by a handful of Nigerians themselves (see Egbue, 2006; Ikporukpo, 2005; Osinubi, 2007). In the case of Nigerian authors, a perusal of their methodology sections exhibits little detail on the intricacies they encountered in conducting their research from the perspective of native researchers who were investigating settings situated in their own native contexts. Munthali (2001) has particularly noted that when Africans carry out research in their own country, there is often a lack of description of their own experiences in doing fieldwork imputed into their ethnographic accounts. Fahim and Helmer (1980) in a much earlier discussion note that 'native' insiders rarely indicate the problems and potential of doing their research.

This section of the chapter therefore attempts to describe my encounters in the Alaba-Suru market as a research context and documents the experiences that I went through when doing fieldwork in Alaba-Suru market. As a Lagosian who had spent some considerable time coming to this market as a shopper accompanying my mother, the familiarity of the market as a shopping site seemed quite different when I began to see it as a research site. One of the central reasons I selected the Alaba-Suru market as the study context was in part due to the shortage of relevant market literature on Lagos as well as the fact that the Alaba-Suru market is among the top six of the largest markets in Lagos and I was quite familiar with it.

However as I began to study this market, its complexity and the discovery of often ignored nuances made me question my native researcher status. Leibowitz. (1980) acknowledges that the researcher can be an outsider even in their own home because of occupation, education, residence and speech. These parameters seemed very

applicable with regards to this research because rather than approaching traders as a customer, the turn to assessing the activities of traders required dislodging some of those preconceived notions that I had as a casual customer and replacing them with that of a researcher collecting relevant data.

I relied on the assumption that some sort of situated knowledge would at least ease the difficulties of entering the market as a research setting. This change from being in the market as a customer to being in the market as a researcher made how to encounter the setting in some sort of systematic way, somewhat complicated. The change from a shopping context to a research scene brought with it the problem of how to carve up the large expanse of stalls in the market, cope with the diversity of languages spoken by traders and the maze of multiple commodity divisions that were before me in the Alaba-Suru market into some orderly and meaningful system upon which to design a research. It is in the same regard that Aguilar (1981) suggests that the problems of access, acceptance and the boundaries of what unit is to be studied remain the same, whether or not the ethnographer reflects on himself or herself as an insider or outsider. Furthermore, it may well be the case that in settings where people are not familiar with intensive fieldwork, it can be difficult for the researcher to fully immerse himself or herself totally in the setting irrespective of the level of situated knowledge (Nukunya, 1969). Thus Posner (1980) has described this situation as a case of fieldwork schizophrenia where the researcher can be familiar and foreign at the same time in a setting.

In also reflecting on this insider vs.outsider relation as I set about conducting this ethnographic study of Alaba-Suru market, the fact that markets of Lagos have not been the subject of research or any current interests made encountering and learning from the experiences of other researchers who might have done similar research almost impossible. The traders I encountered were not sure what purpose this research exercise sought to do for them. Many traders were puzzled as to why what they were doing could be of any notable interest and some traders were clearly not impressed or comfortable with their every move being watched (including taking photographs) simply for the purpose of research. Some could not fathom what sort of serious scholarly research involved walking around and watching traders and asking them questions to which I should have known the answers. Like Munthali's (2001) study of Northern Malawi aptly summarises:

“Doing research in one's own home is also problematic because your informants think that the researcher already knows the answers to the questions” (Munthali, 2001, pg.122).

Even familiar traders who knew me from previous occasions as a customer, warmed very slowly into the research exercise. Nonetheless, informed consent was sort from respondents before beginning the research. It was only after I explained to them that I was a researcher seeking to understand the coordination of the market that they began to indicate any interest. Even after these sorts of explanations some traders whose stalls were facing demolition, for instance, expected that the research would draw the attention of the government to their plight. Other traders expected some sort of cash reward or incentive to take part in the study, while others thought I was a reporter and wondered what local station they would be shown on. Emerson et al. (1995) have also suggested that while participants may have consented to the research, they might not know exactly what the research involves and this in many ways paints the picture of the respondents I encountered.

In therefore capturing the complex relations that I was faced with in conducting this study for the six-month period between March 2010 and September 2010, I break down the discussions of the research design into a series of sub headings. In each of these headings I cover issues relating to stepping into the market, obtaining consent from traders, the sampling strategies employed, the ethics of watching and doing observations on foot, engaging with traders as interview participants and issues with recording data. I show in each of these discussions how I worked around the challenges of conducting ethnography in the Alaba-Suru market. The first of these discussions considers stepping into the market as a researcher.

4.4 Doing observations in the market

When I stepped into the Alaba-Suru market, I was struck by the sheer size of the spatial extent of the market and the vast transactions occurring simultaneously. Commodity lines retailing a diverse range of commodities, extend and criss-cross each other, while numerous traders and customers are involved in exchanges that are diverse and numerous. Normally as a customer visiting the market, I would concentrate my attention on visiting the commodity lines that stocked the sort of goods of I was interested in, and even such visits would involve patronising a select set of tried and tested traders. Such a shopping exercise meant that not all traders, commodity lines and hence not the entire market would necessarily be of interest to me. As a researcher however, a commitment to accounting for the practices of the market traders in the Alaba-Suru market did not proceed as a shopping exercise would.

While the intention in this research exercise was not to necessarily capture the

representativeness of all the characteristics of traders, commodities, and routines across all the possible commodity lines in the Alaba-Suru market, it was nonetheless pertinent to develop some sort of strategy to actualise the various topics of ethnographic interest in the market. The Alaba-Suru market has close to 1500 stall spaces and an estimated 8,000 traders in a total of fifty two-commodity specialisation arranged across a vast expanse of commodity lines. Given the six months that the fieldwork afforded by this study, depicting this setting accurately required some sort of sampling strategy to transform the Alaba-Suru market into some manageable entity that produced some valuable accounts of practice. Bohannan and Elst (1998) capture this complexity of relations by noting that:

“Even the simplest of culture is vastly more complex than the mind of any one single person whether native or casual observer can encompass. The ethnographer sees as much as there is time for, and explains as much as possible in the terms of the people who live the lives they are reporting. It is an honourable and demanding goal - and one that can never be reached (Bohannan and Elst, 1998, pg.26).

Before approaching the sampling strategy, official introductions were required from the market association of the market before commencing the research proper. The introduction to the market committee was itself a long wait as the Seriki (the market leader) had to oversee almost thirty disputes a day. As such, it was not possible to see the market leadership for a few weeks. Repeated visits were initiated until an opportunity emerged in the course of the break after settling a dispute one morning in April, to meet the market leadership. Because the Seriki was so busy, the introduction of the research was combined with an informal interview with the market leader, the secretary and two other women leaders who were present in the office at the time of the meeting. The basic information that was provided by the market leader included a history of the market, a brief discussion of the market structure and the role of the market association in the market. Having established the introductory rites, which also included the provision of local drinks, I then proceeded to observe what was occurring in the market.

Most ethnographic research discuss observation as a key method of investigation, where the researcher is expected to go into the field and be part of the researched subjects as much as is possible, while paying attention to documenting as accurately as possible what is going on in that setting. One of the most significant issues favoring doing pure observation in a market is that the volume and pace of activities occurring may present an inability to interact. Karp (1980) states elsewhere that the characters of public places, within which the boundaries of a market clearly

fall, are shaped by clear norms of non-involvement. He further states that this latter character does not make employing pure observation as opposed to participant observation a limiting method of enquiry. I learnt a lot from observing purchasing techniques to taking in how customers visually inspected goods. Although through the familiarity of the market through ongoing observations, it was not at all possible to immerse myself totally as a full participant in the market by any means. However observation provided me with room to consider to a great depth how I framed my own involvement and reflexivity in how I described and designed this research.

For instance, describing a normal event such as the event of a trader soliciting for a customer does not simply mean looking at the trader but also taking into consideration the set of related actions that are taking place at the same time that event is occurring. The fact is that the entire market proceeds with several traders, customers, load carriers and hawkers involved in various simultaneously occurring events in this market. In the rest of the chapter, I discuss how the process of observation as part of the ethnographic study of the Alaba-Suru market was conducted. I describe it through two main discussions, on spot sampling and the ethics of observing happenings in the market.

4.4.1 Sampling what to observe in the market

The sampling strategy that was adopted in the study of the Alaba-Suru market is what has been referred to elsewhere as the spot sampling technique (Gross, 1984). In this technique, the researcher simply appears at randomly selected places and at randomly selected times and records what people are doing when they are first encountered (Gross, 1984). Using this technique, I was able to get a representative sampling of the various topics that would inform what could be expanded on as ethnographic interest. Spot sampling also allowed the study of issues that would not have been easily studied by any other method of fine-grained analysis. In the case of this research, I could not have relied on a questionnaire to highlight instance what sort of practices would be of interest. Rather these issues could only be uncovered by examining what came across as particularly noteworthy while observing the goings on in the market.

The spot sampling approach was particularly useful in this regard because even though I had some idea of what went on in the market in the form of buying and selling, I wanted to establish the variety of other possible routines that could be associated with the variety of outcomes in the market and from which accounts to practice could be interpreted from. Adopting a spot sampling approach allowed me

to engage with the chance to see the scene of trade in the market and the forms of mannerisms associated with the natural conduct of happenings in the market, before there was any chance for traders to modify their behaviour artificially.

Through the method of spot sampling, I was able to gather relatively rich data about simple things such as display techniques, sorting processes and different ways for soliciting for customers. As a result, unlike many other kinds of qualitative research, the sampling of respondents in this regard took a departure from attempting to mirror generalisability and rigor, to more of an emphasis on what could be known about the social relations under exploration by paying close attention to observing the setting (DeVault and McCoy, 2006). Consequently, representativeness in designing the research strategy of the study focused more on collecting as many subjective viewpoints that illustrated traders' activities and their relations under scrutiny as much as was possible rather than having a representative set of traders in the market to investigate.

A major criticism that could be leveled against this sort of sampling exercise could be that external validity may be sacrificed for internal validity to see how respondents behave in their natural environments (Gross, 1984). Yet things like who to watch, where to go and watch them, when to watch, how often it is done and how long is spent watching are pertinent issues that can address such issues regarding external validity and I discuss these in the next sections.

4.4.2 The ethics of observing traders

Spot sampling as a method of studying respondents in their naturally occurring environment, involves some sort of intrusive behaviour (Penderson, 1987). The ethics of watching respondents doing what they do, with respondents knowing that an outsider is watching them, can present its own challenges to research of this nature. Doing observation as part of the ethics of watching requires a lot of reflexivity and being self conscious in conducting research, as one cannot write without the self experience in mind (Cohen, 2007). As important as watching traders act out their interactions so also was the point of how the watching was conducted as I discuss below under the headings of who to watch, where to watch, how long to watch and what to watch when describing the relations that traders engage with in the market.

4.4.2.1 Who to observe in the market

The Alaba-Suru market, as I have mentioned already, has an extensive layout and employing the strategy of spot sampling helped to narrow the focus of the study to

the areas of the Alaba-Suru market that supported the highest amount of customer patronage. These areas of the market were selected by visually inspecting the degree of human traffic along different areas and commodity lines. It was envisaged that concentrating on these areas of popularity would be a better strategy that narrowed down the most pressing practices within this complex setting. The areas and commodity lines selected for more intense observation were commodity lines that were devoted to the sale of provisions, women's hair products and cosmetics, meat, poultry, soup ingredients, plantain, the market frontage, second hand clothes and fish.

Having identified this cohort of traders, the next set of challenges that arose was how to watch them. For instance, I found that standing too long in certain places, such as on one spot in a commodity line to observe what was going on, potentially obstructed customers' free flow along the narrow roads of the market. In other cases, some traders were offended that I was also pretending to be a customer and wasting their time by not buying anything and simply being in the way of interested customers. Added to these incidences, simply informing the traders that I was doing research did not quell their fears. The market was going through some tough and trying times during the process of my fieldwork as some traders' stalls were being demolished. As a result, many traders were wary and sceptical of any form of official presence in the market. In the next section, I discuss how these challenges were overcome or at least minimised by varying the tactics of watching.

4.4.2.2 Location, frequency and duration of the observation

The areas of the market of interest for observations were selected over a period of three weeks, within which the market was observed from Monday to Saturday. Having noted the areas of the market that would be of interest, I chose the structured division of the market by commodity line to conduct the observation on foot. In doing research on foot, my observations were done as one who was a casual customer in the market to minimise interference as much as possible.

The walkways in the Alaba-Suru market are narrow and considering the areas that were being observed had the highest customer patronage, it was not possible to stand at one spot for too long in order to take notice of what traders were doing. Instead, repeated visits to the same lines over the duration of the study were necessary. Bernard has described this method of direct reactive observation as continuous monitoring, where the researcher watches a subject to record their behaviour as faithfully as possible (Bernard, 1994). This continuous monitoring of traders was alternated periodically in order to capture the scene of market trading as accurately as possible. For instance visits to the market in the morning, when the market did not

have as much customer patronage, allowed the duration of the walk to be at a slower pace and lengthened the duration of observations. Weekends and other weekdays were more crowded, so walks on foot had to be quicker and duration of observations shorter. A walk from the beginning of one end to another commodity line took about fifteen minutes. During this time, pauses were taken to either take photographs or take note of traders stocking up, customers haggling, or to note the patterns of displays employed. On completion of one line, the walk would continue into the next line until the entire section marked out for the day was covered.

According to Geertz (1973), whether one is slow, stops or hurries while doing research on foot matters as this can affect what is put down as an event that is worth observing and could be pursued further since not all observable issues would be of interest and not all issues will be observable on foot. Lee and Ingold (2006) have made similar references to participating in fieldwork on foot. They note that research done on foot does not simply mean a walk, but to walk with the setting and look around it attentively for clues as to what is happening. Geertz (1973) also goes on to express that participating by walking in the setting requires skills of how one looks around, the pace at which one walks to observe what is transpiring and what routes to take to ensure that the walk is effective.

Even though the Alaba-Suru market setting had been simplified by narrowing the focus to only a selected number of commodity lines, the daily route of the walks tended to be dedicated to paying attention to one type of commodity at a time. For instance, on the days I focused on the meat sellers, the routes covered began from the women at the front of the meat line who sold the cow's intestines and the cow's stomach walls. This route led to the beef section, tracing the line of cow leg sellers, through to the goat meat sellers and ending at the mini abattoir, located at the rear of the market. At this point, the walk was retraced so that it ended at the cow intestines lines. This was repeated thrice, interspaced with interviews where it was necessary to clarify certain issues and permissions to take pictures.

4.4.2.3 What activities to observe in the market

Doing observations required careful thought of where to stand and for how long to stand for within a particular location of the market, without encroaching on another trader's or customer's space. However as important as these issues were, so also was the sort of activities that caught attention as an interesting account to be recorded during the observation. Repp et al. (1988) note that a crucial problem with doing continuous observations is that the researcher may be biased about what they are looking out for. This is always possible when the researcher has also been familiar

with the scene prior to research.

In my case being in the position of a customer in this market, I had some prior knowledge of what practices to look out for. Bargaining routines for instance, were the most common techniques I was accustomed to witnessing. As I undertook those observations on foot on different days and at different times, it became apparent that of equally strategic importance were issues relating to the display routines which trader dedicated most of the morning to, prayer time which was a collective activity noted occurring at noon in the market, cleaning the market on Thursdays and the use of idle time by traders during this time as they were not allowed to sell any items till eleven in the morning and dispute resolutions by the market committee. Some of these activities were easier to watch and describe than others. For instance dispute settlements could be watched with permission from the market association because the office had a seating area where visitors could sit and watch proceedings. However watching a trader's idle time was more technical as some traders simply did nothing but sleep, eat or just wandered away to stalls of other traders to have a chat. Days could go by and there would be nothing of note, it seemed to observe, but it also meant that the procedure of doing continuous monitoring meant that certain one off practices could be witnessed.

The demolition exercises that were happening during the time of the research were a good example to illustrate this point. Although, it was not envisaged that the demolition exercises would be occurring at the time of the research in the Alaba-Suru market, the effects of previous demolition exercises dotted the market as make-shift structures and heaps of materials from demolished stalls littered the market. On one such visit in the early hours on a Wednesday morning in May, 2010, I encountered first hand these demolition exercises and the harassment meted out to traders, the panic as traders scurried to salvage losses from the approaching bulldozers and fights between officials and traders. The incidences like those witnessed during the demolitions, were not necessarily everyday happenings, but through continuous observation, they were noted as data of ethnographic interest that could corroborate discussions about the role of external agencies that did influence happenings in the market.

Having mentioned these issues, it would be unfair to say that all forms of actions carried out by Alaba-Suru traders could be noted by conducting observations alone. The limitations of doing research on foot and equally limited duration to watch events that unfolded in the market meant that not all actions going on in the market were observable, making interviews which are discussed next, necessary.

4.5 Interviewing traders

While conducting observations gave some clear introduction to the occurrences in the Alaba-Suru market, it was quite important to investigate how market traders themselves described how they conducted their lives. Although observations helped to give a general sense of what was happening in the market, it was important to still talk to traders to give some form of experience to the observed issues noted as the research proceeded. Although practices may often assume a tacit nature and be unconsciously performed, methods as interviews may be useful. Spradley (1979) has also mentioned that interviews are necessary for the ethnographer to confirm what they think they are observing.

In the course of these observations, it sometimes became necessary to talk to traders to provide the context to what was being observed. Since the activities that were of interest came up as observations proceeded, the choice of informants and who was to be spoken to was not pre-determined before the research was carried out (Campbell and Gregor, 2004). Even if I knew what I was after it would have been impossible to question systematically and sample a representative number of persons given the fact that issues of interest came along as the research proceeded in an almost incidental fashion. As a result, traders were not selected on a predefined pattern but were accounted for in the course of doing observations.

Unlike observations, where the activity being undertaken could simply be noted while watching, it was more challenging to approach traders and expect them to answer questions pertaining to aspects of the research. In many cases, the most interesting observations requiring further information took place when traders were interacting with other traders or customers while gossiping, praying, quarreling or taking part in a bargain. These situations were not the types of activities one could disrupt or even necessarily watch dedicatedly without encroaching on the privacy of traders. In therefore approaching traders, it was only in cases where the trader seemed idle such as when sorting items to make up idle time while customers were not present, that interviews were more desirable. Irrespective of this admission though, traders could not just be approached and expected to take part in the research. Traders who I had also patronised in the past as a customer were a most helpful link in the interview process. Some of these traders helped to introduce me to other traders on their lines or made some of the necessary introductions to particular lines of the market I was interested in, and this form of referral facilitated in great measure the conduct of interviews.

All the interviews were carried out in traders' stalls, which were not equipped with a sitting arena where I could sit down and talk to traders. Furthermore, traders did not take dedicated breaks from their stalls and there were no cafes, or areas in the market where interviews could be conducted in private. Most interviews were done on foot, while standing and for very short periods of time that were repeated throughout the research with interviews and observations were done concurrently. Most interviews were conducted in the mornings when peak period shopping was not prominent and on Thursdays when most traders did not display items of sale in their stalls till about close to noon, due to the sanitation laws in the market prohibiting buying and selling while the mandatory cleaning exercise in the market was occurring.

In total, thirty traders selling provisions, hair products, gari, oil, fish, meat, fruits, and second hand clothes and shoes were interviewed. For the thirty traders who were interviewed, interviews were short and repeated almost daily, and where possible, for periods of twenty minutes at the most. The more lengthy interviews were intermittently punctuated by approaching customers, daily and weekly money collectors, or other pressing engagements, such as going to make deposits at the bank. The flexible nature of interviews left room for traders to field explanations for events that were previously not accounted for during observations. In one case, an interview with a meat seller was interrupted with the arrival of a money collector, who targeted the various butchers on the commodity line. I was curious as to whom the collector was and what types of monies he collected and enquired from the trader being interviewed what he was doing. The trader informed me that this was a regular contribution that the butchers' trader association required all its members to pay weekly, a fixed sum of nine hundred Naira. At the end of the year, these monies collected were returned to the individual butchers as a lump sum, which they could use towards capital projects they deemed fit.

Such scenarios that arose in the course of the research opened up other crucial aspects of practices that were previously unknown and that provided additional information of how traders organised work. Thus whilst I was clear about the line of questioning, every interview and observation proceeded uniquely albeit aiming to achieve the collection of experiences from the traders. This does not mean as the researcher that I did not follow a research schedule, but it was also good to make allowances for interruptions of useful but prior unknown arguments. There were planned questions in the interview questions that covered issues regarding the time spent in learning the trade, previous occupation, associational life in and out of the market, the use of profits, means of transport to work, the availability of credit and start-up capital to do work among other questions. These general topics were not always framed

as questions, so that several interesting topics that came up in the course of doing observations or interviews could be fitted in. Appendices B and C detail the list of respondents spoken to and the full list of issues covered in the formal and informal interviews respectively. Employing a flexible and an open-ended nature to the inquiry of interview was to seek out expert and exclusive knowledge of what was previously unknown or observing what was previously invisible as practice (Smith, 2005).

Another significant discussion under interviews was the type of language that was utilised during the fieldwork. In my pre-fieldwork musings, I had expected that most traders would communicate in Nigerian Pidgin English or Brokin. However it is also common in many parts of Lagos to mix English, Brokin and a variety of local slangs spoken by the diverse ethnic groups together when speaking. Traders generally spoke in terms of the latter, using a mix of English and non-English words. The upside of this language style of communication was that I was familiar with this mode of speaking but the downside of it meant that certain words used did not have direct English substitutes.

Quite a few Nigerian languages are only in spoken form and not widely accessible in written form and as a result in interview accounts it was crucial to work around providing appropriate translations to what was said by asking traders to try to clarify what they referred to and asking other traders to corroborate such evidence. For example the Igbo term for a mature apprentice who wants to be a trader could not be spelt by any of the Igbo traders that I interviewed. Some even suggested that it was a name that was not employed by all Igbo tribes. So as not to introduce confusion to interviews, the general mode of communication was to try as much as possible to expand the terms in English language. I shall return to this point in the section on the analysis of data.

4.6 Recording the data

In most research designs, data collection and analysis tend to be the more prominent aspects discussed. However, the process of recording data in this type of research requires its own specific section for understanding the connection between interviews and observation material and the analysis that follows. Due to the nature of the context of the market, much of the research as I have mentioned, was done on foot. As part of that ongoing interaction, taking breaks to write down jottings was not practical. In interviewing and observation of this nature, there was little room to do much recording while paying attention to what traders were doing. The inability to sit or stand for a long time without causing obstruction to customers and traders,

coupled with walking fast or slow or observing for short periods, meant that the requirements to document happenings as I went along were not always possible. It was easier to watch traders carry out their activities, but bringing out notes to record data, and taking pictures, were not as easy as I walked along.

Cahill (1985) has suggested that in difficult scenarios that the researcher should go into deserted lunchrooms or stairwells to make covert jottings. The setting of the Alaba-Suru market as I have described does not afford this type of covert jottings, as there where no hideaways were I could accommodate the possibility of jotting adequately. In such a case as was is in this research, relying on incidents and key phrases that triggered remembrance of the scenes that I had witnessed were necessary. This also meant that observations could not be carried out for too long at a time, in order that key incidents could be memorised and jotted. Observations and interviews together did not proceed beyond four hours a day at a time. As a result, there are few direct quotes in the fieldwork except in a few interview settings, where traders' stalls did permit for some sitting down. Where jottings were possible, such as in the few cases where traders who owned stalls allowed me to sit with them briefly, key phrases and short notes that could be expanded on later, were employed.

Most jottings were done immediately I left the market so that important events were written as faithfully as I remembered them happening and as close as possible to the periods they occurred. Walsh (2004) has suggested that it is important to put down into writing as soon as possible what is remembered from the field in order to take the best advantage of memory recall. In doing this analytic memos such as ideas that arose in the process of data collection were employed as key points were noted in my field note. Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 are samples of the field notes taken during the research. There are obvious disadvantages with this sort of method as it leaves out quite a lot of information as information is written in a hurry and memory lapses can set in. Added to this is that all the noise and real time happenings are missed out. However because only key incidents are recorded, one is reminded only of the most necessary things in what is an otherwise complex setting (Salzinger, 2002).

4.7 Secondary data

In addition to the observations and interviews in the Alaba-Suru market, to validate the analysis it was also crucial that some level of secondary data be added to the evidence collated in the market. According to Whitehead (2005) the open-ended and discovery oriented approaches to ethnography require secondary material to secure the most valid data related to the questions or topics of interest. The input

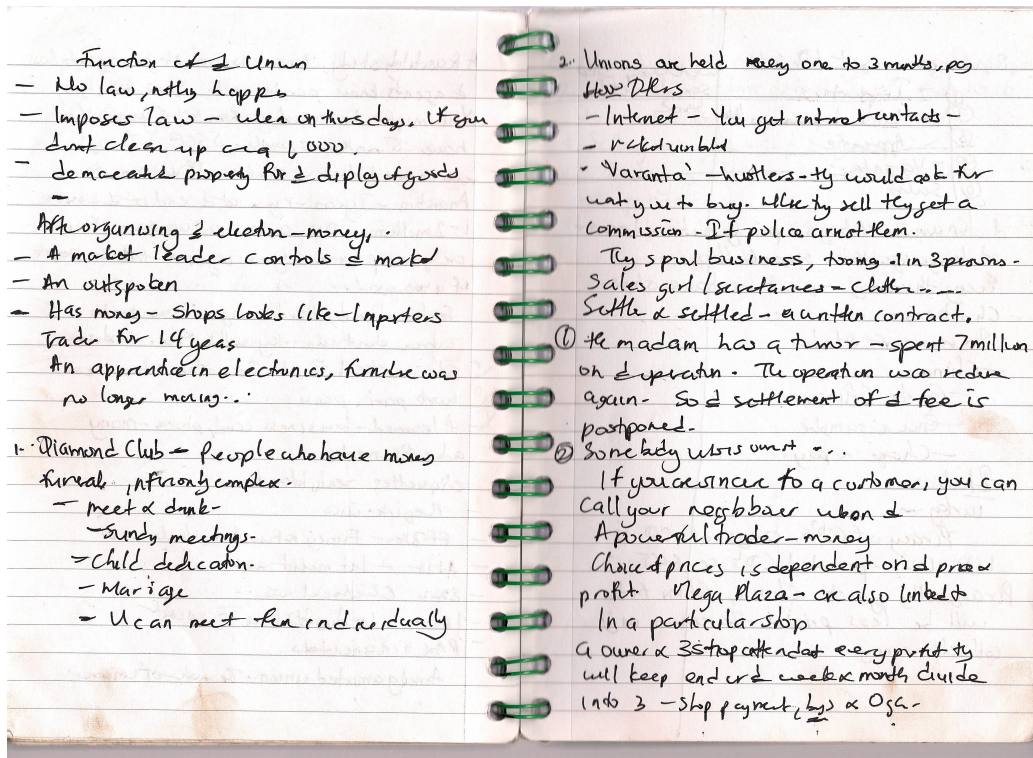


Figure 4.1 Sample of field notes 1

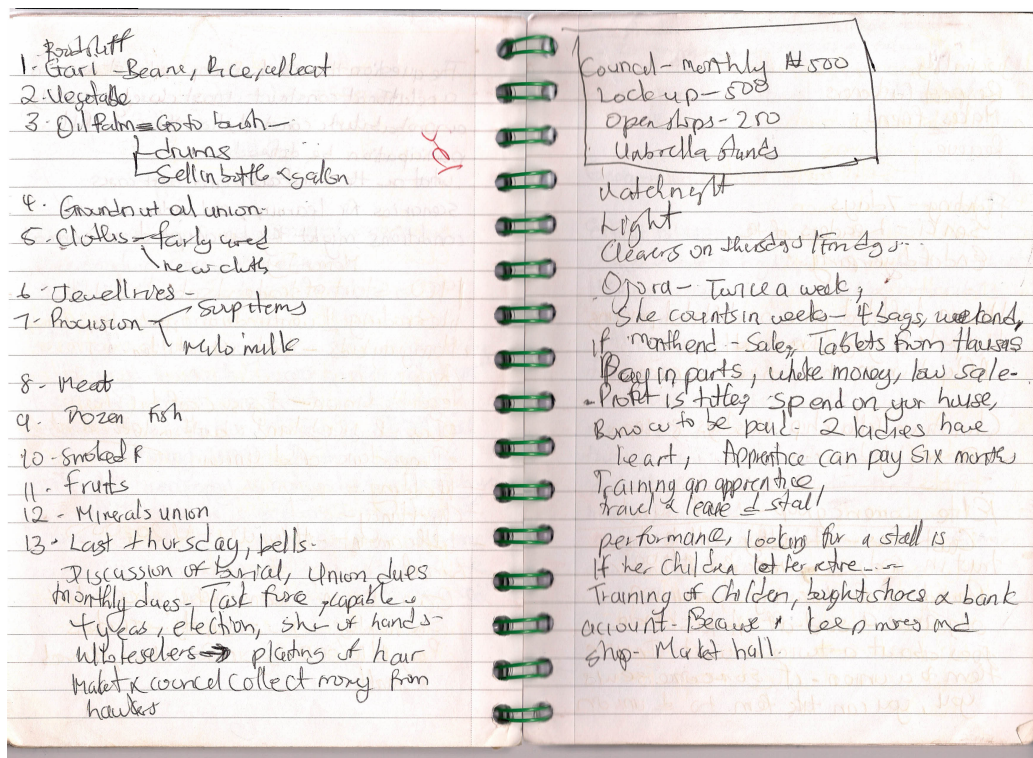


Figure 4.2 Sample of field notes 2

of secondary data in this research was necessary in order not to make generalisations about activities in the market beyond the locality of the market and place the traders and their relations in wider systems of being. Smith (2005) has also argued in

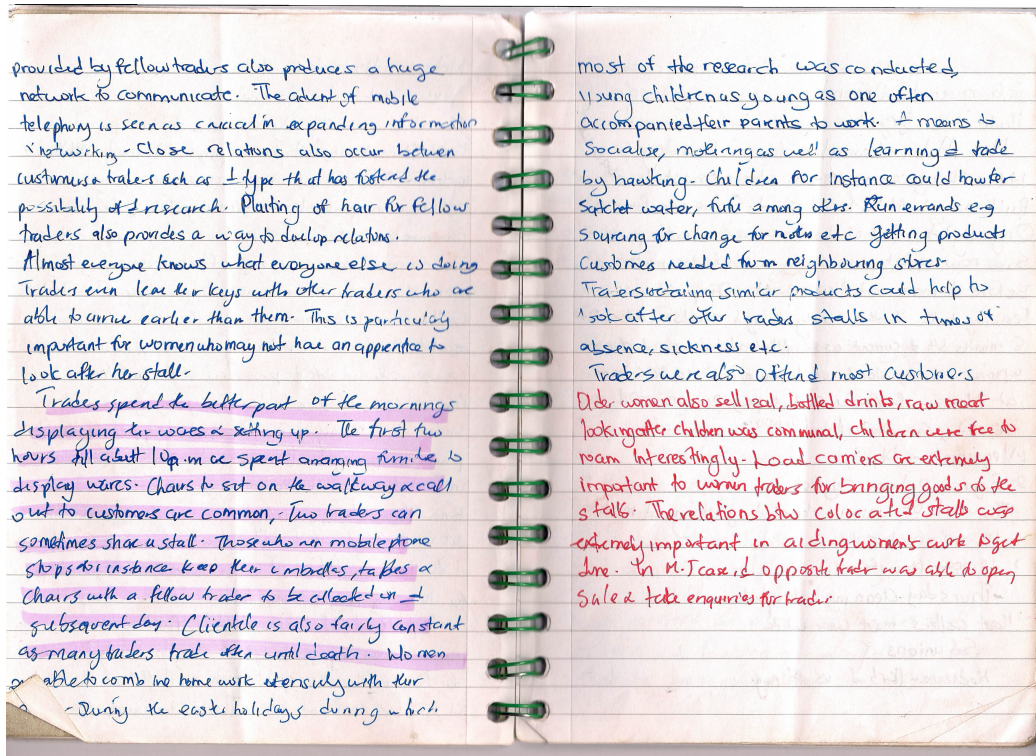


Figure 4.3 Sample of field notes 3

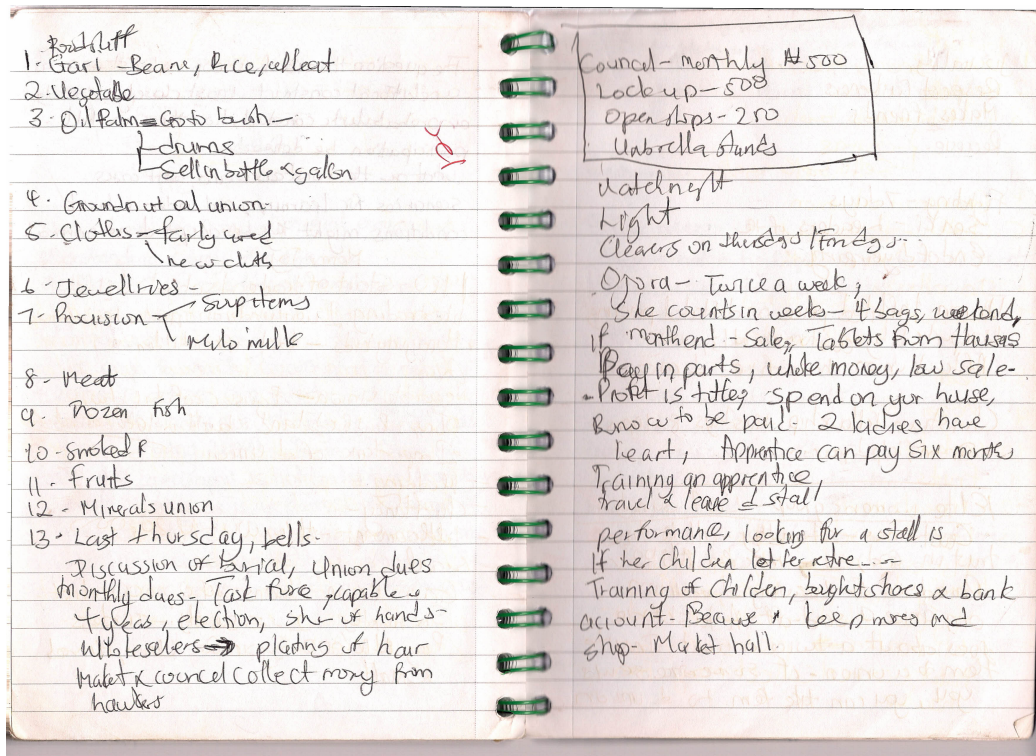


Figure 4.4 Sample of field notes 4

her discussion on institutional ethnography that documents and archival records that people use to organise their relations are pivotal to understanding the issues necessary to organise interview and observation data. Whitehead (2005) has suggested that any

of the following documents serve the purpose of the secondary data, including

- Scholarly and popular (including media) publications and products.
- Archival and statistical data found in various administrative sources at the national, state and local levels (e.g., national censuses, government agencies, state and local planning offices, police stations, city and town hall ledgers, budgets, sales records).
- Other archival documents, such as maps, atlases, abstracts of titles, and title deeds.
- Records and data collected by business, educational, health, social services, labour and professional associations, church records, and other entities that collect data for their particular missions.
- Data collected in various types of directories, including telephone, local business directories, special ethnic publications.
- Personal and individual data, such as diaries, family histories, biographies and autobiographies, tombstones, etc. (Whitehead, 2005, pg. 3).

There was a significant lack of data, documentation, or archival records regarding any of these aforementioned sources on market trading particularly in the Alaba-Suru market. The limited literature that existed on markets focused mainly on the periodic markets of Lagos of the seventies, which formed some of the preliminary information that was used to justify the study (Sada et al., 1978). Nigerian census records do not have any reference to the number of market traders in the country and even the market association of the Alaba-Suru market had no records of data by commodity associations.

Newspaper archives were the only source of publications of any kind that offered some form of additional evidence to the practices of traders in these markets. Reports focusing on the coverage of the effects of market demolitions, shopping practices in Lagos and urban planning in Lagos were useful. Pockets of data also came from visits made to the large wholesale market at Mile 12, whose market association had some data on transport charges, which they willingly provided upon my visit. For this reason of limited data, shorter visits were taken to the Shobatex second hand market and the Balogun central market, the largest in Lagos, to corroborate some of the findings on pricing, transport routes and suppliers that some of the Alaba-Suru traders had mentioned in the course of interviews.

4.8 Analysing the data

Once data is collected, the central issue that arises is the problem of what do with it. A major dilemma associated with qualitative data is that the data collection techniques aimed at collecting qualitative data often generate large and cumbersome material from interview schedules and observations and there are no widely accepted rules for analysing qualitative data. Central to the analysis in this research was how to make connections between the ethnographic data obtained and the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. Primarily the objective of the analysis was how to connect all these stories and events into meaningful statements that threw light on the evidence of practices, community of practice and their limitations in this market. Whether it was the details of traders stocking up, closing the shop, getting supplies, coping with demolition activities, looking after a stall; at any glance, the range of possible practices that were present were complex, potentially innumerable and such that what could be obscured, overlooked or misrepresented was daunting (see Salzinger, 2002).

The analysis began with transcribing the detailed notes taken during the research after daily visits to the market were completed. As I mentioned earlier, the notes that were taken in the market were taken hastily, where possible with key words guiding the triggering of memory to report what was observed. Interviews had more detailed notes even though they followed this pattern. Together these notes and pictures taken were used to piece together the relationship between the data collected. These were then collated into a transcript. Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 are part of the excerpts from a number of the interviews with three Alaba-Suru traders.

In making the transcripts meaningful, language was an important consideration as a lot of the interviews were done in a combination of Pidgin English, local languages and English as the transcript excerpts show. Translating the meanings of words as they were used by traders required that the appropriate context words were used in making sure that their interpretations in English was correct. Hitchins and Klausen (2002) suggest that where specialised vocabularies are employed, it is impossible to transcribe competently without knowing something about the domain. It is evident that in questioning the traders I did not ask for clarification of what words in Pidgin meant as I understood this language quite well. The word *medicine*, as used in transcript two for instance, means to get a magic portion or herbal spell from a fetish source. While the rhetorical question of *Wetin u be sef?* translates to mean questioning or criticising someone else as being too proud or overly conscious of displaying their sense of superiority or success. Agar (1986) suggests that in order to

Table 4.1 Transcript excerpt 1: Female gari trader

| Interview questions | Respondent's answer |
|---|---|
| When did you start to trade? | 1980, I started to trade then. After School, I felt like trading. So I went for an apprenticeship which lasted for six months |
| Did you enjoy this, was this you really wanted to do? | Yes it was, I wanted to be able to manage my home and look after my children. Now I am mainly in the gari union as their provost |
| What do you do as the provost? | Let me tell what we do in the union first, we help people with weddings, chieftaincy ceremonies, we also give little amounts of ₦10, 000.00 to ₦20,000.00 for burial. We also give small loans of ₦40,000.00 with interest for periods of six months, the trader must provide between two and three sureties. As the provost I also supervise the entry of new members into the union. The new members must pay ₦10,000.00, bring a crate of soft drinks and a carton of malt drinks. |

Table 4.2 Transcript excerpt 2: Female provision trader

| Interview questions | Respondent's answer |
|---|--|
| How did you come about this space you use for trading? | I have a long relationship with some of the market leaders so I got this space for free from one of them |
| How are you coping with the demolition of your stall, especially with this small space you are sharing with these traders around you? | The market is a terrible place. People are doing medicine, I mean they are very fetish. Market people hate successful traders. If you are making it, they will ask, Wetin u be sef? |
| How did you come about this conclusion, you seem to be all so friendly with one another? | I usually come late to the market, and when I come, they begin to talk amongst themselves that “in don bring medicine come?” some of them have even gone to the native doctor because of me. I am a strong Christian, they cannot harm me. |

guard against unexamined assumptions, it is important to ground transcriptions in an explicit set of propositions that are independently verifiable in the ethnography of the

Table 4.3 Transcript excerpt 3: Male electronics trader

| Interview questions | Respondent's answer |
|--|--|
| How did you start to trade in this market? | First I did a feasibility study. I even consulted an Agent because the agents know people well. But before then I went to do an apprenticeship with somebody for five years. A family member recommended me to the person I was to learn from. If the person is from Anambra, they will spend between 7 to 8 years in the service of the master. At the end I got a settlement of nearly ₦2million to start my own business because I was a good person. |
| Is the electronic trade profitable? | Well it used to be, but now there are many 'Varanta' boys who are hustlers, who are trying to undercut we legitimate traders. |
| Why do you call these men Varanta? | We traders came up with the name Varanta do describe those apprentices who could not successfully finish their apprenticeship and were sent away by their Ogas. They are really illegitimate traders |

setting. For instance the question of *Wetin u be sef?*, could also be translated to mean who do you think you are, but following the context within which the respondent in transcript two describes the relationship with the traders around her, this conclusion about the meaning as pertaining to pride seems most logical. Without understanding the nuances of Brokin, it would have been difficult to derive these meanings, but my own knowledge of this language greatly facilitated the ease of the transcription process.

Having clarified issues concerning meanings, the work of analysis sought to pull the different accounts that were produced through the interviews and observations and fit them together so that what was under investigation could emerge to answer the three research questions posed at the beginning of the questions. It is common to see with many other types of qualitative research that the data is reduced to themes engaging with issues that more than one person discussed. Campbell and Gregor (2004) however argue that categorising data in themes may distort the idea of tracing relations as there is a tendency to create artificial interests that may be far from the reality of happenings the data is communicating. Much of the work

of the transformation that entailed the work of transcription therefore deviated from other qualitative analysis techniques where the aim of the research is to interpret and assign a value or theme to observers accounts such as in thematic analysis (Aronson, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998) and grounded theory (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Consequently mapping of the events that occurred within the Alaba-Suru market did not follow a simple operation of thematic analysis or coding for themes that often accompanies other qualitative analysis (Silverman, 2006).

Instead the analysis in this regard, after translating the notes into transcripts sought to generate accounts of actions that took place as part of a wider set of behaviours among Alaba-Suru traders and not simply to describe them. While the interest of my analysis was to describe the work of these market traders, my intention was to use the data collated during observations and interviews to connect the experiences of trade in this market to other translocal practices. From the interview accounts, transcript one and three for instance hint at activities of apprenticeship and its variations as part of a wider system of coordinating traders. The development of the ethnographic grounding led to identifying other sources of knowledge about apprenticeships of Igbo traders in particular.

Similarly the effects of demolitions that formed a central part of the enquiry in transcript two led to a consideration of publications and policies that were available particularly in newspaper articles on the subject of market demolition in relation to the Lagos Mega City Project, in order to expand and consider the possible effects on traders' livelihoods. Other activities including but not limited to the role of membership of affiliations in the market, such as savings groups and commodity associations, dispute resolutions, bargaining exchanges that were uncovered during interviews from observations made by the Alaba-Suru traders, were checked against information on pricing, transport routes and suppliers from visits made to Mile 12, Shobatex and Balogun markets.

I sought to make linkages between these practices as they corresponded in some way to the different structures, performances and wider regulation of institutions, I mentioned as the ways of embracing practice. In therefore analysing practices, I drew on the conceptual framework to order what practices of traders are conditioned and related by structures of regulations within the market, are forms of instantaneous routinised practices that have been carved out by traders themselves and beckon to role of other external agency experienced outside of the market.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered in some detail the ethnographic fieldwork comprising observations, interviews and employing limited secondary data in the Alaba-Suru market. In particular, the field exercise evoked other concerns regarding the nature of doing research in my home country. While part of that experience is richly rewarding it was also easy to be a stranger in a setting that was although semi familiar, still not easy to grasp. A major part of that investigation involved critically thinking about how to conduct research in a bustling commercial setting. Language barriers and difficulty in finding appropriate locations to do observations and record data were all part of the issues that were discussed in this chapter.

As I shall show the analysis of the material obtained from this exercise revealed that different traders exhibit organised behaviour that at times reveal very independent but simultaneously occurring actions spread over this boisterous market. The analysed material further revealed that this organised behaviour of traders was also facilitated and constrained by incidental and deliberate encounters between the local market and supply regions, individual habits of traders, regulated policies influencing the conduct of trade, cultural background of traders, family background among others which contributed to the robustness of the system of market trade. In the next three analysis chapters that follow, I engage with the different ways I witnessed practices unfolding, as representative of at times very structured group practices, through to various individual negotiations of trade as well as the important roles that various governmental agencies present in permitting or constraining events that relate to trade.

Chapter 5

The organisation of practices among Alaba-Suru Traders

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of the discussion in this chapter is to describe and trace how happenings in the Alaba-Suru market are organised collectively as practices. In the discussions in the conceptual framework, I suggested that it was important to understand the nature of practices as an important aspect of defining a community of practice. Presenting an account of how traders manifest practices of a shared nature through and in their interactions in order to bring about specific outcomes in the Alaba-Suru market, the chapter demonstrates that traders employ some common practices to construct complex social relations in order to remain competitive, in the midst of similarly competing traders. Understanding what practices carve up the work of traders and how they are contested and produced collectively and individually, illustrates how communities of practice may take shape and emerge in Alaba-Suru market.

The chapter has three sections. In the first part of the chapter, I spend some time discussing what differentiates and integrates the practices of traders in Alaba-Suru market. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, commodity specialisation, and membership of commodity associations and the scale of operation of traders, are highlighted. These factors are relevant for informing how the heterogeneous divisions present among traders in the market can then be comprehended in an ordered fashion even in the midst of such complex and diverse characters in the market. From these discussions in the first section of the chapter noting these diverse characteristics of market traders, the second part of the chapter extrapolates three

broad categories organising the practices of Alaba-Suru market traders. Alaba-Suru traders' practices collectively are described as configured as a response to three broad analytical categories in this chapter. These include the practices of traders that are maintained and facilitated by cultural predispositions (cross-communal practices), practices developed autonomously by the trader to cope with the expectations of their specialty trade (practices of non-participation) and practices of traders that manifest as a response to the rules internalised by regulatory structures operating within this market (boundary practices). In the third and concluding section of the chapter, I argue that Alaba-Suru traders are organised by these three different levels of broad practice categories simultaneously. In admitting this overlapping nature, I acknowledge two related points on collectivising the practices of traders into these three broad classifications.

First, I propose that the organisation of traders' practices as broad classifications of boundary practice, cross communal practice and practices of non-participation ignores the actuality of the performances and internalised meanings that produce these broad classes of practice. Second, the categorising of practices misses out on the implications of the forms of interconnections between these different levels of organising practices and ordering the diversity of Alaba-Suru market traders. The chapter concludes that there is a need to examine a network of practice that informs the myriad of practices occurring between and within these broad categories of practices in Alaba-Suru market. This broader discussion on the network of practice is the subject of the subsequent chapter.

5.2 Collectivising and categorising traders in the Alaba-Suru market

Market traders employ varied markers of differentiation and diversity to establish the boundaries of competition that shore up their expertise in a particular trade. Specialisation and differentiation in trade may give or be derived from advantages that certain groups of traders possess over other traders. Market traders vying for the attention of customers, profits and sustained business growth rely on varied mechanisms to establish uniqueness in the midst of other similar competing traders.

Studies of market traders have variously commented on the forms of social organisation which construct the trajectories along which traders choose to define competence, specialisation and appropriateness in trade. These have included distinctions based on caste and familial organisation (Fox, 1967), as well as the gender and ethnicity of the trader (Cohen, 1971; Afonja, 1981; Porter et al., 2005).

Other studies have included the segmentation of education, manufacturing, artisanal training and agricultural production that are related to trade, as part of the distinction that traders use to establish their position in marketing commodities (ARIA, 2010). This varied specialisation and differentiation of possibilities in trade potentially serves to restrict market traders to particular types of activities and inadvertently certain trading practices.

In the Alaba-Suru market, one way to comprehend the complex organisation of traders is the division of the market into commodity associations. Each of the fifty-two commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market has one or more commodities under its jurisdiction. Some examples of these associations in the Alaba-Suru market such as the yam association, the provisions associations, the palm oil association, baby products association and meat sellers association, perform the function of standardising the practices of multiple traders who trade in each commodity in the market. Traders who belong to a particular commodity association in Alaba-Suru market share or may have in common, similar sales locations, price regimes, suppliers or supply regions and display techniques.

For example, traders who are members of the provision association in Alaba-Suru market are called the Egbenifere (which means locally in Yoruba that 'you do not hurt people'). Provision items are the most popular type of commodities traded in the Alaba-Suru market. Traders specialising in the sale of provision items, form the largest category of traders in the Alaba-Suru market. Items sold under the trade of provisions vary. They range from household cleaning products, light bulbs, rubber slippers, beverages, women's cosmetics, toilet soaps, deodorants, detergents, candles and hair products (See Figure 5.1). The majority of Alaba-Suru provision traders are of the Igbo ethnic group who originate from Eastern Nigeria.

To illustrate the diversity of the provision traders with some accuracy, I briefly profile three key respondents within the Alaba-Suru market. Chukwudi is a male provision trader who has sold women's cosmetics at the Alaba-Suru market since 1986. His shop at the Alaba-Suru market located at the centre of the provision line stocked a variety of cosmetic goods, ranging from bleaching creams, women's make-up products to hair colouring products. Nneka, another provision trader in the Alaba-Suru market who was in her late thirties operated two stalls adjacent to one another in the Alaba Suru market together with her husband specialising in the sale of cooking ingredients. One of the stalls stocked wholesale items of cooking ingredients, which Nneka's husband saw to, while Nneka tended to the other stall that accommodated the retail section of the cooking ingredients. The cooking ingredients that Nneka and



Figure 5.1 A provision commodity line at the Alaba-Suru Market (Photograph by Faith Ikioda, Field work, 2010)

her husband sold, included items like spices, food seasoning, toothpicks and food flavourings. Aunty Eli, another female provision trader, operated from an umbrella stand at the front of the market. She dealt in items, which included food seasoning, beverages, toilet soaps, detergents, sauces, salt, food preservatives and flour.

This brief profile of the traders demonstrates the importance of understanding of the role of the commodity association in organising the trade in provision items in the market, as one example. While the three traders' specialisation by commodities, scale of operation and market locations are different, the membership of these traders in the provision association allows for comprehending the practices of these otherwise diverse set of traders within some ordered framework. In the absence of the structure of the provision association that these three traders belong to, the work of what it means to be a provision trader would be difficult to ascertain. The presence of this commodity association specifies what type of commodities can be classed as provision items as well as the other characteristics that define the Alaba-Suru provision trader. This includes the methods of displaying provision items, what membership dues are payable and the procedures for compulsory attendance of monthly gatherings of provision traders.

Commodity associations such as the provision association also work to resolve

disputes among traders so that enforcement agencies, such as the police, are rarely invited to settle disputes between traders. Instead, well-developed procedural interventions within the commodity association are put in place to settle disputes amongst trader-members (Clark, 1994). Common disputes settled could include unfair price hikes or price reduction among traders, selling a commodity without being registered with the appropriate association and ‘stealing’ a customer from another trader (Field notes, 2010). It is important to note that when disputes occurred between different commodity associations, it was the role of the overarching market association to oversee such disputes. Ikporukpo (2005), has also discovered similar evidence among the fish commodity associations in the Ogbе-Ijoh market in Warri, Southern Nigeria. For instance he argues that:

“Where there is conflict among members of a union, this is settled by the executive committee, which normally imposes a fine. Where the executive committee is unable to settle the dispute, the Chairman becomes the final arbiter. It is not usual to invite the police, even in cases of theft”. (Ikporukpo, 2005, pg.15).

Commodity associations in Alaba-Suru market also provide a supporting role for traders in cases of death, accidents, chieftaincy titles and weddings by making monetary contributions towards expenses. The gari association in Alaba-Suru market, for instance, makes a contribution of between ₦10,000.00 (£40.00) and ₦20,000.00 (£80.00) towards the burial of a deceased member or the spouse of a member (Field notes, 2010). Other roles of the commodity associations include establishing bargaining and merchandising etiquettes and regulating the methods and means of attracting consumers (Lyon, 2003; Olukoju, 2005).

An Alaba-Suru trader could also belong to more than one commodity association in the Alaba-Suru market. Some Alaba-Suru traders belonged to up to a maximum of four commodity associations simultaneously. This ability to manipulate membership of associations allowed a trader to explore a wider range of merchandise and thus improve their share of the market and profits. Commodity associations ensure that the commodities that the trader combined were complementary across the different associations to which they belonged. Aunty Eli, one of the provision traders already discussed, was also a member of the groundnut oil (ororo) association, baking ingredients association, and the packaging nylon bags association, because the products were compatible with provision items. Similarly traders in the uguwu association could sell ogbono and egusi seeds, as these were complementary products for preparing local sauces. Many pepper sellers joined the grinders associations in Alaba-Suru (Figure 5.2), while poultry sellers could also join the association



Figure 5.2 Grinding machines next to crayfish and pepper stalls (Photograph by Faith Ikioda, Field work, 2010)

of traders offering chicken plucking services. In both cases, the activities of both associations complemented one another. Through this organisation of the compatible and incompatible, the commodity association allowed for the relative organisation of a very diverse and varied marketplace to function smoothly.

Commodity associations also help to protect the interests of traders by ensuring that the rights of traders to maintain their share of the market are upheld. A good example to illustrate this scenario can be made about certain associations in Alaba-Suru market that are able to control trader-membership. The need to control associational membership can arise if the entrance of new traders into an existing association is likely to reduce profits accruing to the already established traders in those associations. The Ugwu (vegetable) trade is the most buoyant trade in the Alaba-Suru market as it is a common daily ingredient in the preparation of most meals. Increases in the number of traders in this particular commodity could lead to smaller profits, overcrowding and increased competition among traders. As a result the fee for registration for the membership of the Ugwu (and other vegetables) association is used to discourage new members. The fee is between ₦50,000.00



Figure 5.3 The meat line at Alaba-Suru market (Photograph by Faith Ikioda, Field work, 2010)

to ₦80,000.00 (between £200.00 - £320.00) to become a registered member of the association. This, compared to such associations as the provision association, which charge only ₦250.00 (£1.00) for registering new members, potentially serves to reduce new and potential Ugwu trader numbers significantly and ensure the security of existing Ugwu traders (Field notes, April 2010).

Despite the collective organisation of commodity associations in the market, traders within commodity associations incorporate often different and sometimes opposing economic interests. Unlike the case of the provision association where traders' characteristics are quite varied (in terms of commodity character and location), some other commodity associations are an ensemble of traders of relatively similar characteristics. In associations where commodity specialisation coincides with characteristics such as ethnicity, religion and market location, the ability of traders to stand out from other traders relies on the manipulation of uniforming several trading characteristics outside those afforded by the other role of the commodity association.

The meat sellers' association is a good example to highlight some of these markers of variation that I draw attention to. Most of the meat sellers in Alaba-Suru market occupy the same location in the market (see Figure 5.3). This group of meat sellers is

predominantly of Yoruba origin from south-western Nigeria and are mainly Muslims by religion (Field notes, July, 2010). Among the meat sellers in the Alaba-Suru market, the male traders specialise in the sale of goat meat, beef and goat heads. The female traders on the other hand, specialise in the sale of cow legs, cow innards (comprising intestines, shaki (stomach walls), liver and lungs) and kpomo (cow skins) as signposted in chapter two.

This differentiation by gender of the meat sellers also coincides with the differentiation of the tools used by the meat sellers in the market. Female meat sellers are deemed as unsuitable for carrying out the sale of the main parts of cows and goats because of the nature of tools employed in meat selling. Some of the male meat sellers interviewed in the course of fieldwork suggested that equipment such as cutlasses and saws used to divide up the carcasses of cows and goats were not commensurate with women's physical strength (Field notes, 2010). The male meat traders in Alaba-Suru market suggested that their female counterparts could only adequately use equipment such as knives and scrapers that seemed more befitting for women (Field notes, 2010). The Alaba-Suru male meat traders, even as a singular category of traders, also vary by the scale of operation. These traders range from meat sellers who buy up to seven cows a day, to those who buy a cow a day and traders who share a cow amongst themselves. In addition, certain meat traders' enterprises are buoyant enough to accommodate a number of apprentices, while other meat sellers employ only family labour.

Another example that illustrates how differentiation occurs within similar commodity designation (that reinforces gender and ethnic ties) is the case of the smoked fish sellers in the Alaba-Suru market, comprising of about 60 traders. These women occupy the same location at the centre of the Alaba-Suru market, in about four commodity lines. Almost all of these female traders are either of the Ijaw or Urhobo tribe of the Niger Delta region of Southern Nigeria. Ikpurokpo (Undated), notes that fish marketing has been an exclusive preserve of ethnic groups such as the Ilaje, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Isoko and Urhobo because of their strong links to the riverine areas in Nigeria. The catching of fish is the dominant occupation of men in these ethnic groups, while the women exclusively dominate fish marketing (Ikporukpo, undated). These fish traders in the Alaba-Suru market employed the same techniques for smoking fish, sold the same species of fish, at the same prices, and all spoke the same language as a result of similar ethnic origin. There was often little differentiation among the Alaba-Suru smoked fish traders.

The benefit of this uniformity within ethnic groups that trade was that all the fish

traders had similar information on pricing and supply routes, such that cheating and lying were uncommon, since everyone knew what others were doing. However, the down side of such lack of differentiation was that there was little that distinguished traders who were competing with one another for similar clients, except for the manipulation of different location arrangements in the market. One woman I noticed who sold smoked fish was able to allocate two of her daughters who assisted her, to hawk smoked fish at three other different locations in the market while she remained in the stall. These tactics of multiple locations were also useful to shift products faster, as the trader could reach a much wider range of customers than would have been possible at the singular site of the stall.

Taking all of these practices described together, I suggest that there are three levels of understanding of how the practices of Alaba-Suru traders are organised. I categorise the practices of the various commodity associations I have discussed as a boundary practice (Wenger, 1998*a*). Secondly, there are several relations that suggest tacit understanding, shared and pre-existing predisposition to social codes (by the gender, religion and ethnic origin of the trader) as part of how traders practices are designated (Roberts, 2006; Mutch, 2003). I refer to these ties as cross-communal practices. My third category of practice refers to practices that enforce the individual trader's tactics of divisiveness or differences such as in the example of manipulating locations in the case of the smoked fish trader. This latter attention to individual relations that a trader employs I suggest may be apportioned as practices of non-participation. Each of the categories of practice is expanded on separately in the rest of this chapter.

5.3 Boundary practices

In this section of this chapter, I want to discuss what a boundary practice refers to, as a way of understanding how one level of the practices of Alaba-Suru traders may be organised. A boundary practice, following from the suggestions of Wenger (1998*b*, 2000), refers to a practice relation that demarcates insiders from outsiders and possesses explicit markers of memberships such as titles, initiation rites and rules of belonging. My use of a boundary practice refers to the traders' relations as tied around an engagement in an actual entity. Alaba-Suru traders engage in a boundary practice because there is the presence of an entity to which they can claim membership i.e. the commodity associations.

I have mentioned that some of the commodity associations in this market have methods of entry, designated membership dues, methods for disciplining members and also social obligations to traders. As in the examples with provision trade, the

commodity association was able to bring traders trading in different goods together under its umbrella body and specify how the conduct of provision trade was to transpire. The structure of the commodity association provided a unifying platform for understanding how these otherwise commodities are traded by provision traders. By linking different traders to homogenise and standardise their activities, various commodity associations allowed for the management of the divergent practices of independent traders. Therefore, commodity associations helped to sustain a connection between practices by reconciling conflictual perspectives and finding resolutions (Wenger, 1998a).

The commodity association itself acts as what some have called a boundary object (Sandusky, 1997). The boundary object is the entity such as the commodity association, which through its rules and regulations, permits the sustenance of such practices as membership, dispute resolution, and display and merchandising etiquettes. Traders do not come to the market as a commodity association. However, the knowledge of the awareness of a boundary object (like the commodity association), allows traders to act out what it means to be provision trader, meat seller or gari seller. The example of the commodity association is not the only example of boundary object that produces a boundary practice among Alaba-Suru market traders.

Traders in Alaba-Suru market do not only take part in commercial practices of buying and selling, as they also participate and engage with other types of social interactions whilst trading in the market. A good example in this case, is the boundary object of the traders' prayer and worship team, which encourages the use of religion to pursue the practice of Christian praise and worship in the Alaba-Suru market. The collective praise and worship sessions by traders is seen to promote and welcome God to bless transactions and facilitate cordiality among competing traders. Irrespective of commodity sold, location or ethnic affiliation traders join in these prayer sessions at noon on a daily basis in the market, from Monday to Friday. Usually a trader begins a song or prayer. Other traders follow singing and dancing from their individual shops. Several traders in adjoining commodity lines would normally take part in this collective act of singing and dancing. At certain times, these worship events were interspaced by preaching from the Bible. One of the traders, an expert in biblical teachings, would lead such sermons and would use a microphone to preach across several commodity lines. It was not compulsory for traders to take part in these activities and traders could withdraw at any time to attend to customers who approached during these praise and worship activities.

Not all the Alaba-Suru traders found this exercise of communal worship useful. Some traders suggested that they were often asked to make small monetary contributions towards these worship events. As a result, these traders frowned on these social acts as a money-spinning venture for some traders who took it upon themselves to lead these praise and worship meetings. Other traders frowned at the fact the praise and worship activity was led by a particular Pentecostal movement which was notorious for winning members over solely for monetary reasons rather than for the purposes of spiritual enlightenment (Field notes, 2010).

This latter point suggests that a boundary practice, whether it is a commodity association or praise and worship group, while collective of practices on the surface, may reflect or expose different conflictual relations. For instance, Muslim traders and some traders who are members of sects of other Pentecostal and orthodox churches do not take part in these prayer and worship sessions. By focusing attention solely on a boundary practice, it becomes possible to lose sight of other related practices that are not necessarily about visible markers of identifiable group membership or shared engagement. The point I make next by introducing the term cross-communal practices is that often, the understanding of a practice may not always be clearly defined in a boundary object such a commodity association that in turn produces boundary practices of membership and categorising diverse practices.

5.4 Cross-communal practices

This section on cross-communal practices examines how complex social, cultural and historical systems that have accumulated over time, come to define the practice of Alaba-Suru traders. The term cross-communal practice originates from the work of Osterlund and Carlile (2005), from what they term cross communal relations. Both authors eschew the need to view practices in a collective and simplistic sense of shared notions. Osterlund and Carlile (2005) suggest that a well-rounded perspective of the practice that produces a community of practice includes how participants produce and reproduce larger structures, such as institutional arrangements, artefacts and other long-standing relations. In contrast to a boundary practice, which relies on categorising collective practices around a boundary object, cross-communal practices suggest divisions of labour and institutional forms of participation (Osterlund and Carlile, 2005). Unlike a boundary practice, cross-communal practices are not ascribed to a specific identifiable bounded structure or object. Markers of cross-communal relations may arise from gender roles, lineage based ties, kinship relations and other subtle tacit cues. Hence, the moment, place or particular boundary that defines the set of relations organising practice may not be evident (Mol, 1999). The

example of apprentice training and gender stereotyping illustrates the presence of this type of practice in Alaba-Suru market.

One of the provision traders, Chukwudi, had trained a number of young men who had also gone on to become successful traders. Chukwudi trained only male Igbo apprentices. These men helped Chukwudi to run the shop and usually went through a trial period for one year at the start of the apprenticeship. If at the end of the first year the apprentice was a slow learner, a thief or disobedient, Chukwudi would send him away. To avoid such disappointing trials, apprentices were recruited upon strong recommendations from relatives and village kinsmen of similar Igbo ethnic origin. Chukwudi usually accommodated the apprentices for the period they were under his tutelage, from between three to six years, in his private residence. The apprentice was taught how to make purchases, take account of stock, record expenses and sales and how to solicit and retain customers. Upon successful completion of training, Chukwudi usually gave the apprentice a settlement of an agreed cash payment and sometimes a non-cash numeration, such as a fully stocked stall and prayers for the apprentice to begin his life as a trader. Chukwudi did not take on female apprentices. He argued that female apprentices could be married off before completing their apprenticeship, or there may be a temptation to develop a romantic relationship with a female apprentice, which could jeopardise the business (Field notes, May, 2010).

Egbue (2006) has suggested that it is typical among the Igbos of south eastern Nigeria not to allow women to take on trading apprenticeships. Based on her study of the Onitsha market in south eastern Nigeria, Egbue found that only Igbo women, who were married or widowed, could learn a type of modified apprenticeship (Egbue, 2006). According to Egbue:

“A major characteristic of the Onitsha trade apprenticeship system is that up to now only males are eligible for it. Exceptions of this rule are comparatively few wives and widows usually 30 years and above. These women undergo a form of loose training programme under husbands, other relative or family friends. This is usually carried out on a part-time basis due to women’s home commitments”. (Egbue, 2006, pg. 165-166)

These modified female apprenticeships take place over a shorter duration (six months) and possess less in-depth training when compared to the male apprenticeships, which can last anywhere between two and six years. The six month training is also learnt on a part-time basis in order to allow a female trader to still have enough time to tend to the family and other domestic arrangements whilst learning to trade. Information gathered from my field work further revealed that even for married

women to undergo this type of modified apprenticeship, a fee of between ₦10,000.00 (£40.00) to ₦40,000.00 (£160.00) was required (Field notes, 2010). An exception to this fee was only possible if the woman learnt the trade from her husband or another relative. This is the reason Nneka, one of the female provision traders mentioned above, chose to learn to trade in provisions for a period of six months from a relative, whose expertise and experience removed the need to undergo a paid apprenticeship from a non-relative.

Apart from the constraints to trade training, other cultural expectations about trading activities and gender stereotyping also warrant discussion. Aunty Eli, one of the provision traders, had initially wanted to become a trader like her elder cousin with whom she had spent most of her school years living. However her cousin had envisioned that sewing clothes was a more respectable means for a woman to earn a living rather than trading, and discouraged her from trading. Although Aunty Eli completed the apprenticeship in sewing, she never practised fashion designing as an occupation. Her steadfastness to trade prompted her to begin her trading first as a hawker, selling nylon bags in the market. Eventually, her resolution to earn an independent income from her husband, when she got married, necessitated his provision of funds for her to set up a shop at the market (Field notes, 2010).

Aunty Eli's case reflects a specific type of gender stereotyping in trade that has been noted in the past among the Afikpo Igbos of Eastern Nigeria, which incidentally is Aunty Eli's ethnic origin. Ottenberg's (1959) study among the Afikpo Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria, although dated, suggests that market trade was typically restricted to men and that the women who attempted to trade, stopped after a short while. Ottenberg suggested that many Afikpo Igbo women did not particularly excel in trade because of the inability for full time trade to serve as a major ladder of economic mobility for Afikpo women in Nigeria (Ottenberg, 1959). Ottenberg went on to discuss that Afikpo women were more likely to climb the mobility ladder faster by gaining regular employment as dressmakers, an activity which was more profitable than trading. This historical trait of trading in part may explain the preference of the choice of sewing over trading by Aunty Eli's cousin.

Ethnic stereotyping of trade is also illustrated in another case, by Chijoke, one of the traders in Alaba-Suru market, who dealt in electronic items. From my observations during the fieldwork, I noticed that only men dominate the electronics trade in Alaba-Suru market (the few women who are seen in the electronic stalls are sales girls). Chijoke noted that the majority of these male electronic dealers in the Alaba Suru market were of Igbo origin. Chijoke further noted that a few male Yoruba traders

had entered the electronics trade in Alaba-Suru market. For this set of Yoruba traders to be seen as legitimate electronic dealers in the market, Chijoke described how two Yoruba traders had learnt the Igbo language in order to communicate appropriately like the other male Igbo electronics traders in the market. Similarly, Chijoke pointed out that the Yoruba traders had adopted Igbo names in order to fit in with other electronic traders. Despite these skills learnt many of the electronic dealers like Chijoke did not particularly see these Yoruba men as legitimate electronics traders (Field notes, 2010).

It has been mentioned elsewhere that specialised crafts and professions can be restricted to lineages that solely possessed the mandate to properly carry out particular professions (Oyewumi, 1997). Diop (1987) corroborates this evidence in a study of marginalisation in occupational guilds by noting that:

“A subject from outside a trade, even if he acquired all the skill and science of a calling which was not that of his family, would not be able to practise it efficiently, in the mystical sense, because it was not his ancestors who concluded the initial contract with the spirit who had originally taught it to humanity” (Diop, 1987, pg.8).

Elsewhere using the example of traders in Shea nuts in Ghana, Chalfin (2004) showed that women dominated the trade in Shea nuts in Ghana, not only because Shea nuts were traditionally classed as women’s crops but because of women’s skills to ascertain the quality of the smell, colour, taste and hardness of Shea nuts, which gave women a greater advantage in the procurement, distribution and processing of Shea nuts. These sorts of socio-cultural processes endow elements of tacit knowledge that allow certain embodied performance to occur and define the practice of the trader. Gender roles, lineage based ties, ethnic and kinship relations related to trade and other subtle tacit cues are what my attention to cross-communal practices draws on.

Bourdieu’s (1990) argument for how habitus evolves and designates meanings to the actions, events, and settings that people encounter and perpetuate practice is relevant in this light. It can be argued that cross-communal practices like Bourdieu’s habitus are likely to employ culturally sanctioned rules, multiple and complex constituted practices. An illustration of cross-communal practice supposes that traders can employ a number of multiple realities of traditions based on gender, ethnicity, and religion (together or independently) to influence the practices of trade. Unlike a boundary practice, cross-communal practices do not require specific identifiable boundaries to develop a systematic understanding of what regulates and sustains a set of practices. Furthermore, cross-communal practice suggests that the performance

of a practice is not an attribute of a single object or structure. Instead, practice becomes an attribution of versions of multiple behaviours and predispositions to already existing socially defined patterns of being, defined elsewhere. Consequently, the moment or place that defines a particular distinct set of relations of practice of the trader may not be evident (Mol, 1999).

These discussions of cross-communal practices also draw striking similarities to the concept of institutional bricolage coined by Cleaver (2001). According to her, institutional bricolage is:

“A process in which people consciously and unconsciously draw on existing social and cultural arrangements to shape institutions in response to changing situations” (Cleaver, 2001, pg.26).

Institutional bricolage suggests that there is a frequency of cross-cultural borrowing and of multipurpose arrangements, which regularises the actions of diverse stakeholders in the face of competition and uncertainty (Cleaver, 2001). In this regard in institutional bricolage, like cross-communal practice, tradition or institutions regulate how practice is realised.

Cross-communal practices, however, have the tendency to reproduce social ills of already existing inequalities through disposition to pre existing socio historical practices. Such practices that rely on what is culturally defined may reinforce the emphasis of local traditions at the expense of intra-community social change or contestation (Ettlinger, 2004; Pelling et al., 2008). The result is that often unchallenged and subordinate practices are possibly translated to unchallenged forms of being in a practice. Consequently, participants may even unconsciously align themselves with possibly an acceptable or unacceptable way of doing things, bestowed by a moral command of things that went on in a previous time. For example, the trend of allowing women to undertake modified apprenticeships as against full apprenticeships that Igbo male traders enjoy, means that many female Igbo traders do not possess expertise in the same types of trading activities as the male traders do. The shorter duration of training for Igbo female traders means that they do not acquire the same type of training, skills and expertise that would have come from formal apprenticeship training. Hence, it is common to see that in trades like electronics, furniture retailing and book selling in Alaba-Suru market, that there is an absence of female traders.

Cross-communal practices emerge out of a number of contingencies and forces that are not decided in a moment or place (Mol, 1999). As a result, the urge to even

challenge the inequality prevalent in such practices may not even arise because of this pervasiveness. Consequently, the performance of peculiar social practices may become so routinised as to appear natural and become associated with a liminal awareness i.e. they are so institutionalised to a fault (Martin, 2003, 2006). This normalisation may endow cross-communal practices participants to draw on separate experiences to produce a practice (see Haraway, 1991).

Similar arguments can be made from Cohen's (1969) study of markets in southwestern Nigeria. Cohen observed in his study almost forty years ago, that among the male traders in Ibadan market in south western Nigeria, Muslim Hausa male traders and some Muslim Yoruba male traders measured their success in trade as going hand in hand with attainment in Islamic learning culminating in a pilgrimage to Mecca. In contrast to these traders for whom the title of Hajji was the greatest facilitator to trade, the Igbo trader's aim of trading, was to promote self adaptation to modern conditions in the urban market. Consequently, Cohen concludes from this evidence that Igbo male traders tended to have a higher sense of achievement than Hausa traders who tended to be conservative and traditional (Cohen, 1969). In incidences of cross-communal borrowing, it can be argued that all actors do not accept the tradition behind a practice in the same way. Traders may interpret practices differently for a number of reasons. This property of practices is made more evident in the practices of non-participation discussed in the next section of this chapter.

5.5 Practices of non-participation

In this section of the chapter, I discuss a third way of describing the practices of traders in the Alaba-Suru market. I refer to these practices as traders' practices of non-participation. This term comes from Hodges' work on dis-identification in practice as non-participation (Hodges, 1998). Hodges illustrates that dis-identification in practice occurs at a point when people reject the identity connected with the practice. At the same time, however these people reconstruct identification with other possible mutable identities (Hodges, 1998). Wenger (1998*b*) also suggests that non-participation is a practice that emerges from a lack of sustained interactions between persons in a practice. Both these terms that refer to non-participation express it as a point where the individual's interpretation of practice takes a centre stage over a collective sense of practice (see Henriksson, 2000). This is the sense in which I employ the term practices of non-participation and relate it to the practices of Alaba-Suru traders.

In referring to the practices of Alaba-Suru traders as practices of non-participation,

I reflect on the way competitiveness may encourage individualistic tendencies to dominate how traders define the meaning of practice. It is necessary to assume that not everything that traders do can somehow be placed in some form of categorical discussion of practice. Traders are still in competition to succeed independently of other competing traders. For this reason, to remain competitive, traders may engage in and demonstrate certain forms of practice that are unconnected to the practices of other traders. In the earlier sections of this chapter, I have shown how traders' practices may also be collectively aligned to the regulatory structure of associations as well as to cultural predispositions. Yet in the midst of these orderly practice groupings, traders must also accede to certain practices that allow them to be a step ahead of other competitors.

Cases were noted in the course of the research that revealed how traders in Alaba-Suru market often had to resort to extreme personalised practices to trade. One trader in particular noted that the need to source for scarce goods was the answer to quell adverse competition. He noted that 'if too many people are selling one commodity, it is no longer scarce and hence unprofitable because a business makes profit by scarcity' (Chukwudi, field notes, 2010). Chukwudi, in this case, therefore made it his duty to find the rarest products directly from manufacturers, sometimes as far as Ivory Coast, to maintain this trade by scarcity that he mentions.

Another trader, Ogbonna, who specialised in used ladies shoes in the Alaba-Suru market, also gives this sort of impression about the autonomous nature of practices in trade. In Ogbonna's case, many of the second hand shoes he sold were sourced through illegal routes from Cotonou, Togo and Ghana, because second hand goods are considered as contraband in Nigeria. Whenever Ogbonna travelled to get new supplies, he arranged for lodging with some other traders in Cotonou, Benin republic, in their homes while waiting for the consignment of goods to arrive at the ports. These hosts were also the source of Cedes and CFA francs needed for Ogbonna to buy his merchandise. Ogbonna also relied on these hosts to give him information when a shipment of goods arrived at the port.

Once the goods were off loaded to a warehouse, traders like Ogbonna were often embroiled in a 'first come first grab' brawl to select items of shoes, clothes and bags, which were the constituents of shipments. Ogbonna described that there was an enormous amount of individuality in second hand goods trade, as traders almost relied entirely on themselves and luck, to pick the best grade of commodities. Among second hand shoes, the first grade items were items in almost new and unused conditions, which were the preferred items of selection. Second grade and third

grade items were often remnants, soiled shoes, with broken heels or worn out items, which could bring significant losses and returns to traders who selected them. This phenomenon of luck in picking by second hand goods traders has been described as a process of selling uncertainties (Brooks, 2011).

It is not only the selection of goods that marks the individualisation that occurs among second hand goods traders. As mentioned previously, because second hand goods are banned as contraband in Nigeria, Ogbonna like many second hand good traders had to smuggle goods into the country through secret routes. These routes are often through canoe transport on inland waterways and in the hidden parts of vehicles across expressways, in order to avoid arrest from customs and border patrols at the Nigerian border when returning from buying consignments. According to Ogbonna, the best passages with least risk of being arrested and with fewer patrol officers, were carefully guarded by the traders who had knowledge of these routes. Ogbonna also informed me that second hand good traders never collectively embarked on these journeys across the borders together, even when the route was one that was proven and tested as safe. This was to avoid possible seizing of goods in the event of arrest (Field notes, July, 2010).

The autonomous nature of second hand trade also continues even when traders arrive at the market. As mentioned earlier, because traders pick different grades, use specific routes, and may offer bribes to certain officials, the pricing of second hand goods differs significantly among Alaba-Suru second hand goods traders. The commodity association in the market in this case, does not have much jurisdiction over how second hand goods are priced for sale, because it lacks control over the strategies through which individual traders sourced their items. Traders like Ogbonna fixed the prices of shoes taking into consideration the exchange rate of the Naira against CFA franc, bribes offered, the grade of goods and the country of origin of the shoes selected. It is important to note here that once the second hand goods made it to the Alaba-Suru market, illegality of second hand goods is no longer the problem. The second-hand goods, once in the market, are however legal commodities. Traders even recount their daring exploits to another, comparing experiences of eluding authorities and stories of bribes they went through. However, many traders were careful not to talk about contacts, new routes and particular advantageous hideouts.

The uncertainty of what goods the trader got from the scramble of bales, the secretive nature of advantageous routes and the freedom to fix prices means that what emerges is a largely disconnected practice of second hand goods trade. This disconnection is what I suggest contributes to a practice of non-participation among second hand good

traders like Ogbonna. What makes this case of second hand trading practice further stand out as one of non-participation is that the balancing of the individual's domain, becomes the most important element in defining what the trader's practice is, rather than any communal understanding of a shared practice. Traders like Ogbonna rely more on individual knowledge and skills to acquire the best contacts, negotiate the best routes to avoid detection and the best currency exchange rates. In cases such as second hand trading, these practices of non-participation outweigh the regulatory practices of commodity groups and tacit expertise, even though these categories of practices are relevant to informing trading practices.

In practices of non-participation, the meaning of the trader's practice is not necessarily regulated by a boundary practice or dispositions to the moral command of cross-communal practices. Although these aforementioned practices play a role in organising the trader in non-participation, the trader's desire to act out their own subjective desires, which may diverge from commonly held practice, dominates. The practices of non-participation do not occur in a vacuum. Wenger (1998*b*) has suggested that practices of non-participation are mediated by particular institutional arrangements of the practice. For instance, in the case of smuggling second hand goods, the legislation of tagging used clothes as contraband and prosecuting offenders conditions the autonomous and largely non-communal nature that is evident among second hand good traders.

To end the discussions in this section of this chapter, I have argued that in an otherwise heterogeneous setting, as the case of the Alaba-Suru market, there are many ways to view the practices of traders. Given that there are multiple ways to see the traders' practices (by different commodities, gender, location, scale of operation, age, ethnic origin, religion, type of training), each angle of practice, independently, would have presented a cumbersome analysis. Three broad ways of categorising practices have been discussed in this chapter to grant some analytical grip to the limitless practices Alaba-Suru market traders display. I suggested that the practices of traders in Alaba Suru market can be presented as collections defined by boundary practices cross- communal practices and practices of non participation (see Table 5.1). Although I have for the purpose of clarity differentiated traders' practices into three distinct forms, these practices overlap and occur simultaneously. The implications of organising practices in this manner, is discussed in the next section of this chapter

Table 5.1 Categories of practices among traders in Alaba-Suru market

| Categories of practice | Characteristics | Source | Examples of practice |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Boundary practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifiable boundaries • Membership is reified by certain titles and attributes • Clear idea about who belongs and who does not • May involve face to face interactions and could be quite tight knit and local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodity associations • Savings groups • Praise and worship meetings • Market associations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pricing practices • Dispute resolution practices • Bargaining etiquettes • Membership of association practices |
| Cross-communal practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relations are not identifiable because they arise from practices that are not located at singular moments • The awareness of the practice is unconscious and probably unintentional to its participants • It can easily reproduce existing social ills • Tacit and codified knowledge dominate the practice • The evidence might be local but arises from factors operating across many scales | <p>Gender, ethnic and kinship ties that predispose traders to certain types of trade</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship practices • Commodity specialisation practices • Language practices |
| Practices of non participation | <p>Autonomous practices of traders that are not necessarily aligned to any regulatory structure or cultural disposition</p> | <p>Institutional arrangements such as unhealthy competition, increasing profit and other individual tactics to outdo others</p> | <p>Smuggling practices</p> |

5.6 Understanding the different organisation of traders' practices

In this section of the chapter, the implications of considering the organisation of traders in these three categories of practices are deliberated. The discussion in this chapter suggest that boundary practices as one example of organising market traders may help to ameliorate dissonance between otherwise heterogeneous groupings of diverse traders (see Adams and Blandford, 2005). I showed that in the Alaba-Suru market certain commodity associations help to prevent undue competition and secure the livelihoods of traders by reducing over-subscription to popular commodities. Other studies have shown that trader associations help to bridge the boundaries between traders in ethnically volatile market places, which helped to reduce sites of ethnic conflict (Porter et al., 2005). There is also the presence of boundary practices like prayer and worship practices, which helped to promote communal sociality, making the market more than an economic site of buying and selling. In the absence of commodity associations, there would be no systematic means to ensure that traders operate in a relatively egalitarian environment.

Cross-communal practices, which I have also described in this chapter are driven mainly by tacit dispositions. As a result these practices are more than the practices that are carried out as a response to the mere rules of a boundary practice. Examples include practices that originate from traders' dispositions to ethnic origins, gender roles and other cultural forces that legitimise practices. However, the possibility of dissonance, competition and the need to diverge from communal sense-making practices among traders may fuel the need for greater differentiation and practices of non-participation. I have found it useful to suggest that practices of non-participation are a vital link to understanding the independent practices of traders that cannot be easily classed by assuming a collective presence of practice in categories. And so:

“whereas socio-spatial patterning does occur, also pertinent are the variation and multitude of non conforming cases that are too important to suppress by implicitly or explicitly conceptualizing them as exceptions, outliers, deviants and residual or more generally as analytical noise” (Ettlinger, 2004, pg.29).

There are advantages of presenting traders' practices in a broad classification. On one hand these categories of practice show that despite the diverse and competing nature of traders, there are considerable instances of mutually sustaining practices (boundary practices and cross communal practices). Yet despite these mutually

sustaining practices Alaba-Suru traders are still able to display autonomy and choice (practices of non-participation). In organising and ordering practices to produce uniform outcomes where necessary, Alaba-Suru traders use a mix of predisposition, personalised acts as well as rules internalised by regulatory structures within the market. These relations collectively overlap simultaneously even though they are organised around very distinct form of practices and occurring and maintained across different contexts (McDowell, 2008). This assertion shows that the people who populate any discrete practice are 'suspended by values, norms and as well as taken-for granted assumptions that are at least partially of their own making' (Barley and Tolbert, 1997, pg.93-94).

Furthermore categorising practices also allows for a valuable development of understandings of the ways in which power relations are constituted at different contexts of organising practices. This focus on different contexts for defining practice points to the different dimensions of power defining the agency of practice of Alaba-Suru market traders. On one level, the agency of boundary practice is structurally ordered as a centered and instrumental form of power that is held and accountable in a bounded entity (Allen, 2003). Examples here include the role of the commodity association for determining pricing, display and membership practices of traders. In other accounts, traders may derive and reproduce their own practices from power relations that emerge through and are inseparable from predispositions that are similar to Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Evidence of lineage-based disposition to certain trade have been employed in this chapter to show instances that eschew the acceptance and dismissal of what is an appropriate practice to undertake as a trader. Finally, there is the power that emerges to define practice which is dependent on how different traders define and internalise separate meanings of their practice. This multi level analysis of power is important because it focuses on the multiple entanglements that help to define what actors do and the strategies they adopt in one setting (Faulconbridge and Hall, 2009).

However, it is in these discussions of multiplicity of agencies enacting their power differently that there appears a number of disadvantages to employing broad classifications in collectively discussing practices. While the demarcations of commodity associations, predispositions to cultural ideals and independent autonomous gestures of traders may regulate and attempt to order relations in the market, the arenas in which each of these categories may operate are not mutually exclusive as their boundaries overlap and at times blur any distinctive characteristics that may be attributable to any one particular category of collectivising market traders' practices. For example, I have argued that it may be difficult to contest the

power regimes of cross-communal practices because there is no identifiable entity to make the complexity of its relations evident.

Yet, constructions of ethnicity or gender differences in traders, it must be noted, are produced and maintained by a range of historical, societal and everyday practices that operate at and across different spatial scales that are not only manifested in and through the market in particular commodity specialisations. In the case of barriers to apprenticeship systems of trade it is seen that identities of apprentices are renegotiated and reordered on encountering different specialist fields. Thus while Nneka and Aunty Eli might have worked around such boundaries to trade in provisions, in the electronics trade many Igbo women are still only allowed to work as sales girls without opportunities to proceed to train as traders. So whereas it might be easier for the purpose of analysis to focus on groupings according to specialisation or by cultural designation, it is important to trace and investigate how the connections across these different categories may at times be in conflict with one another in expanding on the sort of outcomes that are occurring.

The categorisation of practices therefore denies how the connections within these different arenas take shape and destabilise the outcomes of practice. As a result, there is an absence of the forms of connections across these divisions of broad practice categories. Categories are useful but there is also the need to make connections and understand how different scales of practices are interconnected (see McDowell, 2001, 2008). McDowell (2008) is suggesting that it is important to draw meanings from the complexity of practices originating from multiple scales by allowing connections to be made between everyday life, cultural assumptions and other structures that affect the division of practice.

Furthermore, categorising practices as boundary practices, cross-communal practices and instances of non-participation, glosses over the performance, doings, instantaneous acts, choices and actions of practice that may occur between such broad categories. Hence the variations within these categories such as different values, perceptions and socio-spatial locations of actors and actants, are ignored (Casino et al., 2000). For instance, the relationship between the traders ability to interpret the rules of commodity associations and employ such understandings to influence everyday acts of bargaining, soliciting for customers, making supplies, and merchandising, become suppressed against the need to make wide generalisations of practices.

Consequently, to make this exercise of tracing the set of relations that allows market trade to manifest may require abolishing boundaries between categories of practices

and instead making connections to the actual performances that make the practices within these categories possible. As Corradi and Gherardi (2010) note:

“To study the often-obscure dimension of work practices is to explore the complexity of situations and to trace the network of roles that constitute a work setting” (Corradi and Gherardi, 2010, pg.270).

Unless the relations of practice in different categories are theorised together as networked and connected, the constitution of the community of practice of Alaba-Suru traders will be incomplete.

5.7 Conclusion

It is important to note at this point that many studies on communities of practice in the urge to essentialise the concept of the community of practice as a substantial entity often use predefined boundary practices, such as the commodity association and praise and worship groups, to designate as examples of a community of practice. Such discussions often go on to examine and define who is in and out, as an indication of how people are participating in a community of practice. I suggest that although the boundary practice presents opportunities for joint activities and opportunities for traders in this case, to meet, interact and share certain practices, these attributes do not necessarily define a community of practice.

Whereas a community of practice tends to reflect a group's shared practices as joint and mutually sustained irrespective of the diversity inherent in the practice, Wenger (1998*b*) warns that a boundary practice may risk being presented erroneously as a community of practice, when in essence it only defines practice in a very narrow way. Structuring practices as a boundary practice, for instance leaves little room to pay attention to other people in that practice whose interactions may not necessarily be bounded to a well defined entity (Brown and Duguid, 2000, 2001; Osterlund and Carlile, 2005), as I have argued by presenting further categories of cross-communal practices and practices of non-participation. I have suggested that broadly categorising practices is useful in understanding and making out what practices might mean in such a multiply constituted and heterogeneous setting as a marketplace. Yet, it is important that such a summary of accounts of practice does not ignore the actualities that make up these categories. The need to broadly focus on categorisations, which has been termed elsewhere as inter categorical complexity, and instead focus on discursive practice (anti-categorical complexity) has been widely discussed (McCall, 2005).

The next two chapters consider this suggestion through different routes of framing the complexity of practices without categorising and grouping any collectivity. The first of the two chapters which is discussed next, presents the trader's practice as discursively produced in moments of particular instances as well as in responses to the performances of other actors in the market (such as the practices of customers, suppliers and other non-human actors e.g commodities, stalls etc) through an emphasis on the network of practice. The second of these two chapters follows work in governmentality to examine the relational influence that transport networks and the role of the state in market demolitions play in shaping the practices of traders in Alaba-Suru market.

Chapter 6

Networks of practice in the Alaba-Suru Market

“As community of practice thinking proliferates, the original emphasis on context, process, social interaction, material practices, ambiguity, disagreement - in short the frequently idiosyncratic and always performative nature of learning, is being lost to formulaic distillations of the workings of communities of practice” (Amin and Roberts, 2008, pg. 353).

6.1 Introduction

The arguments presented in the previous chapter portray the practices of market traders in categories that reflect collective acts of boundary and cross communal practices as well as individual traders' acts of non-participation to interpret personal meanings of trading as they compete for survival and means to earn a livelihood. Acts of membership in various commodity associations and predispositions to certain cultural advantages have been discussed as examples of understanding trade in a sort of collective system in order to arrive at some order for explaining market trade as a coherent economic feature. The goal of this present chapter is to move away from considering Alaba-Suru traders' relations solely as collectivised entities and to express practices as interlinked, dense and extensive networks of practice that are produced continually and renegotiated in interactions. I suggest that market traders do and act out relations that are connected, related and produced in interactions consisting of not only themselves but also with other customers and non-human elements (such as commodity items). The chapter argues that market traders' practices are produced and constructed as shifting, dynamic and fluid acts, which broad configurations of practice such as boundary and cross-communal practices

may not highlight.

Similar to Amin and Robert's (2008) reflection above, while appreciating the essence of boundary, cross communal or non-participatory practices, this chapter pushes for an argument that favours the loosening of categorical metaphors (Ashcraft, 2007). In embracing this loosening, my focus in this chapter tends towards appreciating the multiple forms of discourse that exist between and within these containments of practices (see Carlone and Taylor, 1998). I recognise that beyond the containment of traders' practices in particular categories, it is important to reflect on practice as a phenomenon that is also constituted in doings and actions. I therefore express in this chapter that traders' performances of practices are orchestrated in interactions which can be described as similar to a network of practice (Brown and Duguid, 2000). By engaging with describing the connectedness and active nature of market trade as a network of practice, I place more emphasis on the unfolding of market trade in its 'doing' as an active, ongoing and fluid object of analysis. Thus, instead of neatly categorising where a set of practices begins and ends, it may be fruitful to equally conceive of practices as networked and therefore continually extended in ways that may not sit well with elements of categorisation. It is this rationale from the study of practices as broad categories to a more performative bound nature of practising trading in the Alaba-Suru market, which forms the focus of this chapter.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first two sections of the chapter present a discussion on Alaba-Suru market traders' practices as acts that are performed in response to a series of dynamic and fluid possibilities. Bargaining, sorting, soliciting practices are some of the examples of such activities that are produced as traders interact with customers and the limits of commodity characteristics they trade in. In the third part of the chapter, I examine how these activities are interconnected as acts and performances that culminate in a network of practice through a number of scenarios observed among the Alaba-Suru market traders. In the final section of the chapter, the discussion argues that a trader's network of practice is active, dynamic and subjectively constituted and reconstituted in response to instances occurring within as well as outside the locality of the market. It is practical to consider where and why practices are practised, beyond neat static generalised categories, before attempting to define how communities of practice are conducted in the market. Embracing this extended view of practising as active as opposed to practice as a static entity challenges a rethink of where the boundaries of a community of practice are drawn.

6.2 Performing and doing practices in Alaba-Suru market

In the previous chapter, the discussion focused on the organisation of practices as three broad groupings, discussed as boundary practice, cross communal practices and practices of non-participation. The rationale for systemising the practices of Alaba-Suru traders into these categories in the previous chapter was to attempt to assemble and comprehend the myriad of differentiating properties of market traders in some coherent manner.

Some of these properties included divisions between scale of operation, gender, sales locations, and ethnic origins of traders, which all influenced the socio-spatial relations of traders' practice. Rather than paying attention to these inherent singular divisions and their infinite possible relations it made sense to employ categorical distinctions in an attempt to stabilise the boundaries of Alaba-Suru market traders. Without examining the unfolding of practice beyond these individual differentiating properties, familiar practices such as dispute resolutions, associational membership and artisanal training regimes might have made not have made sense as meanings of communal sense making that are present among traders.

These differences are however relatively discursive elements that do not express the intuition that goes into organising the actual tasks that traders undertake within the categories described. For instance, a commodity association as a boundary practice, though ordered and rule bound may internalise loose networks and coalitions. It may be expected that traders who collectively belong to a commodity association may operate differently in response to how they individually understand the rules of an association or as it concerns their own specific circumstances. In certain cases, even the fear of sanctions of rule breaking can be flouted in the midst of rules guiding common trading techniques. Often the rules of commodity associations are not enough to discourage traders from disobeying or acting in ways that may contravene expected collective acts. Many traders, for instance, have been known to steal customers and run down other traders deliberately in order to dominate trade. While there are rules prohibiting such dishonest actions by traders in commodity associations, there are also differences in how traders respond to such stipulations. Even when such disputes are eventually brought before the association's leadership and settled, there are no assurances that repeat events do not occur. Cases have been known to occur where commodity association leaders take sides with offending parties and pronounce judgments based on favouritism, rather than the facts of the

matters presented. These variations to how diverse understandings to rules influence and constitute membership practices may not be apparent at the broad level of a boundary practice.

Seemingly organised and structured practices can be features of a temporarily negotiated act that are not necessarily representative of the actuality of everyday happenings in the market. For instance, commodity associations and prayer and worship groups only meet on a fortnightly basis and at noon in Alaba-Suru market, respectively. Once such meetings are over, the existence of the commodity association, with respect to its rules concerning rules around displays, dispute resolution and pricing strategies may be subject to various forms of interpretations that challenge the homogenising character of the association as an entity. As such, the membership practices of a commodity association alone cannot and do not inform adequately on the complete picture of how buying and selling and a variety of other interactions occur in this market.

Similarly, the prayer and worship meetings of traders organised at around noon on a daily basis in the market can only be said to be a collective practice at that particular time of the day. Once prayers are over, traders return to their individual actions of trading that are not accounted for as a boundary practice. In a similar light, practices of prayer meetings are not all encompassing as traders who are Muslims or who belong to certain Christian denominations may not take part in these activities because of their conflicting understandings regarding religious views in relation to trade. There are therefore tensions in how a shared practice is defined, or what it means to collectively talk of practice in a dynamic setting like a market. This is because once the opportunities to communally assemble disappear; the actions of rational and competing market traders become appropriated towards markedly different aims and ends.

Like the boundary practice, cross communal practices that influence trade may reflect divergent understandings of how rules should proceed. It was explained in the previous chapter, concerning the adoption of Igbo names by Yoruba traders, that tacit dispositions are not easily learnt in order to acquire legitimacy in trade. The ability to learn certain elements of culture in order to acquire the tacit character to fit into a trade does not necessarily endow the trader the status of equal legitimacy because it is difficult to transmit and learn tacit know-how (see Nonaka, 1994). This could explain why the Igbo electronic traders had difficulty in accepting that the Yoruba traders could operate as successful electronic traders.

This evidence is similar to views expressed by Rouse (2006) who suggests that tacit

dimensions of inaccessibility may be so embedded in a social practice, that people may have difficulty in recognising serious alternatives when they appear. In the midst of this perceived illegitimacy concerning the transmission of tacit dispositions, there is nothing to suggest that these Yoruba traders did not do as well as Igbo traders in electronics trading.

Broad classes of practices internalise a range of spatial contradictions, antagonisms and disjuncture that do not simply or always produce a homogenous set of practices (Casino et al., 2000). The attention to grouping the complexities of occurrences of Alaba-Suru market traders' practices into categorical structures tends to overshadow what it is that traders actually undertake as work within these distinctive and seemingly demarcated entities. Storr (2010) captures this problem of the complexity and order within markets when he notes that:

“The market’s ontological status, then is as a social order that results from the actions of the nature of the order, or on the process that creates the order, but we should never lose sight of the fact that it is a social construction involving moments of externalization and objectivities” (Storr, 2010, pg. 202).

The awareness of this active nature of practice draws parallels with arguments presented elsewhere that have expressed that there is a demarcation between ‘espoused practice’ and ‘actual practice’ (Brown and Duguid, 1991, pg.41). Turner (1994) has expressed similar opinions to this demarcation, by arguing that accounts of normativity, similar to that of espoused practice are often merely instrumental. Quite unlike actual practices, espoused practices defined by categorical inferences, like being a member of a commodity association, do not necessarily fulfill, in Turner’s words ‘the need to connect the stuff of thought to the world of cause and substance’ (Turner, 1994, pg. 37). Martin (2003) suggests elsewhere that espoused practices should be formulated as practices while the actual doing of the practice should be designated in a more active form of practising.

These acts of practising refer to the activeness of events that are produced at points involving interactions and that are continually dynamic, negotiated and contested as opposed to the more static nature of categorical descriptions of practices. The implications of considering instances of traders actively practising trade as opposed to bunching up their actions means that the previously standardised and broad classes of practice as discussed in the previous chapter can be explained as moments of multiplicity and diversity (Marcus, 1998), that are being experienced by traders as they work everyday in the market. The danger of positing categorised practices

lends itself to describing self-contained categories that are fixated on a sometimes false sense of shared belonging or sense of collectivity (Osterlund and Carlile, 2005). Whereas depending on where the boundaries of practices are drawn when collectivising practices as attributes of a particular category, each set of practices referred to, looks very different. The exercise of collectivising practice as a result, makes absent an understanding of the diverse meanings, performances and interpretations that unsettle categories of practice.

Traders, whether as members of commodity structures, disposed to certain ethnic orientation or personal predispositions to earn a living must still be thought of as actively employing varied methods of sorting, processing, bargaining and soliciting for customers in the market. The occurrences of these latter practices are diverse and negotiated, contrary to monolithic interpretations of categorical forms of practice. A more subtle rationale to elaborating traders' practices would be to demonstrate that the classes of boundary practices, cross communal practices and practices of non participation, internalise everyday trading practices differently. Focusing on how traders interact through their minute by minute actions in everyday life, challenges such consistent features of practice. Furthermore the urge to witness the actual unfolding of practice helps to establish practice as 'co-present and dynamic hybridizations of alternative, complementary or competing social relations which may vary over the shortest stretches of time and space' (Lee, 2006, pg. 421).

This constant production and reproduction of practices through their continual but varied practising, is what I express as a manifestation of a network of practice. I elaborate on how the unfolding of events occurring in the interactions of Alaba-Suru traders play out as networks of practice in the rest of the chapter. Before that I discuss a scenario from Sumbo, a tomato trader in Alaba-Suru market that reveals the various agencies that admit a trader into a network of practice. I discuss the components of this network of practice after the discussion from field work accounts that follows

6.2.1 Vignette 1: The tomato trade

Sumbo is a tomato trader in Alaba-Suru market who displays tomatoes for sale around the entrance of the market. While Sumbo put up the display of tomatoes, an activity she does most mornings, she also spent some time sorting the tomato bunches. In carrying out the process of sorting, Sumbo separated the rotten from the strong tomatoes. She further grouped the tomatoes according to size and quantities using small bowls (See Figure 6.1). Sumbo embarked on the sorting of the tomatoes in this way, in order to improve their affordability and to make the

display more presentable to approaching potential customers. The bigger bunches of tomatoes were often marketed to customers who were more economically buoyant. Smaller quantities and rotten pieces of tomatoes were often marketed to less buoyant customers. Therefore, included into the actions to sort and process the tomatoes, was the economic decision about the means of the customer, which was factored into the determination of the price.

Throughout the course of the day, Sumbo regularly checked the effect of intense humidity and heat on the tomatoes on display. The ripest tomatoes were separated from the strong ones at intervals and water was occasionally thrown on the tomatoes or they were soaked in water to continually make them more attractive. Soaking tomatoes in water was also carried out so that the tomatoes did not dry out and rot in the heat, as rotten tomatoes were useless and accrued as losses to Sumbo.



Figure 6.1 The tomato display (Photograph by Faith Ikioda, Fieldwork, 2010)

As Sumbo sorted the tomatoes, she also scanned passersby for any potential customers, coaxing them with calls to approach to grab bargains. Once a potential buyer took interest in Sumbo's goods, other tomato traders located close by did not approach this buyer at this time. All traders were aware of this mutual guiding etiquette of soliciting for customers as members of the tomato sellers association in Alaba-Suru market.

The ensuing bargain between Sumbo and the customer took the form of price

bargaining or Hausa (quantity) bargaining. The term Hausa bargaining is borrowed from a similar description of bargaining among Kumasi market traders (Clark, 1994). As in Clark's description of bargaining among Kumasi market traders, in Hausa or quantity bargaining the customer can bargain for additional units to be added on, for a given fixed price. A customer could ask for spoilt tomatoes, upon visual inspection of a bunch, to be replaced by much healthier looking tomatoes, for a fixed agreed price. This request for add-ons is popularly referred to as *fisi*. In this case, Sumbo could offer to replace rotten tomatoes with healthy ones. Sumbo must however gauge this act to *fisi* against how many rotten tomatoes are to be disposed of, without accruing a loss later. Where the customer was not satisfied with the quantity of what is added on as *fisi*, situations could become contested until an appropriate quantity was agreed on. In cases where a satisfactory *fisi* was not agreed upon, the customer could choose to cut short the bargain and end the purchase altogether (Field notes, May, 2010).

In price bargaining, both Sumbo and the customer make offers of prices some distance apart and gradually move closer until they meet at an agreed price. Initially Sumbo starts with a price to which the customer puts forwards his/her own price, often lower than the price suggested earlier. This constant negotiation of lower price referred to as *jale* (a term meaning, to reduce) can go on, until there is an acceptable *jale* that Sumbo makes a profit and that the buyer can comfortably pay. In cases where the *jale* price was too low for Sumbo to break even, Sumbo often refused to sell, thus ending the bargain on an unsuccessful note. In the case of the break in bargain, previously unapproached tomato sellers would beckon upon the unsatisfied customer. These traders overhearing that the previous transaction was unsuccessful, would approach the customer with a new offer that might either include a better *jale* or an increase in *fisi*, compared to what had been overheard in the previous transaction. In the next section, I draw out some implications of these acts of practising bargaining, sorting and soliciting for customers.

6.3 From practice to practising

In this section of the chapter, I want to use Sumbo's account above to draw attention to the practising of trade by the trader as a precursor to describing the network of practice. This practising I focus on is opposed to collectively describing a practice as pinned down to a particular category. The acts of bargaining described above through Sumbo's accounts, represent a series of dynamic actions when compared to the rather static practice domains noted in the previous chapter. Practising therefore refers to the doing, displaying, performing, mobilising and manoeuvring that contrast to configurations of practice (Connell, 2003). From this distinction between practice

and practising and from Sumbo's tomato trading activities, I want to depict some implications for embracing the practising of trade as a networking strategy.

First, there are varied understandings of the rules, procedures and patterns that are involved in bringing about the fulfilment or enactment of the actions of trade in a particular instance. For instance, neighbouring traders' eavesdrop on the transactions of one another despite the presence of rules established by commodity associations that traders do not deliberately obstruct ongoing transactions of other traders. The acts of eavesdropping did not only occur for the purposes of cornering a customer in the event of an unsuccessful bargain. Eavesdropping measures were also employed to ensure that neighbouring traders were operating at competitive rates. Eavesdropping was employed as a subtle mechanism to keep other traders in check who might be selling at inflated prices or at greatly reduced prices.

The competing desires of traders reflect that the understanding of any rule, no matter how collective, is subject to multiple interpretations of how to proceed with that rule, which in turn brings about other new or specific activities (Schatzki, 1997). According to Schatzki (2001), interpreting a practice differently is based on three prevalent issues. These are a prior set of understandings of what has happened before, what it means to proceed in doing that action as well as the expected end to be achieved (Schatzki, 2001, 2005).

To illustrate this point further, in a case in which a *jale* was unfavourable to a trader, other traders could call on a customer even when they have heard an agreed price from a previous transaction that would amount to making losses. However, many traders make a sale that is disadvantaged from a prior transaction, either to reduce losses e.g. if goods are almost expired, or simply to take the risk to make a loss, in the hope of establishing a potentially lucrative trader- customer relationship at a next visit or patronage from the customer. In the case of *jale* where traders sold even below their cost to hopefully establish a trader-customer relationship, there may be no guarantee of a return visit on the part of the customer to whom the service has been extended. Traders may also simply make such transactions for the sake of spiting other traders or to incite jealousy.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the case of *fisi*. The *fisi* in addition to being a response to a request made by the customer to increase the quantity of a purchase, can also be used by a trader to compensate and reward a customer who has made an especially large purchase. Trager (1981) has referred to this latter practice elsewhere as *dashing*. Traders who are known to be particularly generous with their *fisi* can accumulate more customers than those who seem tight fisted with add-ons.

The *fisi* and *jale* practices of Alaba-Suru traders reveal that any seemingly collective know-how is interpreted differently, in response to different possible outcomes among traders competing with one another. These sorts of evidence reflects Wittgenstein's (1953) arguments that rules are not self-interpreting, as any rule can be followed through in a number of ways. Furthermore, the actions of sorting, processing, soliciting for customers and bargaining, described in Sumbo's account, show that Alaba-Suru traders engage with multiple actions that are interconnected and linked to one another. For instance, the resulting explanation for Sumbo's acts of bargaining is shaped by a combination of limits set by the perishability of tomatoes, customers' technique to employ *fisi* and *jale* effectively, profit margins and non-economic possibilities like friendship, hate and jealousy. Hence, it can be deduced that the explanation for the interpretation of a practice is not just an occurrence on its own.

Practices must be understood as instances that respond to the performances of others, instigated through interaction (Taylor, 1985). The practices of *jale* and *fisi* for instance, are practices that are not meaningful in isolation from the utterances that transpires between the trader and customer in the course of the bargaining process. In the same vein, Sumbo's practices of sorting and display are acted out in response to the need to manipulate the perishability, profitability and attractiveness of the tomatoes she sells.

Expanding on this latter point, the characteristics of a commodity, such as its divisibility, bulkiness and perishability admits the trader into different forms of sorting, processing, and bargaining of commodities. Sorting for instance varies with perishability, divisibility and bulkiness of commodities. However, it was noted in the course of the research that for certain pre-packaged items, there was limited flexibility for traders to manipulate practices of divisibility. Items such as canned evaporated milk, beverages, food seasoning, and sachets of salt for example, are often almost indivisible because of their pre-packaged nature.

The limitations of the divisibility of a commodity may consequently influence the trader's profits. One provision seller noted that a carton of seasoning, for instance cost ₦7,000.00 (£28.00) and because of the lack of divisibility, the entire gain on the carton was only between ₦100.00 (£0.40) and ₦200.00 (£0.80), which barely covered the transport incurred in making its purchase. On the other hand another gari trader bought a bag of gari for ₦6,000.00 (£24.00). She noted that the bag could be divided into a 'derica' or a 'paint bucket', which are the two measures of divisibility for products like rice, gari and beans. With a bag yielding about 30 'paint buckets',

selling at ₦400.00 (£1.60), per bucket, the trader stood to make, ₦12,000.00 (£48.00) and a gain of ₦6,000.00 (£24.00).

In describing the practices of Alaba-Suru traders in their actual doings and in the moments practices are made (McDowell, 2001), the challenge becomes how to present its coherence with regards to the entire trader population. In the next section I suggest it makes sense to think of these complex relationships of practising trade as a combination arising from a network of practice.

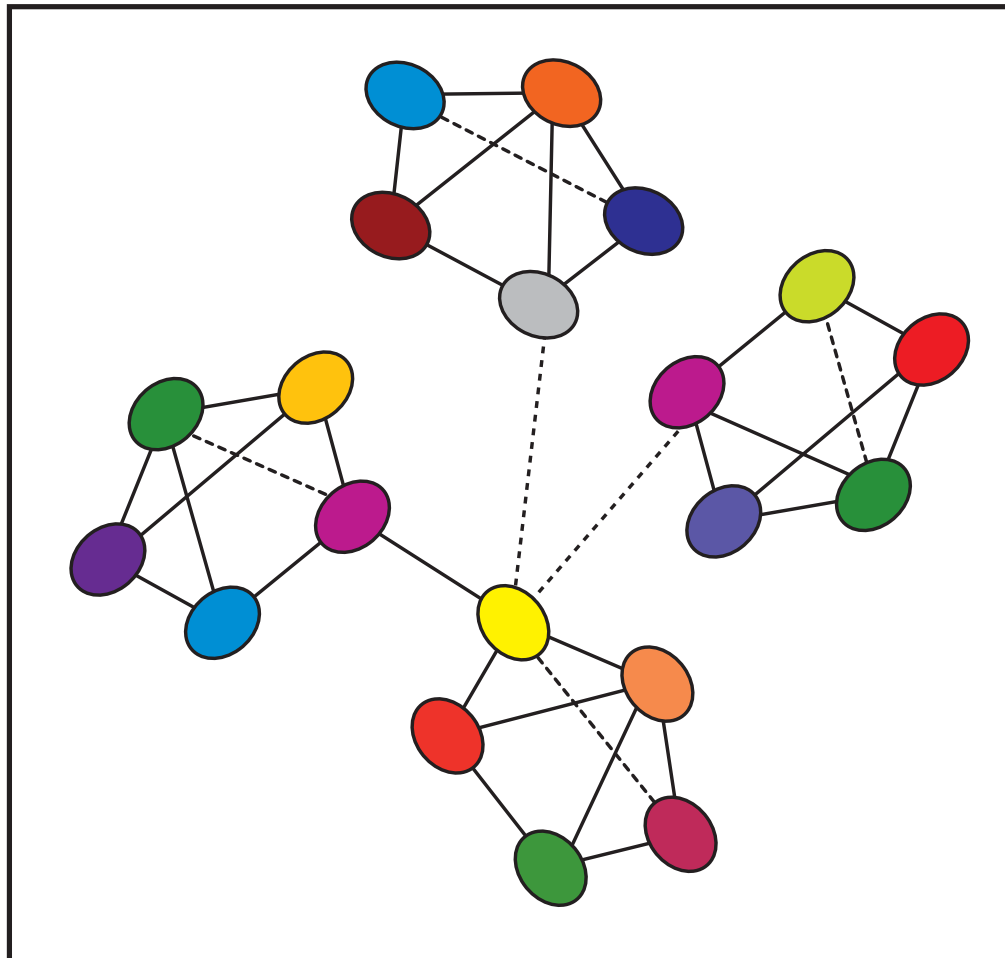


Figure 6.2 Serrat's generic representation of a network of practice (Serrat, 2009, pg. 1)

6.4 The network of practice

It is somewhat apparent at this stage of the thesis that each commodity in the market supports a trading network that is associated with its own layers of, ethnic, class and gender assignment drawing on location, commercial and other specific social, political and economic histories (see Clark, 2002). These characteristics further play a critical factor in defining the active processes of bargaining, profitability, sorting

and processing practices of traders on a day to day basis. In therefore exploring the active nature of practising, the multiplicity of linkages that is taken into account for understanding how everyday outcomes of market trade come about, the purpose of this section of the chapter is to examine how traders' practices emerge and are made through the organisation of a network of practice (See Figure 6.2).

A network of practice is defined by Duguid as a concept that 'designates the collective of all practitioners of a particular practice' (Duguid, 2005, pg. 113). Serrat goes further to suggest that a "A network of practice refers to the overall set of informal, emergent networks that facilitate information exchange towards practice-related goals"(Serrat, 2009, pg. 2). The concept of a network of practice is itself a recent addition to the literature spurned from the concept of the community of practice by Brown and Duguid (2001). In terms of its application much of what is discussed in making reference to networks of practice has been restricted in large part to electronic networks of practice, focusing on interactions between people that are made possible via chat rooms and emails (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Other discussions have been concerned with how technological innovations are able to standardise and facilitate how distant and autonomous groups understand a dispersed practice (Murillo, 2008).

To a considerable extent, the use of the network of practice as a technological tool has overshadowed and distracted from grasping its true nature in non-technological contexts (Bou et al., Undated). Takhteyev (2009) for instance, has suggested that networks of practice should be conceived in the same ways as actor networks after Callon and Law (1982). Such a version of the network of practice allows for a problematisation of how different, distributed and heterogeneous practices work together to produce an outcome. It is also for this reason that I choose to reflect on its potential applicability within the context of this discussion to bring together the various relations occurring to permit market trade.

Studies of network relations very similar to the view of the network of practice resemble debates in relational economic geography that have been concerned with the extensive set of processes that are responsible for how particular economic outcomes are brought about (see Ettlinger, 2001; Amin, 2002; Yeung, 2005). In the last decade, a number of network studies have been carried out in this field at the micro-level of the firm to understand the sort of different spatialities of economic action and processes that allow economic activities to thrive (Yeung, 2008). However despite the profuse literature geographers have considered on networks, studies on the dynamics of how individual actors structure networks are significantly under-

theorised (Ettlinger, 2003). In this regard, it is hardly ever questioned whether the network structure that is observed is stable over time, whether it is just a snapshot of relations that exist because of an incidental encounter or what denotes or does not come into the equation when describing a network (Wal and Boschma, 2009).

To therefore reflect on describing networks of practice in market trading in this regard, it might be as Sawyer (2001) argues, impossible and meaningless to trace all the possible relations resulting from ethnic origins, climatic conditions, apprenticeship training, pricing strategies, various association membership to mention a few that allows a singular account of active practising of buying and selling, to be described for all situations observed. While attending to describing market trade as linked to a variety of heterogeneous elements which simultaneously give agency to practice (Callon, 2007; Berndt and Boeckler, 2009), such a network of practice can mean almost anything and be probably too broad and even admit relations that might not be necessarily useful to explaining the outcome that is under consideration.

Serrat (2009) has proposed that it might be more useful to describe certain attributes of a network of practice to include its nodes, function, localisation and scope rather than aiming to delimit the extent of a particular network. The function of the network of practice refers to the role and purpose that the network serves. Nodes are the individuals or groups within the network, while the localisation and scope of the network together, refer to where the nodes of the network are located, both physically and thematically. By following through this sort of ordering of how a network may be envisaged, it may then be possible to explain what forms of networking strategies are presented when engaging with specific outcomes. In order to put Serrat's typology of a network of practice into use, the next section of the chapter engages with tracing the function of networks in facilitating trusting relations in interactions in the market. This argument is illustrated in a set of four scenarios observed in the Alaba-Suru market which point to different basis for exhibiting trusting relations based around different linking properties that characterise each of the specific networks involved.

6.5 Trust and trading relationships

Trust generally involves risk taking where both parties know that the actions of one party can materially affect the other, but both share ideas, concerns or issues candidly based on commonly shared norms of a community (Fukuyama, 1995). Fafchamps and Minten (2002) reveal that one of the most specific uses of networks in interrogating trade activities is that their function can help explain not only the relationships between traders but also the nature of trust in interactions in markets.

Trust has been of the most important linkages needed to foster interactions in marketplaces not only between traders, but also between suppliers and traders, as well as between customers and traders.

Trust is also necessary to sustain cooperation in the midst of competitiveness between traders as well as facilitate credit relations between suppliers, customers and traders (Trager, 1981). According to Tripp (2001) trust is what permits market vendors selling the same product side by side not to encroach on each other's regular customers. The presence of trust also aids the great lengths to which traders go to help each other out in making sales and covering for one another if one has to leave one's stall temporarily (Clark, 1994) and also is a key factor in facilitating information flow and permitting lending between traders in the absence of formal systems of contracts (Fafchamps and Minten, 1999; Lyon and Porter, 2007).

However, since the structural patterns of networks are rarely revealed it is often complex to understand how trust based mechanisms are initiated, sustained or broken. Elaborations of networks generally tend to stick with Granovetter (1985) who proposes two types of network relationships based on strong ties and those based on weak ties. This chapter seeks to move beyond that strict divide between 'weak' and 'strong' to instead focus on as Grabher (2004) argues, the different temporality, and various modes of interaction that overlap, are in conflict and in tension between diverse networking practices, as in this case among Alaba-Suru traders. In the next four vignettes detailed below I expand on this argument.

6.5.1 Vignette 2: Capacity trust among traders

Mama Jane is a gari trader in the Alaba-Suru market. While away to get supplies from the wholesale gari market at Ojora, Mama Jane often left the keys to her stall with a tailor, whose stall was opposite hers, called Patience. Patience not only helped Mama Jane to display her goods, but also made sales on her behalf, pending the arrival of the gari trader, whilst also tending to her stall and own customers. Mama Jane also often left the key to her stalls with Patience who sometimes opened up for Mama Jane when she did not arrive early to the market. Located adjacent to Mama Jane was another middle-aged gari seller, Iya Ibeji, whom Mama Jane never entrusted her stall for the fear of Iya Ibeji 'stealing' her customers and sales in her absence. Mama Jane and Iya Ibeji both sell gari and both belong to the gari association of the market. However, the level of similarity in commodity specialisation was a cause of concern for Mama Jane, to leave the care of her stall to Iya Ibeji, as competitors seeking out similar customers for the same goods.

Though both traders are members of the same commodity association, membership practices notwithstanding, Mama Jane was wary of entrusting her stall to Iya Ibeji. This relationship bears semblance to Ettlenger's notion of capacity trust (Ettlenger, 2003), defined as the trust that is based on one's judgement about confidence in the capability and performance of another person. Between Mama Jane and Iya Ibeji, capacity trust is hindered by the nature of competition between traders. Even though Mama Jane and Patience differ in the types of commodity they retail, for the purposes of looking after ones stall, Patience who is located opposite Mama Jane provides a suitable relationship for capacity trust to unfold in this case.

An interesting observation made in this case was that Patience would not relinquish the care of her stall to Mama Jane or Iya Ibeji, in the event she was away from her stall, as neither gari trader was knowledgeable about making clothes. Therefore, differences in the skills and knowledgeability may also differentiate the extent to which practices are performed, in this case, what it takes to look after another trader's stall. A related case can also be made for the practice of 'giving change' to customers during a transaction, If Mama Jane, Iya Ibeji or Patience did not have the required change to give a customer during a transaction, they could beckon any other trader on that commodity line without regard for differentiation.

By conceiving this relationship as a network of practice, variations in the performance of practices that facilitate or restrict interactions and produce different versions of a practice, ensue. For different purposes, the network of practice of these three traders shows that what is suitable to practice is dynamic and subject to change and continually negotiated in different interactions.

6.5.2 Vignette 3: Credit relationships and customer patronage

The second scenario I employ to discuss the evidence of a network of practice is that of Ifeoma, a trader who sells oil products and ogbono seeds at the Alaba-Suru market. Most of Ifeoma's oil products are bought on credit from a particular palm oil distributor. Ifeoma repays what she owed upon returning to the supplier to pay for the previous transaction. The reputable credit relationship between Ifeoma and her distributors is not sustained solely by repayments, but also on the quality, viscosity, taste, colour, smell and durability of the oil, which is got by feedback from Ifeoma's customers after purchase (Field notes, 2010).

Constant and repeated positive feedback after a customer's use of a palm oil purchase encouraged a continued patronage of Ifeoma by the customer, payments for prior purchased goods by Ifeoma to the distributor and a continued supplier-trader

relationship between Ifeoma and the same distributor. A negative feedback on the other hand from Ifeoma's customers through bad reports of quality, smell or taste, can result in a complete break of transaction. This could result in a breakdown of trader-supplier relationships irrespective of monies owed from previous transactions, without any form of repercussion involved. This also means that Ifeoma's customers may also seek new oil traders to deal with. Hence once that reputation of 'good oil' is broken, the customer is free to choose any other type of trader to conduct their business with and the trader, which was Ifeoma in this case, can go in search of a new supplier. This peculiar type of system that covers the practices of patronage and fruitful relations between traders, customers and suppliers in Nigerian markets has been typified as *Onibara* relationships (Trager, 1981). Generally describing the nature of *Onibara* relationships Trager notes that:

“Onibara relationships, like *pratik* in Haiti and *suki* in the Philippines are long-lasting dyadic ties formed between individuals operating in the market place. At a minimum, they imply the existence of regular transactions between the individuals. They may also involve extension of credit, concessions in quantity, reduction in price, and multiplex social ties. The establishment of these dyadic ties has been shown to be an important mechanism for manipulating the competitive situation of the market place” (Trager, 1981, pg. 133).

This sort of representation of practice as a network of practice through the example of the *Onibara* relationship allows the traders' practice to be embraced as a dynamic set of connections, rather than broad configurations of practice.

6.5.3 Vignette 4: Product referral

Product referral occurs when a customer enquires of a product not in the possession of a particular trader as has been initially described in the case of Ijebu gari above. Product referral may proceed in any number of ways many traders, rather than refer a customer to a competitor who they knew possessed the required item, would often leave their own stalls to locate the product themselves, so as to prevent the loss of that customer to a competitor. In some cases, product referral may rely on a process of self referral as I will illustrate in the case of Emeka, a cosmetics dealer at the Alaba-Suru market.

In one peculiar case of product referral, I witnessed during the field research a female customer had approached Emeka for a particular brand of body cream Emeka did not have the product and urged the customer to go for a similar yet potent cosmetic product he had in stock. He acknowledged that although she would find a similar

product elsewhere, he could guarantee her that the product was going to be a fake one. The customer believed Emeka's tale and did purchase the product.

In considering this development of the network of practice in Emeka's case the non-availability of the customer's desired product as well as Emeka's selling strategy of putting down his competitor served to facilitate the emergence of this transaction. However, there is no guarantee that there is to be a sustained relation between this customer and Emeka. The customer might as well develop multiple links to other types of traders or even markets probably if on the next visit they do find a customer who has the desired body cream. In this case, Emeka's practice allows observing relations that might occur at only a single moment in time as a chance encounter that is probably not going to be repeated. There is no guarantee that there is going to be a substantial tie to this customer or any guarantee that a repeat visit will be made at a next occasion.

As such I want to suggest that the relationship that is encountered in this case of product referral is that which can be likened to the discussion of swift trust designated by Meyerson et al. (1996), which is thought to occur where there is not enough time to develop a sustained relationship. In this case, the customer has simply taken Emeka's word for the sale of his alternative product to ensure that a sale is conducted and the purpose of the relationship dissolves once the immediacy of the activity is achieved.

6.5.4 Vignette 5: Looking after another trader's stall

Aunty Eli, one of the provision traders recalled an incident that had occurred in the past when she had to go on maternity leave and entrusted her shop to a fellow provisions trader located opposite her. While away on her leave, the provision trader to whom she had entrusted her stall cornered all her existing customers as well as goods, profits and sales. Upon returning from the maternity leave, Aunty Eli's sales, goods and customers had been completely taken away by her competitor, causing the Aunty Eli to begin her trade from scratch. Aunty Eli's actions to relinquish the care of her stall was based on a capacity to trust her neighbouring trader, whose capabilities might have been gauged due to the geographical proximity of their stalls as provision traders. However the stress of competition created an opportunity for this trader to dupe Aunty Eli, resulting in a climate of distrust. In Aunty Eli's case we get a glimpse of mixed thoughts and feelings that are critical elements of developing trusting relations that may permit the interaction between two traders to continue or be hindered. This case also puts into perspective that individual priorities to succeed

in business at all cost, and which may be a prime feature of market trading often produces cases where competitors may employ betrayal of trust to outdo one another.

6.6 Practising trade and the network of practice

The four vignettes above differ in certain aspects regarding the scope of the network in performing the function of trust. The nodes also vary from being traders to also include customers, suppliers and commodity characteristics themselves. Notably the localisation and scope also vary from short incidental encounters to repetitive and sustained actions that are contiguous on one another. If the four scenarios are to be analysed as forms of networks based on Serrat's attributes discussed earlier, the scope of the first set of network relations encountered by Mama Jane is facilitated by geographic proximity of the three traders and the nodes within that network are mainly traders. In the second and third scenarios however the nodes in the network extend to include not only traders but also customers, commodities and suppliers.

Each network of practice, if each case is taken individually that is, in this case performs a different trust function based on the scope of geographic proximity, customer preference and commodity quality. In addition, in the first two scenarios the temporality of the network is more extensive than the latter case, with Emeka's encounter with swift trust and in the latter case, distrust. However, despite their different social scopes, nodes and temporal scales, the interactions that make up the network that allows the practices of looking after a trader's stall, maintaining customer patronage and of product referrals, share some important features as being about the particular but different behaviours exhibited among Alaba-Suru traders at different times and places to actualise trade. Each arrangement produced practices and events of practising that was not merely a matter of imitating the movement of other traders, but involved some understanding of the performance to which they responded (Rouse, 2006).

Interaction of buying and selling, conducting product referrals, or looking after another trader's stall may be also about suppliers, customers and other traders. The ties between all of these components of the network of practice are reconfigured from one moment to the other around a relatively stable set of core relationships that vary. By acknowledging the dynamic purposes motivating what is practiced by a cross section of Alaba-Suru market traders as a network of practice, I have expressed that the traders' practice emerges through a continuously negotiated net of interactions. Hence what is practised or what comes to define a market trader's practice is therefore not static, but changes with time and for various purposes as other intervening factors

come into the picture of the set of relations that can constitute what is practiced. But a crucially important point is that these actions are not separate and are only presented as separate networks for the purpose of analytical clarity.

These behaviours and results of interactions are snapshots of the severally connected experiences occurring across this market which underscores the difference in the manifestation of the everyday life of traders' interactions owe their being to multiple allegiances. One might argue that Ifeoma's success in business owes not so much to her values as an Igbo woman or her membership of a commodity association or her personal ingenuity of being intelligent in trade but critically on the relationships and trust established in and around the quality of oil products she sells. In all of these cases like Ifeoma, my aim has been to show that interactions as an active practising of trade involve connections and disconnections, such that the network of practice that emerges does have a break at moments where trust cannot go (Aunty Eli's encounter with her neighbour), but at the same time it does necessarily continue endlessly (e.g. good quality oil will sustain customer and supplier patronage) and can be purely incidental (as in Emeka's case of referral).

Such a strategy for defining a network of practice as I have signposted here is important for uncovering the variations and difference are items that might be overlooked in aiming to understand practices as coherent and unchanging (Ettlinger, 2004). It highlights and accommodates diversity, disarticulation and the sometimes conflicting mix of values, thoughts, emotions that individuals might exhibit while disrupting accounts of structured coherence (Harvey, 1989) and homogenising shared values of practices. And when dealing with actors working and living in a competitive context, one must take into consideration that any form of 'tidiness is unsettled by internal differentiation' (Ettlinger, 2004, pg. 28).

Having a common context such as a marketplace does not necessarily bring all traders under a singular collective community. Traders may call upon, particularly in their daily practice and moment-by-moment interaction, multiple experiences that challenge presumptions of conformity and uniformity. Yet the interesting issue that arises from that tension of multiplicity is that they produce relations that influence one another both negatively and positively and the market still stands irrespective of the outcome. Instead referring to a trader's network of practice enables a host of heterogeneous relations that allows the trader to carry out trading practices in Alaba-Suru market to be made. The approach of viewing traders' practices as networks of practice, allows for seeing how traders themselves draw on different forms of interactions to activate practices (see Jones and Esnault, 2007). The temporality,

scale and scope of the performance of actions of practice are seen for different contents and contexts of relationships formed at particular times.

An issue that arises in seeking to draw the connections that may facilitate the trader's everyday life by focusing on actual doings of practices is that it might be difficult to account for all the possible interactions in time and space. Moreover as not all practices might be explicit, as some may convey tacit characters, attempting to explain all the possible doings of any practice, would lead to an identification of an endless 'network of networks' (Ettlinger, 2003, pg. 161). This drawback may be the disadvantage of a network strategy and those who have employed it as part of that broader relational debate in economic geography, like Massey (2004), acknowledge that:

“The lived reality of our daily lives invoked so often to buttress the meaningfulness of place, is in fact pretty much dispersed in its sources and its repercussions. The degree and nature of its dispersal will of course vary between individuals, between social groups and between places” (Massey, 2004, pg. 7).

The issue that stands out here is quintessentially the geographic perspective of multiple relations that are non-essentialised which suggests therefore that the actions and processes from which outcomes proceed are multidimensional and not encapsulated in a singular phenomenon (Haraway, 1997). Combining various interpretations of practice produces the opportunity for scale jumping or what Marston et al. (2005) perceive as a flat ontology, where practice is potentially overstretched to other and much distant settings without critically analysing the extent to which such a generalisability is problematic. Relationality is useful, but so also is the need to balance a relational view of practice with some ability to say specific things about market traders' coordination without being overly complex or lost in analytic concepts that are not ontological realities. There is an inherently complex nature that underpins exchange and interactions in the market place and in order to embrace that multiplicity and reveal the extent of what networks of practice offer, many geographers have suggested engaging with a non-essentialist perspective of relational thinking in geographic inquiry (Dicken et al., 2001; Lee, 2002; Amin and Cohendet, 2004). Such relational thinking recognises that interactions are constantly reshaped through a variety of internal and external influences initiated in interactions between traders, customers, suppliers and commodity characteristics themselves in contributing to giving meaning to particular accounts of practice.

People's behaviour seems to tend to elide individual actors and includes also non-

human elements engaged in a network that is fluid and changes over time. Such a non-essentialist perspective embraces the angle of the network of practice as a phenomenon that not only unsettles the containment of practices by undermining categorising practices, but it also opens up a relational examination of traders' practices as not solely originating and terminating in the marketplace. The relations that make up a network of practice may also extend beyond the confines of everyday performances and locality. For instance, in the example of the network of practice of Ifeoma's oil trade, it is possible to argue that the trader's reputation based on the quality of palm oil is linked to several relevant features beyond the Alaba-Suru market. This could include the conditions of the oil palm plantation, the processing of palm oil, the bottling and packaging of the oil, the transportation and storage of oil products to the market and a host of other parameters before resulting in the purchase from the trader and its use by the customer. Consequently, the network of practice allows for drawing attention to other sites of practices that are made local in the marketplace but existing elsewhere.

In reducing the interactions in the Alaba-Suru market to a focus on competing practices and their practising, it would be unwise not to acknowledge that the focus has largely been limited to describing micro level of phenomena operating in the locality of the market. There are also important institutions occurring at other scales that frame the trader's practice in interaction. While the interactions between traders, customers, suppliers and commodities make the description of the trader's practices possible, one bears in mind that neither people, goods nor the market as a locality appear in a vacuum.

Market traders' practices interconnect in finite categories and as relational ties generated from traders and their relations. Yet these networked relations are also connected to various not-taken-for granted spatialities that are path dependent under specific institutional conditions (Bathelt and Gluckler, 2003; Bathelt and Glucker, 2005). In the bid to make sense of complex relations of market traders in the market, there is the tendency to take for granted the different elements that define the scale of the practice as multiply historically, spatially or institutionally defined. I recognise that traders are internally diverse but that also that diversity is linked with happenings that are not necessarily geographically restricted to the confines of the locality of the marketplace. Thus, it might be important to understand how non-local relations and flows occurring elsewhere shape market trade outcomes (Yeung, 2005). Some as Bathelt and Gluckler (2003) and Boggs and Rantisi (2003) have suggested that space should be a perspective for examining relations rather than the object of analysis. In that case, whereas the traders might be organised in commodity associations and

other form of cultural ethics, the extent to which the network of practice can cover is an open environment. Consequently, the attempt to explore traders' network of practice is not intended to evoke a geographical scaling of practices but essentially seeks to identify different logics that allow an outcome to manifest relationally.

Notwithstanding this argument, since conflicting interests give traders' practices their meaning, practices cannot simply be understood from a unidirectional link to a unitary account of practice as localised in the happenings of a market (also see Ferree, 2003). Practices are also answerable to many forms of interactions occurring at a number of different levels including a variety of institutional forms shaping practice. Government regulations, the siting of markets, transportation networks, shopping practices, among other examples are also structures which can influence the market trader's work in the market. This emphasis is the purpose of the next chapter.

6.7 Conclusion

The arguments in this chapter suggest that while it is analytically useful to view the practices of market traders as organised within contained categories, it is also helpful to consider traders relations as networks of practice (Brown and Duguid, 2000, 2001). Considering the activities of market traders as network of practice helps the present analysis not to simply or unreflexively focus attention for examining practices in certain structures that may enable seeing the diverse practices of traders within neatly homogenised categories, which may mirror the character of mutual engagement and shared repertoire of traditional communities of practice. Instead, an argument for embracing the perspective of a network of practice to examine the work that go on in the daily lives of market traders helps to show how the production of any practice involves actively practising different realities of everyday life which may defy comprehension as composite patterns of practice (see Jones and Murphy, 2010).

Depending on the scope of the network discussed in the four scenarios I mentioned in this chapter, it was possible to witness different types of particular relationships among traders. Rather than simply referring to informal groups of traders who have something in common in practice, by adopting a network of practice outlook, one can examine the nature of interactions and relationships that are glossed over in the shared sense of broad categories of practice. It is not easy to get a sense of the particularities of what is entailed in a trader's practice when attention becomes immersed solely in categorising practices as boundaries, cross communal or non-participatory practices. Attention to intricacies about the nature of what actually

transpires in the market, such as buying, selling, bargaining, and sorting and other moment by moment encounters, becomes lost when attention becomes focused solely on static delineations of traders' practices as substantive categories.

The discussions in this chapter therefore suggested that networks of practices allow for thinking about the heterogeneity and complexity of all the actual acts that make these categories of traders' practices possible. The consideration of the network of practice opened up practices as defined by and arising from customer-trader relationships, trader-trader relationships, and trader-supplier relationships. Networks of practices allowed the discussion in this chapter to extend the focus on practice as an active, ongoing and contested process that responds to particular situations. At the heart of the discussion on the network of practice is a relational approach, where context, social meaning and identity are central to interpretations of how practices are shaped. In the discussions in this chapter, processes as *jale* and *fisi* are shown to manifest as combinations produced and reproduced in regular interactions between and traders. Their interpretations however remained open to diverse, contingent, and unpredictable actions, expressions, and outcomes that varied from trader to trader, commodity and profit considerations.

Yeung (2005) has argued that attention to network relations only provides a thematic sense of happenings without specifying the causal nature of such patterns, which under theorises and under specifies power relations. This makes it difficult to either attribute causality or outcome to any particular structure nor can there be an explanation of where such relations, stop, where they begin and what comes before what, because not all ties in networks will be equally powerful, as they do not have the same functions (Lin, 1999). And because these relationships are relational constructs and not substantial constructs, it is difficult, for instance, to specify what the relations that bring about the best case or worst case scenario are, or under what conditions they can be accepted in formulating any solutions (Osterlund and Carlile, 2005).

To investigate an object depends on being able to fix and define a range of associations and relations that can be taken into account in a piece of empirical work. Like Amin and Cohendet (2004), I contend that practices are as well reproduced and changed through negotiations as people interact within and between particular locations and spaces. I however added that in examining the network of the traders' practice as part of a broader relational debate, one must consider relations to broad regional and institutional contexts, as the market place in its entirety does not occur in a vacuum. The next chapter considers in more detail the role of the transport

network of market commodities in Lagos in influencing the practices of Alaba-Suru market traders. A latter section of the chapter focuses on state regulations on markets and looks in particular at the peculiar effects of the Lagos mega city project on the operation of the Alaba-Suru market.

Chapter 7

Governmentality and scaling market trade practices

7.1 Introduction

It has been discussed in the preceding chapters of this thesis that traders as the key operators in the Alaba-Suru market conduct trade with other traders, customers and suppliers, within the remit of associational structures, individual expectations of traders to earn a livelihood as well as historical and cultural expectations linked to gender and ethnic dispositions to trade. The attention to these discussions presents traders' relations as a predominantly micro social experience which does not take into account other happenings influencing trade originating from distant processes occurring outside the locale of the Alaba-Suru market. It is necessary to examine how contexts that are not based in the marketplace can have intended and unintended implications that manifest in the everyday life of the Alaba-Suru market trader. This chapter's aim is to therefore investigate how the processes that sustain the coordination of trade in the market are connected to other practices that are not necessarily produced by traders. These distant practices are presented as practices of governmentality.

This incorporation of distant places raises important issues as to how local transactions that are apparent in the market confront other systems that are disengaged from the local setting but are still bound together with what happens in it (Knorr-Cetina and Bruegger, 2002). By linking the discussions on traders' relations in the market highlighted in the two previous chapters with other political and economic conditions occurring in the urban setting of Lagos, it becomes clear that there is a variety of

regulatory frames co-existing to sustain, regulate and govern market trade emanating from processes operating within and outside the market. In elaborating on the instances in which these distances come to bear as everyday experiences of trading in the market, I draw upon the literature of governmentality as practice following two case studies on the transport system of food supplies and urban redevelopment initiatives in Lagos.

The chapter shows through evidence from the ethnographic fieldwork how the role of transportation networks of supplies to markets and the effects of demolition exercises carried out as part of the Lagos mega city project present peculiar instances that have implications for the everyday life of Alaba-Suru market traders. These implications which include limits to profitability, pricing of goods and threats to the existence of the market, I argue are not necessarily the product of interactions or structures of associations of trade in the Alaba-Suru market. Instead they are products of processes that are dispersed and located in forms of regulation that connect the challenges of market trade to urban processes in the city of Lagos. Therefore I connect the two cases of happenings in the transport systems and urban redevelopment projects occurring in Lagos at the time of this research, in addition to the previously considered aspects of traders' relations as boundary, cross communal practices, practices of non-participation and networks of practice. I put forward that this coming together of different processes informing the governing order and involving various cultural and institutional forms of conduct of market trade, is a manifestation of the practice of governmentality.

Employing the approach of governmentality to highlight how traders practices are made both in and out of the market at different levels of analysis, I also contextualise the practices of Alaba-Suru market traders within a discussion on the politics of scale (Smith, 1993). By showing that markets function and experience everyday life not unconnected to processes occurring elsewhere in the city of Lagos and possibly beyond it, my arguments follow Massey (2004) and McDowell (2008) who both contend that practices are capable of being created in the here (for example in the Alaba-Suru market) but are yet always created somewhere else (in police checkpoints on roads, food merchants. state policies and plans etc). By combining governmentality as practice with the scale literature, the desire is to understand how the conduct of the state, its agencies, traders or some form of affiliation of them, reorder and shape the conduct of market trade. The collective implication for such conduct is that there is a constant dynamism, contestation and multiplicity of events at various scales, which challenges the coherence and stability of practice.

The intention to capture the scalar materialisation of market trade as a result of a variety of external and internal influences on the market does not however present a hierarchical analysis where the market is pitched as local against wider regional, national or global forces. Instead, my admission to scaling practices is purely analytical in order to examine and draw out the relational nature of the numerous agencies influencing practice to emerge (Nielsen and Simonsen, 2003). Considering practices as a scalar notion in this regard is useful as it corroborates the relational nature of practice as dynamic networks, which I have already suggested in the previous chapter. It further challenges the designation of rigid communities of practice as a category, leaving practice as an open-ended process that is complex and relative. I go on to add that since traders' practices are scalar occurrences that suppress distinctive categorisation in favour of an active process of blurring, I propose that it is necessary to view the practices of traders as coordinated not within communities of practice per se. I however do not offer any particular alternative designation to communities of practice, so as not to risk lapsing into what Jones (2009a) terms spatial voluntarism, where a single category explains all possible scenarios of practice. What I do offer are suggestions on why a relational and non-essentialist contemplation of communities of practice, particularly as a multi-scalar notion, needs further development as a coherent analytical tool, a point I raise in this chapter and broaden in the concluding chapter that follows.

In the first part of this present chapter, I briefly examine the relationship between markets and their place in the urban setting of the city of Lagos. While resembling some of the earlier discussions in chapter two, the context of this section is to highlight the linkages between markets and the urban system. This linkage sets up the discussion for addressing governmental practices, as it is suggested that the existence of markets as a place to trade for the trader is characterised by an incidence of fragmentary and multiple systems of regulation. In this regard, I show that from the trader to the various commodity associations, the market association, local government agencies, state-level market association and various ethnic and religious groupings, that there is a complex process of conduct influencing the goings-on of trading in this market.

I then explore in the next section of the chapter, the two case studies of transporting food supplies and urban redevelopment projects as part of that discussion of how fragmented state processes materialise in the everyday life of the Alaba-Suru traders. Focusing on what Dean (1999) terms authoritarian governmentality, I show in the next section of the chapter that despite market traders' attempts to sustain a livelihood, the state continues to play a crucial role in articulating its own interest. In

so doing, state regulations continue to limit the extent to which traders can reasonably shape the conduct of market trade, suggesting a process of governmentality-in-the-making (Tikly, 2003) as opposed to the Foucauldian version of the term.

The next set of discussions considers the implication of these two case studies within the features of practices of governmentality-in-the-making as part of a politics of scale, in order to chart the relations between a vast and dynamic system of conducting this market and the effects on the everyday life of traders. At the centre of this discussion is the point that the different governors of trade (the trader, state, and other institutions) complicate grounding the practices in Alaba-Suru market within any sort of stable analytical platform. The latter section of this chapter proposes therefore that trading practices are relational processes that exist at particular times for specific purposes and within the remit of spatio-temporal conditions rather than in rigid categories of a community of practice.

7.2 The market as a governable site

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to bring into focus how the market exists as an object that can be governed in the conduct of trade. Ranging from the self-governing strategies of the traders and various groups already discussed in the previous chapters, through to different forms of governmentality manifested in and through the state and various forms of institutions expanded upon in this chapter, the aim of this section of the chapter is to reveal the complexities involved in realising any account of market trade as a practice. I begin this discussion by reiterating that the Alaba-Suru market as the object of the focus is one that I have already explained as being composed of a heterogeneous mix of traders. These traders are of various ethnic groups, gender dispositions, age, religion, recipients of different forms of training and specialisation in various commodities, whether as wholesalers, retailers or a mixture of both. Added to them are apprentices, load carriers and hawkers who facilitate the workings of the market by providing sundry services.

Traders are able to take advantage of certain niches in trade in Alaba-Suru market owing not only to the aforementioned characteristics but also to the fact that they are able to organise themselves collectively within very structured commodity associations. I also argue that the presence of organised associational structures within the market (for social purposes and economic purposes), such as praise and worship group events, commodity associations and market associations, facilitates the coordination of otherwise self governed traders originating from diverse ethnic groups, gender, age, religion and specialising in very diverse specialisations. Just as

traders do not exist independently of historical, social and associational contexts that give meaning and coordination to market trade, so also must trade itself as an activity be linked to the forms of regularities that shape it. According to Hess (2004) any type of economic action must be understood as grounded in the structure of society. This structure of society may indeed include networks of actors but also how such networks are constrained by the societal and cultural background of particular places which shape that action (James, 2005).

Markets like the Alaba-Suru are built on land provided by the state government and while traders may buy plots of lands to build stall places from the state government to build stalls on a freehold basis, the market is still largely a public property. The state government still possesses rights to regulate problems of market overcrowding, poor sanitation and illegal display of wares along public highways which may obstruct traffic and constitute nuisance to the public. Over the years, these sorts of issues have recurrently been the bone of contention between market traders and the Lagos state government, with the latter's mode of redress often in the form of massive trader clearance and market demolition (Lawal, 2004). The Oshodi, Tejuosho, Ketu and Aswani markets in Lagos, are a few examples of markets that have been partly or fully demolished since 2009 in order to redress the problem of markets and street trading in Lagos. Often these demolitions are carried out without plans to resettle evicted traders and evicted traders, in turn often continue to trade illegally elsewhere.

The role of the state in market trade is not limited to the sorts of clearance activities. Markets such as the Alaba-Suru market provide a source of revenue to the state and local government as well as other affiliated agencies. The fifty-two individual commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market require traders to pay individual registration and membership fees to establish their legitimacy to trade. In addition to these dues, each of the commodity associations on behalf of the market association also collects a market toll of ₦200.00 (£0.80) from each trader (Field notes, 2010). The market association gives part of those dues as revenue to the Lagos state government through the Lagos State Market Men and Women association, in which it acts as a representative of the Alaba-Suru market. The remainder of the dues are often set aside to pay the sanitation and vigilante (security) groups in the market. Olukoju's (2006) study of actors in the urban politics of Lagos state suggests that the dues collected by market associations of various markets in addition to paying the wages of security guards and cleaners engaged to get rid of waste after the mandatory sanitation exercises in the markets, "were also responsible for the payment of electricity bills and support for members in case of emergencies" (Olukoju, 2006, pg. 162).

It is important to point out that these sorts of groups maintained by the market association in the form of sanitation and security operatives are usually replicas of other forms of formalised institutions of the state. For instance, vigilantes are employed by the market association to be present in the market to deal with theft, which is usually the function of the police. As mentioned in chapter five, the police often have no established presence in the market. Therefore, criminal activities such as theft, which were often out of the jurisdiction of the dispute resolution role of the market association, were often addressed by vigilante groups employed by the market association. Nolte (2008) argues that vigilante groups that have been established within Nigeria's public and political sphere combine both the definition and provision of security provided by the state as well as a wide range of political, economic, social and moral concerns related to the protection of communities. Sanitation groups constituted by the market association ensure (at least in principle) that the public walkways in the market are cleared of rubbish on the mandatory sanitation exercise carried out in the market every Thursday. These sorts of sanitation bodies are pitted against such state constituted authorities as the Lagos State Waste management authority (LAWMA), which is formally entrusted with the task of collecting rubbish by the state government from the market as part of its official responsibility (Field notes, 2010).

Aside from sanitation and vigilante groups, traders whose stalls were located closest to the market entrance and closest to the main expressway bordering the market also paid a levy of ₦200.00 (£0.80) daily directly to officials of the Lagos State management transport authority (LASTMA). It was suggested by traders that the officials of LASTMA were paid these dues so that the traders' wares that were (illegally) displayed along the pedestrian walkways and close to the expressway were not confiscated (Field notes, 2010). Stalls in the markets were also taxed by the Ajeromi-Ifelodun local government officials, since the market was located within its administrative area. Even when traders owned the stalls from which they conducted businesses, it was mandatory that they paid commercial tax rates to the local government on a monthly basis. Failure to pay any of these aforementioned bodies the dues demanded often resulted in the confiscation of the trader's goods and sealing off the stall concerned, preventing the trader concerned from trading until such payments were settled. Porter et al. (2010) have argued quite convincingly that local government revenue tends to be heavily dependent on marketplace trade particularly as there is an absence of other forms of taxable businesses: however such funds tend to be employed for exploitative purposes instead of improving market infrastructure.

As in one example where local government mismanagement of stalls is mismanaged, Porter et al. (2010) demonstrate cases where the chairmen of local governments reallocate stalls to friends and allies. In another case Olukoju (2006) has presented the example in the Agege main market in Lagos where new stalls were priced at ₦350,000.00 (£1,400.00) for a single shop space while the project was under construction, a price that the market association considered prohibitive and exploitative and instead insisted no more than ₦120,000.00 to 130,000.00 (£480.00-520.00) per shop and ₦20,000.00 to 30,000.00 (£80.00-120) per stall, depending on their size. Olukoju notes that through the influence of the chairman of the Agege local government association and with the support of the market association that the stalls were sold on the basis of a monthly payment of only ₦120.00 (£0.48) per shop and ₦80.00 (£0.32) per stall. The association also ensured that the shops were bought by genuine bidders and not speculators who would acquire the stalls only to resell them at a huge profit. Where the genuine owner wanted to sublet the shop or stall, the association insisted that only moderate rates were charged (Olukoju, 2006).

These discussions demonstrate the possibilities and limits of external interference and intervention in the affairs of the market and the ways it is governed. The discussions highlighting the relations between traders, market associations as well as the local and state government provide a glimpse into the agencies influencing trade in the Alaba- Suru market. I want to understand, using Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality, how the host of potential agencies and institutions governing the operation of trade in the Alaba-Suru market and elsewhere shape the conduct of happenings in the market and its traders. Addressing market trade as part of an analysis of governmentality through which various practices are produced in social, cultural as well as political spheres, I move to consider how processes taking shape outside of the market shape the activities within it. To do this I focus on the case of the transportation of perishable commodities and the occurrence of demolitions of the market as part of one urban development initiative in Lagos.

In the first of these discussions, I focus on how the transportation of food commodities to be traded in the market plays a pivotal role in defining the trader's livelihood. Specifically highlighting issues relating to bribes, poor roads and policy regulations influencing the transport of food products in Lagos, I show that transport processes as one form of agency not operating within the territory of the market, have significant implications for the sustenance of market trade. More importantly, focusing on the governmentality literature it is argued that the technologies of self, in the form of the politics of struggle and protest of traders are limited and constrained by the weak and fragmentary system of the government of the state in this system of transport of

food products. The discussion shows that traders' pricing strategies, livelihoods, customer sustainability and profit regimes are put at risk by poor roads, tolls at multiple checkpoints and all forms of regulations that are permitted by the system of the state and its domineering influence on regulating transportation.

In the next set of discussions I go on to focus on the Lagos mega city project, a specific urban regeneration project in Lagos with its implications for trade in the Alaba-Suru market. The aim of this second discussion is to show how the attempts by the Lagos state government through its policy to reinvent the city of Lagos comes to command a significant threat to the very basis of the survival of the Alaba-Suru market. I suggest that the intention to address uncontrolled development of markets which encroach on all available land, roads and walkways may be disguised in programmes of clearance and demolitions aimed at managing the urban environment in the name of public interest. However such attempts at market clearance pose a massive challenge to traders, who must come to terms with the effects of such demolitions on displaying wares, profit making, stall ownership and survival of market trade.

7.3 The transport network of food supply to markets in Lagos

As an urban daily market, transportation of goods, services and persons is of vital importance to the survival of the Alaba-Suru market. Goods that come to the Alaba-Suru market come from a diverse range of sources. Perishable goods such as cattle, fruits, tomatoes, plantain, and kola nut come from states in Northern Nigeria and as far as neighbouring West African countries like Benin and Togo. Other perishable items as vegetables (bitter leaf, spinach, ugu) and live poultry are sourced from local farms in the vicinity of the market. Frozen food items such as turkey, chicken and fish are sourced from local cold storage facilities in Ajegunle where the market is located. Yam, beans, potatoes, pepper, carrots, onions, and groundnuts and other goods come from states such as Benue, Niger and Nasarawa in Northern Nigeria through lengthy road trips to Lagos that can accumulate into days (Field notes, 2010).

Available data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), National Population Commission (NPC) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), show that the manufacturing sector accounted for only 4% of Nigeria's GDP between 2003 and 2007 (FSDH, 2008). Products in Lagos markets such as earrings, matchsticks, erasers, textiles, alcoholic drinks, fruit juices, baking ingredients, cosmetics, men and women's clothes are imported. Many come through ports such as the Tin Can

Island port in Lagos from Asia (electronics and clothes) and Europe (manufactured items). A few locally manufactured items such as food seasonings, plastic products and household cleaning products are sourced locally from the few local factories in the handful of industrial estates within Lagos. I will focus the discussion in this section of the chapter on the transportation of perishable products sourced from other parts of Nigeria, as they journey to Lagos markets, Alaba-Suru market included. While market trading itself comprises a dominant proportion of women, freight forwarding, truck offloading, driving, the police and revenue collectors and load carrying are activities in the almost exclusive preserve of men (ARIA, 2010). During the research, it was observed that most of the transporters who drove the large food trucks that brought most food to Lagos were mainly men from the Hausa dominated part of Northern Nigeria, who operated under the umbrella body of the Arewa Food Merchants (see Figure 7.1).



Figure 7.1 Trucks of onions being offloaded at the Mile 12 Market in Lagos (Photograph Abiodun Omotoso, 2010)

Elsewhere, in this thesis in chapter two, I have mentioned that commodities associated with long distance trade have historically been the domain and preserve of men due to the combined processes of colonial policy regarding export crops and local cultures. In addition to these processes, the risk factors often associated with the difficulties in long distance transportation of the goods that come to Lagos, often prevent the involvement of women in transportation activities.

Overa has argued that the information exchanged using mobile phones could go a long way in enabling traders to calculate demand, supply and prices more accurately. Added to this advantage the issues that arise from poorly maintained, cumbersome and time consuming journeys and particularly for female traders, the problems of spending long times away from their businesses and homes are greatly reduced with the advancement and spread of mobile telephones (Overa, 2006). Clark (1994) in her observation of transport activities in the Kumasi market in Ghana notes that particularly regarding the skills of driving, that the lengthy apprenticeships that bestow the driver with the skill of driving are rarely crossed by gender lines, and this effectively bars traders from bypassing drivers to operate in the transport sector. Clark (1994) goes on to note that the few traders who had non-commercial relations with drivers, whether as lovers, husbands or childhood friends, possessed a greater advantage in manipulating favourable supply networks to their favour. In Porter (2011) it is suggested that the actual means of transport by motorcycles and bicycles is male dominated in Sub-Saharan Africa, as often women may be limited resources to own and purchase transport equipment. The study also further notes that the association with women's mobility and improved access to intermediate means of transport is often correlated with traits of promiscuity, hence attaching a stigma that might curtail women's mobility and reinforce socio-political contexts that reduce women and young girl's mobility potential.

The female traders in the Alaba-Suru market I interviewed, whose supplies involved long distance trade like in kola nut and palm oil, which come from western and eastern Nigeria respectively, expressed concern that incidents of long periods away from families, reports of rape, theft and extortion often largely discouraged them from taking part in long distance journeys. Instead, many preferred to patronise distributors at the larger wholesale markets as Mile 12, Balogun and Ojora, despite the knowledge intermediaries' fees may be passed on in the form of inflated prices for goods (Field notes, 2010). Traders made the trips to and from these supply markets by public transport. Most traders teamed up with two or three other traders in the same commodity association to pay visits to suppliers at markets like the Mile12 market. At these markets, these groups of traders could make bulk purchases and rent trucks together to transport their goods to Alaba-Suru market. These trucks however carry only freight goods while traders still utilised the privately run public transport buses to get to the market.

On average Alaba-Suru market traders travelled for up to four hours back and forth from these markets to get supplies and return to make sales, thrice a week on the average. As stall sizes are small, permitting limited storage, recurrent visits to

suppliers are common among most traders. When daily journey times to suppliers are taken into consideration, traders trading hours seem greatly reduced. The average travelling times to suppliers in the wholesale markets of Mile 12 market or Balogun market could take as long as three to four hours (Field notes, 2010). Part of the explanation for this extended travel time lay in the fact that there was significant over reliance on road transport to transport both goods and commuters. Traffic jams and poorly maintained roads ridden with potholes, which are a normal occurrence in Lagos, lengthen travel times. This also means that a considerable time of the trader's day is spent away from the market in order to source for supplies. Extended travel and journey times could often lead a to a reduction in the number of hours the trader could spend soliciting for customers and making sales. Clark (1994) has suggested that the daily presence of the trader for long hours at the peak hour of sale was crucial as it helped the trader to purchase goods at the lowest prices, cultivate a steady clientele and justify the rents of selling space. The ability to manage time appropriately is an essential element that traders need to manage and these difficulties associated with intra-state transport routes could be detrimental to the survival of the business of trade.

Journeys that involved inter-state travel out of Lagos did not fare better. Poor road networks, crime, bribes to custom and police officials, poor parking and offloading facilities, characterise the road journeys that food trucks undertake in order to bring foodstuffs from other parts of Nigeria to Lagos. All of these activities associated with long distance travel significantly hamper and restrict traders' commercial activities in many ways, even if they do not directly take part in the transportation process. Market traders are often passed on the costs that accrue to truck drivers from problems that may occur at any point along the transport network with potential issues for reduced profits. These issues could range from both illegal and legal checkpoints, fuel hikes, armed robbery attacks, accidents and other hardships that accompany the difficult journeys of goods to Lagos markets.

Beef marketing provides an illustrative example. Cows are transported to come to Lagos from as far as African countries like Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan and these journeys on average, can take anywhere from between six to nine months. It is estimated that 7,000 cows are slaughtered in Lagos daily, making it one of the largest destination for cattle in West Africa. Recent figures from the Amalgamated Foodstuff and Cattle Dealers Associations Of Nigeria (the national body that represents most traders that deal in edible food items in all the markets in Nigeria) shows that at least ₦5.5billion (approximately £24 million) is lost in revenue to bribes, for transporting cattle products to Lagos alone (Basseyy, 2010).

Following up on this point, a recent newspaper article on the problem of market trading in Lagos suggested that an estimated ₦70,000.00 (£280.00) is required by truck drivers to settle social miscreants, corrupt police officials and revenue collectors (Adepegba, 2010). These are in addition to legitimate dues that are required to be paid by truck drivers in bringing food materials to Lagos. Evidence from the secondary data collected in the course of this research suggested that some truck drivers encountered as many as twenty police checkpoints, where payments estimated at a minimum of ₦2000.00 (£8.00) per trailer were required before being allowed to offload goods in Lagos. Table 7.1 is an estimate of what yam suppliers pay per truck as bribes en route to Lagos from the other states of Nigeria. Each trailer bringing yams to Lagos from the northern part of Nigeria is faced with these fines and levies on a single journey alone.

Table 7.1 An overview of bribes yam suppliers pay per truck into Lagos on selected routes

| Route trucks pass en route to Lagos | Amount | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| | Naira (₦) | GB Pounds (£) |
| Kogi State | 3,500.00 | 14.00 |
| Enugu and Anambra State | 3,000.00 | 12.00 |
| Delta and Edo State | 5,000.00 | 20.00 |
| Ondo State | 3,000.00 | 12.00 |
| Ogun State (in 5 Places) | 10,000.00 | 40.00 |
| Lagos State (in 10 places) | 20,000.00 | 80.00 |
| Total | 44,500.00 | 178.00 |

Source: Mile 12 market association (Field notes, April 2010).

Table 7.1 shows that in Lagos alone, there is an increase in fares demanded from food trucks by a variety of state governments, federal government, local and private collecting agencies, who demand tolls before commercial trucks could enter the state. There are ten collecting agents who demand dues from trailers, including but not limited to some I mention. There is the Isheri Ministry of Agriculture who collect ₦1000.00 (£4.00) per truck. There are private companies such as Amori enterprises who collect a levy of ₦1000.00 in their capacity as a subsidiary of the federal ministry of transportation and Omo A Global ventures, another private company which collects ₦1000 for working with federal ministry of works and housing. There are also neighbouring states represented by officials at the Lagos state border who collect dues on behalf of their states. These are the Ogun state ministry of environment which collects ₦1000.00, the bureau of transportation, Ogun State which collects another ₦500.00 and Ifo Local Government Area in Ogun state which also collects ₦1000.00. The Lagos state government itself collects a Lagos state Tax of ₦1000.00, the ministry of transportation, Lagos State collects ₦500.00

(£2.00), while the Lagos ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative collects ₦1000.00. These dues are often prompted as a means of generating all forms of revenue to help improve borders, roads and to augment much needed internal state revenue. Such a myriad of institutions, drawing on the federal, state, local and private powers and all working at the level of the state for transport regulation of food trucks alone, introduces chaos, complexity and unnecessary bottlenecks to the transportation of goods long before they reach any market.

Although traders may not be directly involved in the transportation of goods, it is estimated that they are likely to pay over 70% of what is supposed to be potential profit even before goods reach the markets as Alaba-Suru (Adepegba, 2010). In addition to these costs that come with transporting food commodities, Lagos state laws prohibiting the movement of food trucks at key times also pose some issues. The Lagos state government prohibits trailers and big Lorries from plying the roads of Lagos between 6am and 12pm daily. Trailers and trucks violating the curfew risk having the Lagos state traffic management authority (LASTMA) seize their vehicles and have it released only upon the payment of a further ₦50,000.00 (£200.00). In many cases, trailers have been known to be deliberately delayed so that such penalties are levied on purpose. When added to the dues already mentioned in table 7.1, each truck stood the risk of paying on average ₦94,500.00 (£362.00) per journey to deliver food supplies to Lagos markets. Added to potential expenses traders incur through these hikes and numerous levies, delays in the transportation of perishable products could compromise freshness, causing decay and valuable merchandise to rot and hence accrue as losses to the traders (Field notes, 2010). In the case of perishable food items, many trucks that could not get to Lagos before 6am, risked losing their supplies to rot and decay. Many truckers often paid off these large extortionist fees instead of risking huge losses running into millions of naira resulting from spoilage for the trader.

These forms of multiple regulations caused severe food scarcities in Lagos in April 2010, when the Hausa drivers in the association of the Arewa Food merchants embarked on strikes to protest these unfair practices. This action led to the almost total disappearance of foodstuffs from most of the markets in Lagos (Adepegba, 2010). It was noted that some traders in Alaba-Suru market had to sometimes travel as far as to neighbouring countries as Cotonou in Benin Republic to get food products such as tomatoes and onions to sell. Many traders who had paid for products that were sitting in the striking trucks made huge losses, as most perishable items were rotten by the time the strikes were called off. Some traders had no items to sell and had no earnings during the period of the food strikes (Field notes, 2010).

Issues like transportation constraints are only a part of the many possible links that can be drawn upon in understanding the variety issues that may complicate and come into the picture of how everyday market activities are conducted. In the next section of I will focus on another the urban development policy linked to the Lagos Mega city project.

7.4 The Lagos Mega city project and the politics of market demolition

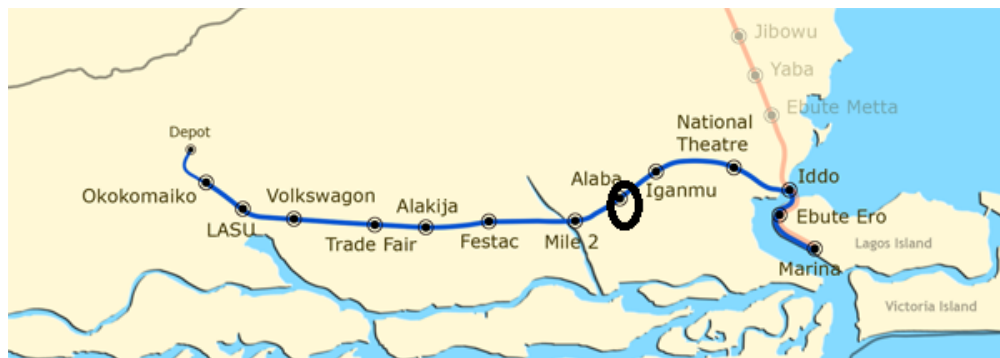
In response to the general problems of the decaying infrastructure of Lagos metropolis in general, in 2003, the state administration of Lagos began a drive to reinvent and transform Lagos. Under what it captioned the Lagos Mega city project the aim of the project is to transform Lagos into the “New city on the Atlantic”. Upon completion, the project should improve the provision of electricity, security, develop the city’s crumbling infrastructure and improve citizen participation by the year 2015. Key projects upon completion of the Lagos mega city project would include the construction of a light rail system, the construction of a new international airport and the development of reclaimed land from the Atlantic Ocean to be called the Eko Atlantic city(Lagos, 2004).

The blue rail line project in particular, is meant to address the existing infrastructure of Lagos by being the city’s first light rail mass transit mechanism, as the city of Lagos does not have a functional rail system presently. The rail project, it is hoped, would work effectively towards reducing the problematic transport problems of the city. It is to extend from Okokomaiko in the west of Lagos, to the Lagos Marina (see Figure 7.2). As part of its initiative to make the light rail project a success, the Lagos State government is undertaking the expansion of the Lagos-Badagry along which the Alaba-Suru market is located, to a ten-lane expressway. The expansion of the expressway will see the inclusion of light rail tracks and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor to carry an estimated 1.4 million passengers daily (LAMATA., 2010). To make room for the light rail system in the city, the construction of the blue rail line has led to the demolition of existing settlements along the Lagos-Badagry expressway, which is the main route of this proposed rail link. Part of that demolition has affected a substantial portion of the Alaba-Suru market.

Much of the frontage of the Alaba-Suru market which I described in chapter two during the demolition exercise that began in January 2010 and continued up till the middle of May 2010 was demolished to accommodate this new multilane expressway. Together an estimated 6,000 Alaba-Suru traders, representing almost



(a) Artist impression of the blue line rail when complete



(b) map of proposed route of the blue line showing Alaba-Suru market (Alaba)

Figure 7.2 The Lagos blue line project (Courtesy, Google images)

half of the market's population, were affected by the demolition exercise that had taken place since the construction of the ten-lane highway by the Lagos state government began. The affected market traders continued to manage whatever space they could find at the frontage of the market, in the hope that some sort of relocation relief would come at some point from the Lagos State government. Many traders in the Alaba-Suru market still came to the market daily because they had nowhere to go and assemble daily to eke out a living and therefore utilised the small space cleared of stalls to erect make shift umbrella stands to continue with trade (see Figure 7.3).

One trader I spoke to who managed a small table stand where she sold groundnut, noted that there was no prior warning of the demolitions and as a result, she did not have enough time to pack up her items, before they were crushed by the bulldozers. Another provision trader noted that a woman who sold gari next to her stall who had lost her goods in the wake of the demolition had died a few days later out of shock for her loss (Field notes, 2010). Another bookshop owner, who had two stalls in the



Figure 7.3 Displaced traders at the Alaba-Suru market sheltering in makeshift stands (Photograph Faith Ikioda, May, 2010)

Alaba-Suru market, lost an entire stall to the demolition. He had only just recently purchased the demolished stall at the site of the market entrance to make his sales more attractive to customers. His second stall, which was located in the inner parts of the market, was cumbersome to get to. Sales had really boomed given the dual location of his business and even two more sales girls had been employed because of the pace of business. When the demolition occurred, the most valuable stall was affected and even though his second stall did not get involved in the demolition, his sales plummeted given the hidden nature of his other second stall, and he cut down substantially on his employees as well.

Aunty Eli, one of the provision traders, had a total of fifteen stalls and lost thirteen of these to the demolition exercise in the wake of the construction of this highway. A significant amount of these rents she accrued from the additional stalls were crucial for supporting income from her provision trade, helping to care for her ill husband and for the care of her four children. By not compensating traders' loss of stalls, potential revenue and profits that could be ploughed back into businesses by traders like Aunty Eli who relied on other stall rents to support their income, were left at a loss as to how to cope.

What is also noted in all of these stories is that traders responded differently to

these moves to seemingly eradicate their livelihoods. The demolition of the market during the period of the research provided a good opportunity to verify the extent of traders' response to how economic and political strains occurring from outside the market, affected their business and interaction possibilities. The demolition showed how Alaba-Suru traders could quickly overcome obstructions to their livelihood and quickly resume their original trading relations albeit with severe adjustments. While the demolition of part of the Alaba Suru market meant that the physical space within which traders coordinated economic activity was curtailed, with the possibility of potential conflict to emerge, there were no disputes or conflicts around space encroachment witnessed during the study. It could be argued that traders required and depended on the relative calm of market peace in order to pursue their own fragile livelihoods. Hence, it would be to the disbenefit of traders to instil an environment ridden with conflict, given the lack of alternatives available to relocate elsewhere.

Despite the resilience of traders to withstand and adopt various networking strategies to cope with demands of disruptive practices like demolitions, it is important to balance this argument against questions around the uncertainty of marketplaces. Demolition activities contract the extent of market possibilities and practices as clearance operations reduce the existing spatial extent of the market which in turn has a ripple effect in shrinking stall ownerships, the spaces that are available to display goods, profits, and scale of operation. Like Aunty Eli who resorted to the use of an umbrella stand to trade, the move from a stall to an open space limits, and greatly makes problematic, an extensive display range and reduces room to store goods. Furthermore, away from the sheltered confines of a stall, these traders such as Aunty Eli had to move their wares in the event of rain and bore harsh weather conditions of extreme heat in the open.

Added to these problems, customer patronage became also significantly hampered as recurrent demolitions continually altered the location of traders. This meant that customers who often relied on specific positions along commodity lines to patronise established traders, could not often make out where a traders shop was, given the constant changing scene of the market. In many cases, certain customers became discouraged from visiting the market and went to alternative markets, as the demolition exercises were quite disruptive and chaotic to normal shopping practices. Furthermore, because locations tended to clash with specialisation by commodity, gender and ethnicity, the demolition activities appeared to have affected mostly female traders selling fruits, frozen items of poultry, provision and many second hand clothes traders located close to the market frontage. In the next set of discussions,

I discuss the two case studies and their implications for understanding trade as a product of governmentality as practice.

7.5 Governmentality as practice in the Alaba-Suru market

“Governmentality stands for the activity of the government which rationalises its existence through the phenomenon of the state and other forms of sovereign power modified in the course of history and delegated through the variety of institutions and mechanisms” (Fimyar, 2008, pg. 7).

In this section, I want to focus on the implications of constituting practice at the levels like those I have deliberated on in the case of transportation and urban development, as part of discussion of practices of governmentality. The notion of governmentality recognises the relations between the exercise of the government of politics and the government of the self in shaping the conduct of practice (Fimyar, 2008). Government is however not intended to be a synonym for the state but expresses the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Foucault, 1982), expressed not solely in the politics of the state but also including the self and a variety of other regulatory agencies including the state. Foucault refers to the government of politics as technologies of power while the government of self operates through the technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). Technologies of the self designate the strategies by which individuals display their expertise. This exhibition of expertise allows for the self-regulation of individuals by employing mechanisms of self-development to “allay the anxieties generated when the actuality of life fails to live up to its image” (Rose, 1999, pg. 88). Thus if the state in this regards as I have argued through various means make traders’ lives difficult, traders can indeed become an agency in steering their affairs in the direction they hope to proceed.

On the other hand, in the technologies of power, the state is not necessarily the dominant factor in governmentality. Consequently, the focus on governmentality is a juxtaposition of the mentalities of self-government by individuals and groups and the manifestations of other forms of possible agency that produce governable conduct. I consider in this section of the chapter what such a designation implies for shaping practices by focusing on the discussion of the transportation of perishable commodities and the occurrence of demolitions of the market as part of the urban development initiative in Lagos.

A central matter of reflecting on transportation and market clearances as part of

urban development initiatives in Lagos is that in both processes, the sustainability of the market and the livelihood of market traders are within a strict remit of the power of the state. The Lagos state government can arbitrarily demolish the market, promulgate laws that restrict the transportation of commodities and may feign ignorance to the difficulties encountered by traders along the city's transport network. Furthermore, the state is not simply some overarching presence in this transport network but is itself fragmented among variants of the federal, state, local government and private enterprises representing its interests and competing to define levies and taxes and rites of passage of food supplies. In the example of laws banning trucks from moving at particular times of the day, which are eased in the event of the payment of bribes by truck drivers, it can be interpreted that the role of the government of the state is not compromised or seconded. Truckers and traders have no choice but to comply and work within the limits of the state, even if that means paying bribes to state officials in order to ply their trade. It is apparent that the role of the state in both instances could indeed lead to a cessation or severe constraints on market trade.

Lemke (2007) notes that the grounding of the state in a network of governmental practices does not mean that the state is a secondary object in contemporary society, and in these examples, the significant role of the state as a central governing role in conducting trade is apparent. Quite contrary to Foucault's neoliberal notion of governmentality where there is some form of implicit understanding of freedom that comes from the possibility that power is decentred and where the market mechanism may dominate the state, what we have in the case of regulating market trade is a particularly repressive form of the state, which possesses some very strong and overarching influence on trade. This admission however does not suggest that governmentality as practice is limited in the sense of this discussion per se, but it is more of an indication that Foucault's argument is focused on contexts in Western Europe and Anglo-American states as part of a struggle for freedom. Sigley (2006) notes until recently that most studies of governmentality neglected non-western and non-liberal contexts.

Tikly (2003) has however suggested that there is a kind of governmentality that may be used to describe the repressive destruction and curtailment, which occurs between the state and the self in post-colonial economies, of the kind I have described between market traders and the transport system and redevelopment projects in the city of Lagos. Focusing on what she terms governmentality-in-the-making as opposed to the governmentality that Foucault adjudges occurs in liberal states, the former is defined as "the form of rationality that reinforces the division between the governors and the

governed and the domination of one group over the other” (Tikly, 2003, pg. 163). Hence, whether it is traders bribing officials when transporting goods, reduction of trading hours due to traffic and poorly maintained roads, or struggling for trading spots in what remains of a demolished market which is now the site for a potential road, the politics of governmentality-in-the making plays itself out with traders under the regimes of the state.

Even when transporters protested for traders’ rights indirectly against the state’s barriers to food supply noted in the case of food strikes described above, it was traders who eventually suffered from such protests because their source of livelihood was put at risk. The case of striking, although an extreme form of protest by truckers to challenge the oppressive regimes which were aimed at protecting both truckers and traders produced, may be seen as a counterproductive action. The strikes were more problematic for traders who did not have any food products to sell to sustain their livelihoods. Appadurai (2001) has referred to such a feature as a symptom of counter governmentality which essentially is a system that is displayed in the presence of conflicting agendas. In this case traders, the state and all sorts of manifestations of the latter have turned on themselves with deep implications for the long term sustainability of trade. Dean (1999) has suggested the term authoritarian governmentality to describe such a situation where all other forms of government must refer to the state. This results in more and more control of practices coming under the control of the state. This in many ways does describe the scenario where both the state and its various agencies continue to be a centrally deciding factor in constraining the activities of market trade.

In relation to the processes of counter-governmentality and authoritarian governmentality illustrated by the state’s role in regulating transportation and directing urban redevelopment projects, focusing on governmentality practice is a useful way to expand how any practice unfolds within a much broader context. Watts (2003) illustrates that governmentality is an expansive way of thinking, suggesting that the multiplicity of authorities and agencies within and outside of the state open up not only various modes of regulation but also a variety of spatial levels shaping the conduct of practice. Huxley (2007) takes on this spatial notion of governmentality as well and points out that there are ways that space and environment can be seen as ordered and visible rationalities of government. Huxley’s concern is how to prioritise space at the centre of understanding the spatial rationalities of government and hence reveal how practices inhabit such spaces.

It is the case that practices are indeed constituted by the places, spaces, and material

contexts where they are performed and it is in such places, like the market, that links to other spatial settings, outcomes, and influences of government strategies are instantiated (see Jones and Murphy, 2011). Yet, the problem with such a focus on space as the focus of governmental practices is that there is the likelihood of a confrontation with a taken for granted notion that the practices of governmentality are bounded, locatable and stable. Such an admission to rigidity may suppress the connectedness, instability and always linked nature of practices that has been at the centre of stressing the relational and networked character of practice in this thesis so far. While spaces as the container of governmental practices may be useful, such an agenda may over sensationalise the reality in the micro-scale, limiting the way such space variously embodies the influence of multiple spatialities. Huxley (2007) goes on to admit in her closing remarks that:

“There is further potential for an ‘analytics of government’ to explore the multiple, taken-for-granted spatial presuppositions that inform technologies and practices of regulation and subjectification” (Huxley, 2007, pg. 199).

Rose (1999) has been more active by not essentialising space in considering governmental practice by directing her attention to studying how the spatialisation of government and governable spaces necessitates observing practices produced at differing scales. In this way, by avoiding considering a sort of container where governmental practice take shape, the Alaba-Suru market can be considered at a crossroads between urban development initiatives, traders self determinations to trade, a range of internal market organisations of all kinds and the state manifested in a variety of agencies, all occurring at a variety of scales. By considering governmentality within the politics of scale (Smith, 1993), it becomes possible to chart the relations between practice and the variety of agencies of government of trade with the intention to understand “the agency and resistance of the individuals that may be the target of government, capitalist, nationalist or communal regimes, but are never wholly constituted by them” (Legg, 2007, pg. 282). Therefore, casting governmentality as manifesting practices through a discussion of scale is suggestive that the organised and often mundane practices of market traders are not wholly subsumed by the domineering tendencies of the state.

By reflecting on governmentality within the politics of scale it becomes possible, instead of focusing so much on the negative influence of the power of the state to coerce and force traders to comply with its conduct, to ground the practices of various governments of conduct at different scales which permits the agency of enablement to be observed (see Faulconbridge and Hall, 2009). Whether it is

in bargaining or in soliciting for customers, or attending a commodity association meeting or exhibiting the tacit tendencies traders derive from certain ethnic, religious or gender disposition, traders still actively adapt, contest and negotiate the effects on their livelihoods in different ways and at different scales in relation to the state's fragmentary but dominant rule. Therefore, as I continue with this discussion, while acknowledging the role of the state in regulating in large part the conduct of market trade, I do not wholly accept that traders are in constant subjection to some sort of state regulation, and thereby simply accept certain practices as given in a hierarchical top-down approach.

It is in that light that by employing the scale literature in human geography that I intend to highlight how governmentality (although in the making) provides a broader perspective on practice as something that is not hierarchically ordered but relational (Nielsen and Simonsen, 2003). In the remainder of this chapter, I attempt to untangle how the government of market trade in this market entangled around groups of traders, commodity association, market associations, state-level market associations, various ethnic and religious groupings allow practice to emerge relationally.

7.6 The multiple scales of market trade

In admitting that transportation and the demolition of the market have a role to play in defining what transpires in the day to day life of the traders, these features are added to the already diverse boundary, cross-communal practices of non-participation and networks of practice that I have mentioned, of which Alaba-Suru market traders are part. They include practices that occur because and through commodity associations, religions, gender, ethnicity, various interactions between traders, customers and limits set by the perishability, durability, storability of commodities on sale by traders. Combining these analytical frameworks together to define how trading is made meaningful as an activity in the market does not deny either the individual trader's contributions, different networks, institutionalised or governmental practice in defining what practice is. Rather it speaks to the multiple interpretations of practices that capture the institutional and the everyday dimensions of trade practices, occurring at different scales of interaction that conflict, compensate or reinforce each other to define what traders in the Alaba-Suru market practise.

Barnes (2006) has suggested that there is a healthy competition when multiple and opposing ideas compete for meaning, because instead of preventing conversations across different approaches, there is a benefit of embracing the addition of different perspectives. As a result, (McDowell, 2008) rightly asserts that we can begin to think

of:

“How to hold together questions about multiple systems of regulation at different spatial scales, the circumstances of an industry/workplace at a particular time while also exploring daily social relations in the workplace, and the ways in which national and local cultures and ideologies and beliefs about gender/ethnicity/religion etc produce active, acting and differentiated subjects in particular places” (McDowell, 2008, pg. 496).

While I acknowledge that market traders’ practices are materialised in the market because of forces constituted across varying scales, human geographers like Marston (2000) suggest that considering scalar notion plays down notions of categorisation and instead implies an examination of socially constructed and fluid contingent acts. All forms of government in and out of the market are only a way of framing analysis and grasping conceptions of reality (Delaney and Leitner, 1997). While not denying the efficacy of each of these categories in effecting a particular account of practice of market trade, the contemporary scale debate in human geography aims to prevent how fixed givens come to be seen as things that have to be dealt with categorically as giving cause and effect to a particular set of practices (see Howitt, 1998). Furthermore categorising and grouping multifaceted processes disrupts the possibility of scales becoming unreflexively fixed, thereby leading to analytical confusion in substituting shorthand for complex processes and arguments (Agnew, 1993).

An illustrative case in point recalls the discussions in chapter five, where I suggested that smuggling practices were sustained by relations of non-participation among second hand good traders. In the light of discussions on governmentality, it could be added to that explanation that a significant reason smuggling practices existed in the first place was because of a federal government legislation that designates second hand goods as contraband items in Nigeria. Since the position of second hand good traders in this broad system is neither static nor passive, I mentioned how second hand goods traders such as Ogbonna worked around the regulations in order to continue to trade. In this particular event, even within the government of the state apparatus we are presented with a clash within the same agency. Police and customs officials, as one facet of the state mechanism, in full knowledge of rules and regulations, permit smuggling practices to continue by accepting bribes from second hand goods traders. Incidents where custom and duties officials and the police go into markets as the Alaba-Suru markets to seize second hand good items on sale are almost unheard of. While customers’ continued patronage of such goods

to some extent encourages the second hand goods trade to thrive and in some ways may further encourage the practice of smuggling.

This sort of failure to only partially exercise regulation while allowing rules to be bent depending on who it favours, allows the practice of smuggling to be transformed and contested in various ways. On one level the smuggling of second hand goods is a profession for the trader but a criminal act in the sight of the state and its agencies. Traders can attempt to completely evade the state where possible or go on to pay bribes to facilitate their passage at the borders. Traders who do not pay customs officials bribes risk having goods seized and being made to pay fines or even face imprisonment. This process of bribing however does not mean that second hand goods are no longer smuggled. Rather, the meaningfulness of smuggling is suppressed and made variable in relation to the inefficiency of the state, initiated elsewhere by laws of prohibition, the resilience of the second hand good trader and the patronising customer.

Hence a practice such as smuggling comes to be as diverse as the processes with which it can be associated. If we only focus on the exchanges that occur between a second hand good trader and a customer in a bargaining interaction in the market as the central focus of practice, it is possible to lose sight of the diversity of processes operating at different points involving the trade in uncertainties, the risks associated with border routes and bribes, that are all associated with smuggling such second hand goods to the Alaba-Suru market. It can be further argued that no single variable, whether it is the trader, the rules banning second hand items by the state, the inefficiency of border control officials or the customer buying second hand clothes in the market, actively captures in its entirety the practice of smuggling. This same analogy could be extended to a variety of other processes operating in this market, but within this example, I have attempted to at least problematise the complexity of allowing practice to emerge as an occurrence that has multiple origins and agencies attached to it.

It goes without saying that oversimplifying the complex scaling of practice within a singular factor such as a community of practice, does not do justice to the wide ranging set of practices that I have come to explain as bringing about and sustaining the trader in this market. It is apparent that any rigid categorisation of what sustains the complex livelihoods of Alaba-Suru traders into something as a community of practice may result in embracing a conceptual baggage over something that is analytically imprecise Moore (2008). Rather than advancing or delineating communities of practice, it may be more appropriate to see practice as

a process that is shifting not as a category defined in any one community. Even seemingly defined entities such as commodity associations and praise worship events occur only at particular times of the week and day respectively and once their purpose is fulfilled traders disperse from such gatherings to resume soliciting for and bargaining with customers amongst other possibilities. The point is that no practice remains or prolongs itself beyond its usefulness and the accompanying change in spatio-temporal manifestation further causes change and reallocation of practice. (Swyngedouw, 2004, pg. 133) therefore stresses that scalar structures do not remain “untouched but rather they are continuously shuffled about like playing cards, merely reordering their variable relations”.

It is however worth noting that collapsing the spatial extent (the market), social and cultural networks (gender and ethnicity) the political (state practices) and interactive moments of trade (various networks of practice) makes it difficult to tie the materialisation of any set of the trader’s practices to anything. For if everything is connected to one another and practices are continually remade and dispersed as their usefulness changes, then as Harvey (1996) reminds us:

“The reduction of everything to fluxes and flows, and the consequent emphasis upon the transitoriness of all forms and positions has its limits and says nothing about nothing” (Harvey, 1996, pg. 7).

Like Harvey, other geographers have questioned how a relational concept of practice can inform cause and effect (Sunley, 2008). In the next chapter, which provides a conclusion to this thesis I grapple with how relational concepts of practice (while accepting the challenge they pose to rigid concepts as the community of practice) as flows and dynamic processes, may be refined more coherently as a useful and power analytic tool for understanding phenomenon.

7.7 Conclusion

Markets like the Alaba-Suru market serve as a vital distribution channel for the goods which pour through the city of Lagos, acting as a major source of employment for market traders and providing a revenue base for the state government. Yet, market traders work in intimidating and harsh conditions within and outside of the market in order to continue to maintain a livelihood through trade. The twin issues of transportation and government strategies aimed at urban planning were discussed as a reflection of the role of governmentality practice on influencing the perpetuation of market trade.

A critical point that the chapter sought to accentuate using these two examples was that the government of the state despite its domineering and fragmentary influence in all facets of market trade plays a crucial role in constraining and limiting traders' quest for survival. Focusing on the transportation of food supplies and the demolition of part of the Alaba-Suru market as part of its urban redevelopment initiatives, I showed how both these occurrences affected the profit margins of traders, stall losses, customer patronage and business sustainability. These discussions confirmed the need to combine an understanding of traders within the marketplace system with happenings elsewhere in order to understand what facilitates or destabilises market traders' activities.

In further framing these arguments, the chapter considered the exercise of governmentality within the politics of scale. The focus on scale was used to address how the competing agencies causing trade to manifest occur as set of relational properties that limits the whole point of a coherent and bounded community of practice. This limitation for employing a community of practice is clearly informed by the inappropriateness of containing multiple, dynamic and relational forms of practice in a sort of coherent order. The fluid nature of practice owing to a range of agencies cannot be oversimplified into something as reductionist as a community of practice. As Leitner and Miller (2007) put it:

“If one begins with the practices and power relations treated in the scale literature rather than abstract imaginaries, one finds considerably more than bordering practices. While necessarily affected by relations of inclusion and exclusion across different permeable borders, power relations, processes and capacities within bounded spaces cannot be reduced to bordering practices” (Leitner and Miller, 2007, pg. 119).

While different scales may exhibit different sort of practices and thereby transforming the order through which practices emerge, these practices are not reducible to something as simple as a community of practice is. Practice must be conceived as relational configurations that are informed by cultural practices, institutions, governmentality and other private and public narratives without necessarily over-sensationalising its essentialist possibilities.

Chapter 8

Limits to the community of practice in the Alaba-Suru Market

8.1 Introduction

In this thesis it has been argued that the advent of the terminology of the community of practice has heightened a concern for practice-oriented studies across several disciplines including geography. Studies of communities of practice have ranged from an emphasis on participation in social aspects of learning in anthropology and education (Lave and Wenger, 2000), to the flow of knowledge across inter organisational forms (Brown and Duguid, 2001; Wenger et al., 2002) and the need for a relational view of sharing tacit knowledge (Osterlund and Carlile, 2005); the latter two being examples from the business and management literature. Geographers, particularly economic geographers, have also argued that the concept of the community of practice may be ‘the basic unit of knowledge formation and organisation within firms as well as beyond their boundaries (Amin and Cohendet, 2004, pg. 138).

The thesis noted that a common thread linking these arguments was the limited context within which community of practice studies have taken shape. Fuller et al. (2005) note that one of the limitations of present work on communities of practice is that its application has only been tendered in the site of the contemporary workplace in advanced industrial society and environment. Ludden (2009) has also expressed elsewhere that there is an ignorance of how communities of practice fare in contexts where multiple practices are present. The central argument of this thesis therefore took as its agenda the task of examining the notion of a community of practice in the

context of the non-western setting of a marketplace in Lagos, Nigeria. My intention was to investigate how the heterogeneous and competitive strategies of activities of market traders in an open-air market could be described using the community of practice.

Thus by seeking to broaden the evidence of a community of practice within the context of open air market trading I aimed to explore how it would accommodate the heterogeneity and multiply situated practices of traders. Since communities of practice are reasoned as being able to bring about homogeneity in a diverse work setting (Wenger, 1998*b*), the thesis aimed to understand to what extent a community of practice helped explain the coordination of the diverse practices of self employed traders in the Alaba-Suru market in Lagos, Nigeria.

Only recently have geographers begun to consider studies of practice as a precise research agenda (Jones, 2008; Jones and Murphy, 2010; Jones, 2008). The concept of the community of practice itself has received far less attention in geography with exceptions being in the work of Amin and Cohendet (2004) and Amin and Roberts (2008). With particular reference to the extensive contribution by Amin and Roberts (2008), both authors note regarding communities of practice that:

“The spatial variations highlighted in this paper, however, force reflection on the very meaning of basic spatial categories such as ‘local’, ‘global’, ‘proximate’, ‘distant’, ‘location’ and ‘territory’ in mapping the geography of knowing in action. (Amin and Roberts, 2008, pg. 365).

Amin and Roberts (2008) went on to suggest that by problematising the varied nature of the occurrence of practice that an umbrella concept like the community of practice was unhelpful.

Like these authors, there has been intense debate particularly amongst other economic geographers on whether a community of practice ought to be defined in terms of spatial proximity or on the basis of the strength of relational ties in trans-local networks. The latter debate on relationality has however been most prolific, albeit with severe limitations proposed as to how geographers studying such communities ought to proceed. Sunley (2008) has for instance criticised how boundaries around practices may be drawn to investigate communities of practice if relational ties are to be the centre of investigation. Sunley’s critique of relational studies of practice is that such studies often seek to destabilise bounded and territorialised notion of space and instead attend to endless networks, flows and dynamic processes, which makes it impossible to draw out stable communities of practice (Sunley, 2008).

In taking into account these criticisms both from Amin and Roberts and that of Sunley, the applicability of the concept itself as well as moulding it into something of a geographical investigation applied to the case of market traders in the Alaba-Suru market, I came to the conclusion that the task of the thesis was how to first problematise practice and then figure out how it could be represented in some sort of communal entity, taking into consideration the variety of power relations and competing forces and the heterogeneity that abound in market trade. In the thesis, I deliberated to some extent what these competing forces in trade were taking note of the historical trend of trade in Nigeria, the characteristics of market traders and the peculiarities of urban daily markets as the Alaba-Suru market. The thesis also noted the role of varying forms of regulation and laws underlying the operation of the market, including the larger urban economy within which the market is placed, various cultural institutions of gender, ethnicity and religion, traders' daily routines of buying and selling, which collectively shape the manifestation of market trade. In the next section a summary of the answers to the research questions posed is presented.

8.2 Summary of Findings

8.2.1 What are the practices of market traders?

The first research question of the thesis sought to highlight the diversity and heterogeneity of activities that could be said to be the practices of Alaba-Suru traders. For analytical purposes, the first set of these practices was presented in chapter five of this thesis as boundary practices, which referred to groupings of associations in the market within which certain collective norms were observed by specific cohorts of traders. Examples included commodity associations, praise and worship groups and savings cooperatives. Another set of practices termed cross-communal practices was also used to designate groups of traders with shared cultural ideals, particularly in relation to gender or ethnic specific dispositions to trading. A third set of practices of non-participation were discussed as reflecting the individual trader's set of unique characteristics that was maintained in order to remain competitive and distinct from other traders with whom they were competing.

However in chapter six, I went on to show that broadly grouping practices as boundary, cross-communal and practices of non-participation did not necessarily recognise or capture the active, ongoing, fluid and dynamic process of practising trade. I argued that while grouping practices in this way was essential to getting some analytical grip on the extensive diversity of market traders, this categorisation

nonetheless condensed and thereby suppressed the internal diversity and processes that are continually being made, contested and reconfigured in different ways and for varying purposes in carrying out trade. Whether it was in the seemingly mundane tasks of enhancing display stands in the market, soliciting for customers, haggling with a customer or looking after another trader's stall, I came to the assertion that there was the additional need to reflect on market trading as a continuum entangled in a network of practice. This dynamic and extensive network of relationships extending from traders to customers and even suppliers and involving varying dimensions of object-oriented relations such as product prices, distances between stalls, product quality and perishability to mention a few, did not fit neatly into any sort of rigid categorisation of practice.

In chapter seven, the third of the analysis chapters I argued for the network strategy further by highlighting how market externalities such as transport networks and government regulation of demolition of markets also come to influence how trade proceeds. Under the heading of governmentality practices, I considered that market traders, the state and a host of other institutions and agencies constitute and inform the conduct of market trade at complex scales. To appreciate the practice of market traders, within boundary practices, cross-communal practice, practices of non-participation, all as part of a network of practice and explainable as a set of governmental practice is to present that traders are therefore locally governed in a marketplace as well as entangled in relational power relations in other distanced governing agencies. As such, appreciating practice requires the acceptance that it is relational, actively practised, multiscale and achieved both consciously and unconsciously.

8.2.2 Is there any evidence of a community of practice in the practices of market trade in Alaba-Suru ?

By establishing that the practices informing market trading unfolds in doings, locations and distant agencies, the second research question sought to establish how such practices in their diverse and relational forms could be evidence of or make evident the notion of a community of practice. The discussions on communities of practice in the organisation and management literature reveal that workplaces are thought to succeed because of how well norms, shared repertoires and communal resources, like routines, trust and language are constructed through communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002). From this literature, those who focus upon communities of practice are prone to situate practices or some sort of shared behaviour principally in the confines of a group. If one follows this approach,

there is some evidence that there are some market traders' practices that reflect this organisational view of a community of practice in this thesis.

For instance, I have demonstrated that the presence of commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market helped to ensure that some sort of collective shared expertise prevailed. Commodity associations could act as crucial connectors, linking otherwise diverse ethnic and interest groups of traders that abound in the Alaba-Suru market. These commodity associations were also responsible for attending to market disputes, as I have mentioned, without the need for interventions by authorities such as the police. In the most severe of cases, market associations settled disputes among members of differing commodity associations by reconciling warring parties and made sure that traders adhered to bargaining ethics, sales ethics, and a host of other regulations which prevented conflict in the first place (also see Clark, 2002). Ariyo et al. (2001) cited in Porter et al. (2005) suggest that the absence of commodity associations may be the cause of violent conflicts in certain markets in Northern Nigeria.

Another example of an activity as a potential community of practice was the exercise of groups of traders involved in praying together at regular praise worship meetings in the market which may facilitate interactions among competing traders, when they collectively pray together at noon daily in the market. Even though much praying occurs within the confines of each trader's individual stall, the communal singing and clapping and playing of musical instruments taking place at the same time, across the whole market, reflects cooperative tendencies amongst otherwise competing persons. Irrespective of the fact that markets have the potential to be conflict points, structures like commodity groups or prayer groups, ensure that appropriate boundaries and connections are made possible, which may resemble conventional communities of practice. It is useful to identify such collectivities as communities of practice because 'without identifying categories, regularities, and generalizations regarding connections in economic spaces, it is difficult to see how we will ever identify and evaluate competing interpretations of causal mechanisms and processes' (Sunley, 2008, pg. 17).

However, such essentialist views of practice that aim to define already functional groups tend to obscure rather than illuminate diffuse kinds of social activity in a wider sea of relationality (Smith, 2000), and cannot inform how such categories are changed, contested and reproduced in many other ways. Gourlay (1999) argues that communities of practice provide a tool for studying occupational dynamics, but that as a tool it need not be restricted to occupational boundaries or groups within

it because actors in that occupation are likely to be associated and linked to many possible types of relations.

Traders must acquire the goods and commodities that they sell in the market through farms, ports, warehouses and other larger wholesale markets. In this process they may enter into many forms of contractual agreements with suppliers, transporters and other traders like themselves, whether this is to arrange credits, repayments or collective transportation of goods to the market. Along these routes they may also encounter a variety of accidental as well as intentional practices that may consequently influence how the goods they sell are priced, how profit margins are set and the time available to spend in the market to trade. Traders for instance must pay transport fares, offloading fares, hire load carriers at the markets to transport goods to their stalls, and have relationships with even truck drivers. The transporting of goods to the market for instance must comply with laws of road safety, duties for moving food and other sorts of regulations that are part of a wider set of conducts influenced by a number of other multiple institutions. In the market, traders actively and continually engage in coercing customers, sorting out goods and adjusting their displays.

When the complexities of such happenings are simply glossed over for categorical distinctions, like the examples that I suggest may reflect traditional communities of practice observed in the literature, such descriptions occlude diversity, replace dynamism with static consideration and transform a term that should best be a relational construct, to erroneously correspond to a real entity of formation needing analysis. Moreover such categories are not permanent features per se. For instance, commodity associations only meet fortnightly, while prayer groups only occur at certain times of the day. Once such activities are over with, there is no evidence that market traders transfer the cordiality that is evident during such activities to daily trading practices.

Traders can keep open many diverse networks with competitors, suppliers and customers. These relations are in turn linked to relations facilitated by stall locations, commodity characteristics and distinct systems of institutional arrangements. The different interactions that produce particular incidents at different scales suggest that bounded and territorialised communities no longer matter in order to explain socio-economic phenomenon. Rather what matters is that the community takes on a scalar notion, where practices are not reified, but fluid, multiple, tacit and continually variable. As a result, it is difficult to associate the community of practice to an organised set of practices and still consider different moments, practices, actors and

networks of practice. As a result, I conclude with regards to the second research question that while practices can have material effects, it is not always necessary to reduce them to a community of practice (see Howitt, 1998). To go with Ettliger:

“Community is a relative term referring to a group sharing common interests or circumstance. There is no singular geography associated with a community because several communities can coexist within one place or a single community can be spread across considerable space.”(Ettliger, 2004, pg. 35)

By retaining the concept of the community of practice, one assigns causal effects to an abstract notion demonstrating what Sayer (1985) terms as spatial fetishism. By committing to account for internal differentiation and fragmentation the tendency to theorise continuous relations quickly erodes the significance of boundaries of practice (also see Paasi, 2004). To agree with Osterlund and Carlile (2005), a practice perspective therefore does not lead or translate into a unifying analytical point or even one definition of communities of practice.

8.2.3 What are the advantages and limitations of the application of practice to the market?

As discussed in the thesis a marketplace presents itself as a potential arena where evidence of a community of practice can thrive by presenting possibilities for a diverse set of traders to achieve coordination. The purpose of the third research question is to critically explore the limitations of employing practice as a relational framework to this study of market trade.

To describe practices as relational rather than in formally defined communities tends to detach groups and individuals from their social and historical contexts such that it becomes difficult to specify the differences that are brought about by different agents (Sunley, 2008). Such an attention to difference would make it possible, for example, to investigate to what degree traders pricing regimes result from the influence of commodity associations, their own attempts to make profit or the constraints placed by the state and its numerous institutions to the survival of the market. Sunley puts this claim more succinctly when he argues that:

“The downside of such a vocabulary is that it distracts attention from the need to attempt to provide causal mechanisms and causal models of economic processes. Without these mechanisms and models, it is

impossible to distinguish different types and forms of relations and purely incidental encounters from those that are consequential and causal” (Sunley, 2008, pg. 15)

The scalar dimensions of practice require that the spatial extent (the market), social and cultural networks (gender and ethnicity), the political (state practices) and interactive moments are collapsed together in order to see practice as relational and dynamic. Yet, by examining the multiple categories of scales at which practice can be shaped it is difficult to tie the materialisation of any set of the trader’s practices to anything. In effect, there is little in this argument that informs on what inequalities and differences occur in trade. Thus, by accepting the collapsibility of different scales, and not taking scale as a given category, there is an absence of how to capture variation and inequality, because by jumping scales, differences and contradictions are smoothed over and ignored (Leitner and Miller, 2007).

For instance, in the demolition accounts discussed in chapter seven, the market frontage was the most significant part of the Alaba-Suru market that experienced the wrath of the clearance operation. However, while causing destruction and chaos to the everyday life of the traders located around this region of the market, through the demolition and the consequent exposure of a new market frontage, traders whose stalls were previously located in the more interior parts and concealed sections of the market, found themselves advantageously exposed to the vibrant traffic and casual passers by and the much coveted buoyant market frontage. In this case, it is important to admit to the relational but unequal effects that seemingly hostile plans like demolition portend for both denying and expanding the activities of market traders.

To link practices and their causal effects, there is the risk of losing a relational conceptualisation of practice and in so doing crediting attention to specific scales of interactions, when the reality of happenings are far more complex than paying attention to simple cause and effect. This admission is particularly useful for those who have argued that practice oriented studies may be incapable of informing any sort of credible policy intervention if they continue to lack specificity.

Yet, part of the discussion of the network of practice has argued that this is not necessarily the case here. Networks of practice may provide an indication as to why such different relationships might differ primarily because traders are in competition with one another and therefore employ and engage with a diverse set of activities, norms and behaviours to that end. While this observation for the possibilities of differentiation that the concept of the network of practice permits to see in the various

agencies that traders may employ, in some ways it remains problematic how the particulars of the networks of practice of Emeka, Mama Jane, Auntie Eli can be extended to inform on the complex set of networks that probably apply to the rest of the traders in this market.

8.3 Further reflections on conceptualising communities of practice and practice-oriented research

The thesis has extended the debates around the community of practice to the context of trading where practices are made and remade through an ongoing reordering of scalar and relational possibilities. Consequently, I have argued that such a flexible notion of practice, such as that which occurs through the activities of traders and their multiple relations in a marketplace, is not easy to reduce to a single concept of a community of practice. Analysis of different strategies and mechanisms influencing market trade in this thesis show that the practices intertwined with the occurrence of market trading cannot be simply bundled up into discrete categories, making modelling bounded communities of practice unsustainable in this case.

Whether it is as a result of grouped boundary practices that are contiguous and continuous to other relations constituted elsewhere (cross communal practices) or simply the individual's mentality (practices of non-participation) in relational networks of practice or by governmental practices, the different scales of interaction continuously bring about the modification and reordering of what causes market trading to transpire. The repercussions of tracing the extended nature of practice is that there is an ever dynamic set of relations coming and going from different places and times and subject to the conduct of not just traders themselves, but also a variety of agencies operating at a variety of levels. Given these sort of complex occurrences in this case of market trading, issues such as market demolition, how market places can be more ordered so as not to warrant such complex regulation or how problems of illegal dues along the transport network are to be managed, are all in some ways linked to the relations between traders, hawkers, commodity associations, local governments and other agencies that have been mentioned in this thesis.

Marston et al. (2005) have suggested that such a broad clustering of agencies through which practices are thought to have effect reflects a 'chaotic conception', where there are no specific cause and effect linkages that can be made between the relations that allow practices to emerge and the agencies causing them. Sunley (2008) similarly argues that current notions of relationality are unable to provide any concepts of emergence or how causality is based on prior mechanisms. Sunley argues that

relational approaches should aim to identify mechanisms that operate in particular places “that allow us to locate actors’ social narratives in temporal and spatial configurations of patterned relationships among institutions, public narratives and cultural practice” (Sunley, 2008, pg. 16).

The network of practice argument raised in chapter six has shown that market trade does occur as a complex process involving spatial considerations, cultural values, governmentality and the desires of the trader to pursue a livelihood. However, it is also possible to use the network of practice to see the particularities that could be associated with different sets of traders and how all this complex processes might apply specifically to influence various traders differently in particular situations and not others. Perhaps this is why the community of practice as a bounded entity might seem attractive as a way to present this diversity into a coherent entity. In this regard, given that practices are themselves relational and anchoring different agencies, the notion of a community of practice must itself remain an abstraction or as Jones (2008) puts it, an admission that a community of practice occurs as a consequence of the practices of a “community of agency” (Jones, 2008, pg. 82). By going further to argue for the designation of a network of practice, I aptly recognise the multiple ways in which practices that are manifest across the state, institutions and other entanglements are connected to everyday activities of traders in very different ways in relation to specific sets of interactions. The vast relationship displayed by this interweaving of occurrences at multiple scales by different forms of networks displayed by traders reinforces practice as a continually shifting process and a phenomenon that is not bound in categorical community containers.

At a time when relational concepts are so popularly debated especially within economic geography, questions remain as to how to explore what type of forces are energising practice without yielding to spatial fetishism or being too abstract when aiming to discuss the relations that highlight the variety of outcomes that are a feature of any given activity. Critics of relationality for instance raise issues concerning the lack of a definable entity that allows researchers to select what aspects of life to be tagged as practices (see Yeung, 2003; Amin, 2004; Jones and Murphy, 2010). For this group of scholars, a central argument is that concrete and essentialised local entities are suppressed for more dynamic relational traits that owe their agency to multiple scales that are not grounded in anything specific (Amin, 2002).

Yet in this thesis it is not that locality per se has been done away with as I recognise that the market is a focal point that allows all of these relational attributes that constrain and facilitate the everyday activities of Alaba-Suru traders to be traced

and described but whilst maintaining that local occurrences in the market are as well a feature and mutually a representation of wider agencies of regulation. Jones (2009b) has also suggested in a similar regard that the problem with relationality is not where it is contained per se but how it is theorised. Quoting Bhaskar (1989) in (Jones, 2009b, pg. 496) it is argued that “in working towards a relational conception of collectivities we need to understand any given collectivity both in terms of its relationships with other collectivities (and in particular those in terms of which it is oppositionally defined or defines itself) and in terms of its intersectional relationships” (Bhaskar, 1989, pg. 8).

It is important to maintain that every occurrence manifests primarily because of the interface between complex connections between varied scales of practices that at times provide conflicting influences on how any event emerges at any point in space and time. It is through these connections that it has been possible to encounter and make meanings out of patterns of bargaining, soliciting for customers or noting the effects of demolition activities on Alaba-Suru market traders. More importantly it is also necessary to consider that relational thinking is indeed a necessary step towards a vibrant yet unfinished discussion espousing the possibility of politics (Massey, 2005).

While the search to find finite possibilities to relational practices remain open, in moving towards such answers, the steps to making such claims cannot side step the continued shift and dynamism of complex related socio-spatial relations of practice. This means that concepts like the community of practice cannot be mistaken for an object of analysis because they lack the precision of the substance of the work they constitute. Admitting that a community of practice is a relational term saves the time of locating structures that are not real entities. Instead, attention can be paid to what constitutes what people are saying and doing resulting from different levels of accounting for practice. This alerts us to the different purposes, intentions and various forms of embodiment that lead to a reconceptualisation of processes that are ‘unowned (Moore, 2008, pg.220) but always altered as they are constituted between separate members of a group. As a result, these sets of practices can themselves be engaged with as unfolding processes that are not completely controlled by the actors that employ them.

However, while admitting that any practice is relationally determined and always linked to other complex agencies through a series of possibly extensive networks of practice, I would argue that to comprehensively trace the relations of a large set of people would be challenging. This is because in aiming to make sense of their relations, there is the potential danger of either giving too much away to essentialist

and reductionist views that deny the relational and multi scalar properties of practice (as I have suggested and built upon since mentioning it in chapter five) or sticking to describing the relations of possibly thousands or hundreds of people's linkages on the other hand, which may be impossible or cumbersome to explain.

By exploring and seeking to make legible the everyday practices in the Alaba-Suru market by traders like Aunty Eli, Nneka, Ifeoma, Emeka and Chukwudi and other traders who compete for survival, it is made apparent in this thesis that the connections between everyday happenings which intersect with other aspects of the urban economy, governmentality and cultural ties are much more than relations that emerge from a community of practice within which any group of traders may be engaged. Instead, one is confronted with rich, detailed and interlinked relations of practice that are networked, contested, remade and competed for in order to arrive at what constitutes legitimate economic behaviour in many different ways.

The thesis has argued that the characteristics of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire of a community of practice, when examined in the context of the marketplace, suggests that a community of practice is never only a local occurrence. Therefore the community of practice in the case of market trade as a competitive setting, represents a series of processes and multiscalar events involving a complex set of actors and events that are continually lived and experienced in a state of incompleteness which is constantly being re-cast, networked and re-spatialised for different ends and purposes.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market

The following is an overview of the commodities forming the fifty two commodity associations in the Alaba-Suru market. Commodities in bold, represent the specialisation of trades that feature most prominently in this study

Table A.1 Commodity associations

| Number | commodity associations |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | Poultry skinning services |
| 2 | Meat including (Kpomo (cow skin), Shaki (Cow stomach walls), Goat meat, cow legs |
| 3 | Provisions Items including Food seasoning, Ladies' cosmetics, Beverages, Toilet soap, Detergents Salt and Sugar |
| 4 | Vegetables (Ugwu, spinach, bitter leaf) |
| 5 | Second hand shoes , clothes and bags |
| 6 | Beans (red and white varieties) Rice(retail) |
| 7 | Tomatoes and Pepper |
| 8 | Hair pieces and wigs |
| 9 | Gari |
| 10 | Palm oil (wholesale) |

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Table A.1 – Continued

| Number | commodity associations |
|---------------|---|
| 11 | Palm oil (retail) |
| 12 | Soup ingredients and spices including onions, garlic and ginger |
| 13 | Kitchen accessories and Utensils including plates, cooking pots and local mortars |
| 14 | Plantain |
| 15 | Carpentry products |
| 16 | Men clothes |
| 17 | Textiles, such as Abada, Wax, and Java |
| 18 | Jewellery |
| 19 | Electronic items e.g. clocks. Mp3s , radios and TV antennas |
| 20 | Smoked fish |
| 21 | Curtains |
| 22 | Women's clothes |
| 23 | Ogbono, Melon (Egusi) |
| 24 | Yam |
| 25 | Plastic products as coolers, plates, spoons, water bottles |
| 26 | Fresh fish |
| 27 | Books and Stationary items |
| 28 | Women's and men's shoes |
| 29 | Baby items |
| 30 | Local snuff |
| 31 | Fruit juices, alcoholic and non-alcoholic packaged drinks |
| 32 | Frozen fish |
| 33 | Tailors and dress makers |
| 34 | Baking ingredients |
| 35 | Cooked food and snacks |
| 36 | Carrier bags |

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Table A.1 – Continued

| Number | commodity associations |
|---------------|---|
| 37 | Confectionaries |
| 38 | Frozen poultry |
| 39 | Fridge owners |
| 40 | Beans (red and white varieties) Rice(wholesale) |
| 41 | Kola nut |
| 42 | Groundnut oil and Palm oil (retail) |
| 43 | Household items (Hardware like mops, clocks, paint and brushes) |
| 44 | Fruits (in season) |
| 45 | Herbal remedies |
| 46 | Live poultry (Chicken layers and boilers) |
| 47 | Wholesale baking items |
| 48 | Charcoal |
| 49 | Local grinding services |
| 50 | Groundnut oil and Palm oil (wholesale) |
| 51 | Stock fish (Okporoko) |
| 52 | Soft drinks and Pure water |

Appendix B

Interviews: Particulars of respondents

*All names of respondents used are pseudonyms.

1. Mama Jane, Provost of the Gari Union in the market, Interviewed in May, 2010
2. Chukwudi, male trader selling Women's cosmetics. Interviewed in April,2010
3. Chijoke, male electronics trader, Interviewed in May, 2010
4. Olu, male butcher, specialising in the beef trade, Interviewed in June,2010
5. Ogbonna, male second hand goods trader. Interviewed in
6. Ifeoma Anyanwu , female in her late 40s selling palm oil, Interviewed in May 2010
7. Jimoh, male trader selling small items of electronics, Interviewed in July, 2010
8. Madam Love, a female trader selling vegetables in the market, Interviewed in August 2010
9. Aunty Eli, a female provision trader in her fifties. Interviewed May and June 2010
10. Nneka, female provision trader, Interviewed in June, 2010
11. Gloria, a female trader retailing soft drinks and sachets of water, April,2010
12. Caro, a female smoked fish seller, Interviewed in May 2010
13. Sumbo, a female tomato seller at the market frontage, Interviewed in July, 2010
14. Bisi, sells cooked food near the wholesale butter line, Interviewed in May,2010
15. Emeka, a cosmetics trader, Interviewed in June 2010
16. Mr Goody, a male trader who sells stationary items, Interviewed in June and August, 2010

17. Seriki, the market leader of the Alaba-Suru market, Interviewed in April, 2010
18. Mr B, Treasurer of the Alaba-Suru market association, Interviewed in April, 2010
19. Kudi, (male) secretary of the Alaba-Suru market association, Interviewed in April, 2010

The following traders were informally interviewed in the course of observations between May-July, 2010 in the Alaba-Suru market:

20. A groundnut seller using a table at the market entrance
21. Iya Bola, soup ingredients trader,
22. Joy, A second hand shoe trader
23. Iya Ibeji, a gari trader
24. Patience, a seamstress
25. Happiness, seller of Baking ingredients and puff-puff (local snacks made of flour)
26. Mama P, female plantain seller near the poultry line
27. A jewellery trader with a mobile stand
28. An apprentice butcher selling meat from a table at the market frontage.

The following traders were informally interviewed during visits to other market sites

1. Mark, A second hand shoes trader at the Shobatex market in Ijanikin, May 2010
2. Nana, a male trader selling women's hair accessories at the Balogun market, July, 2010
3. A male official of the Mile12 market association, Interview August 2010

Appendix C

Interview guide

As previously mentioned, there were no definite specific questions posed in the form of an interview schedule. Instead there were particular topics that became central to the investigation as the fieldwork proceeded. They included but not limited to the following areas of concern:

Trader's background information: including rough estimate of age of trader, the length and route to trade. For instance if the trader had started as hawkers, learnt through a relative or an learnt through trade through an apprenticeship. Mode of transport to work, cost of coming to the market, frequency and duration of being in the market and the use of idle time when away from the market

The role of family support: such as if their children helped out in the market , if traders ran stalls from their homes and other sort of help received from family

Source of the commodities traders sold: e.g. location of suppliers, credit and transport arrangements and frequency of visiting distributors

Membership of associations in the market: e.g. trader's role in different types of activities in the market such as attending meetings of commodity associations or other group membership in the market, making visits to suppliers in groups

Communication and networking in the market: e.g. how did traders get to hear or know of happenings in such a large market, role of rumour mongering, gossip and associational networks

Recalling past eventful issues : Getting traders to recount issues past and ongoing

disputes and the effect of the outcomes of those issues on their relationship with other traders

Market demolition: Issues regarding the demolition of the market and what discussing the coping strategies traders had employed

Discussions on finances: e.g. arrangements to pay creditors, extension of credit to customers and other traders, whether they maintained bank accounts or patronised local savings cooperatives

Business etiquettes: , such as what sort of saving strategies traders adopted, loans and working capital, employment of salespersons, settling apprentices and use of profits

Particularities of trading in the Alaba-Suru market: such as discussion of their locations, other traders in their lines, adopting multiple sales locations or changing their locations to facilitate trade, payments of rents, owning their stalls and infrastructure issues such as electricity, water, internal road network, banks and toilet facilities

Miscellaneous: Other reasons for trading and previous occupations traders had been involved and how traders got selling spaces in the market, start up capital for trader, role of membership in religious associations, hometown associations, age group associations and other groups