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Food For (e) Thought:
Strategies of the urban poor in Johannesburg in achieving food security.

An investigation of how gender and the pursuit of informal livelihoods affect household food-provisioning strategies in Tembisa, Gauteng Province

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Master of Arts Submission
February 2014

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work, and that none of its sections have been previously submitted for publication or examination.

Ishtar Lakhani Signed on this _____ day of _____ 2014

Abstract:

This research report serves to explore how women living in Tembisa, the second largest township in Johannesburg, South Africa, create and maintain highly flexible and mobile personal networks, to maximize their access to financial and social capital in order to improve individual and household resilience to food insecurity. What are the strategies that are adopted, created and manipulated in the daily lives of the food insecure in an attempt to attain a semblance of food security for themselves, their households and their communities?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Eric Worby for his guidance and unwavering enthusiasm that often pulled me away from the precipice of doubt. His comments not only enriched my understanding of the subject, but also forced me to develop a relationship with my mortal enemy…track changes.

I am also deeply grateful to all the women who I worked with in Tembisa for letting me into their homes and lives and for allowing me to share their stories and their food. In particular, I am appreciative to my 'sisters', Phindi and Bahle for their unyielding patience, brutal honesty and wildly entertaining sense of humour.

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Introduction

> *Food insecurity is a complex arrangement of vulnerabilities, not just vulnerability to the trigger of a particular event; deprivation is progressive and its impacts accumulate so that historical patterns of change are important; vulnerability depends not only on a given set of entitlements but also on the perceived risk that these will collapse or prove inadequate; and vulnerable people have agency – they adopt complex and rational strategies to avoid destitution (Devereux and Maxwell, 2001: 82)*

When it comes to food, the famous dictum of the 19th century French gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are" should be expanded on. Tell me what you eat and I will tell you where you live, how your economy functions, who your neighbors are, what you value and the ebbs and flows of your country's socio-political life.

Food has always served as an organising and symbolic entity that connects all humans and situates them within their environment. Through the symbolism invested in food, food can simultaneously unify and exclude. Its significance transcends mere survival to a level of invested meaning and political interest within its production, distribution, preparation and consumption. Food cannot only be viewed as a material object, but it is a bearer of symbolic meaning, a site of material and political interest, as well as a site of contestation.

Eating is a universal necessity, not only to provide nutrition to ensure the physical survival of the human population but also to provide a space in which to practice and pass on cultural knowledge. It is something we all have in common. But, in as much as eating can act as a unifying force between individuals and groups it can also act as a method of exclusion. For as long as eating has been in existence, so has hunger. Hunger is an affliction that has impacted individuals, communities and whole countries for centuries and still persists. With the expansive rise in production capabilities and the global spread of technological advancements, hunger should be a thing of the past but it is a daily reality for millions globally. According to

the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, there were 264 million hungry people in sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2010) and it is estimated that there are approximately 14 million people in South Africa vulnerable to food insecurity (The Presidency, 2008). The 'right to food' is a right at the centre of many global and national policies, but how is this right being realised on the ground. The first Millennium Development Goal is to halve global hunger by 2015, but what does this really mean? When food systems and food prices are implemented more and more at a global level and the increasing reliance on purchasing food is unavoidable, what agency does the individual possess? (Holt-Gimonez and Patel, 2009).

The reality in urban South Africa is that access to food goes hand-in-hand with access to income. The majority of urban dwellers purchase their food (be it from multiple possible sources), but at the end of the day exchanging money for food is the norm. But what happens when there is little or no access to money? When income has to be thinly spread over the multiple needs of multiple people? When the city infrastructure that is theoretically supposed to make modern day living easier, becomes a drain on a household's limited resources? Having access to food is a survival imperative; it is universal and it is seemingly easier for some people and more difficult for others. Food is intricately woven into every aspect of life and ones ability to provide and access food is intrinsically connected to individual subjectivity and one's location in the local, global and geographic context. The navigation of this complex, continually shifting landscape by urban dwellers in Johannesburg, in order to respond to vulnerabilities, in this case food insecurity, is an area that I would like to explore in this research report.

In this project I aim to explore the activities and strategies that are adopted, created and manipulated in the daily lives of the food insecure in an attempt to attain a semblance of food security for themselves, their households and their communities. How it is that poor, urban households cope in a context of multiple vulnerabilities and material deprivation and what actions are taken either directly or indirectly to improve the resilience of these households and individuals.

My focus will be on residents of Tembisa, the second largest township in Gauteng situated on the East Rand in Johannesburg, South Africa. I wish to show how, in a context of high unemployment and inadequate access to basic services (for example healthcare and education), individuals and households are creating and adopting strategies which enable them to provide food (although limited in quantity and quality) for themselves and their families.

The overall aim of this study is to contribute to existing knowledge with respect to questions of urban food security. The majority of the existing literature and studies on food security, specifically in South Africa, examine the food security landscape from a national and regional context, with the focus being placed on agricultural production and emphasis on rural households. Although this is extremely useful in informing national policies, I would argue that much more light needs to be shed on food security at a household level, especially in the growing urban context. It is through understanding how vulnerable households improve their resilience by utilizing what little resources they have in order to increase their food security that more strategic and effective interventions can be made.

Also, I aim to consider food security not only as a calculable, abstract set of conditions based on income and calorie intake, but rather as something that people seek for themselves based on shifting circumstances that are to a large extent out of their realm of control. These efforts to realize food security is subject to the individual's interpretations and intentions within a perpetually changing context.

Furthermore, I aim to go beyond using food as the single lens through which to view household and individual activities, as the purchasing and consumption of food is part of a greater social and economic web. My emphasis does not lie in assessing how much food is bought or what food is bought. Rather it is on how the individual managed to create for themselves an opportunity in which to access food. It is through understanding these daily negotiations of the urban food insecure and how food is part of a greater web of vulnerabilities that more effective steps can be taken to realize the constitutional right of all

South Africa citizens to have access to sufficient food and water (Section27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996).

This research report is structured as follows:

Chapter one provides an introduction to my research with a discussion of my research methodology, my chosen field site and an introduction to food security literature more generally. In chapter two I clarify some of the terms and thematic areas that I will be expanding on throughout the report and I discuss the complexities of food provision in an urban setting. Chapter 3 contains an in depth discussion of the food security strategies that households in my field site engage in. In the final chapter I critique some of the interventions that have been attempted in my field-site and provide some suggestions for moving forward.

CHAPTER 1

Methodology

I conducted fieldwork in Tembisa (Johannesburg) between December 2012 and May 2013. My primary reason for choosing Tembisa was that I had geographic access but also because Tembisa has been a much overlooked location in comparison to Alexandra and Soweto (the other comparatively large townships in Gauteng). Also I chose a township as the location of my research (as opposed to a suburb or city center) because in the context of urban South Africa townships are growing at a rapid pace with no signs of slowing down. South Africa's urban centers rely on labour to function and the majority of people that provide this labour reside in townships on the outskirts of the city centre. Townships are the locus of intersectionality in contemporary South Africa. They are areas that are economically and socially vibrant and as a result it is essential to gain an insight into how food systems in townships work in order to combat the growing levels of food insecurity in the country.

Through my previous work with a gender advocacy organisation I had formed many friendships and networks with women from Tembisa. In addition it was an area that I had spent some time in and as a result I felt comfortable both geographically and socially. This was important to me as I intended to conduct ethnographic research which would require me to spend a large amount of time in my field site. Furthermore, I had a limited time in which to conduct my research, therefore I had to choose an area in which I could insert myself quickly and with relative ease.

I chose this particular time frame to conduct field work to gain as broad a spectrum as possible with regards to the household's general rhythm. December, being the 'holiday season' is a time of planned excess which results in subsequent scarcity in the months of January and February with a semblance of 'normality' being restored in March. It was important to me that I gain a full understanding of the functioning of households both in times of excess and scarcity.

It was also clear to me that what is missing in food security literature is in-depth, site-specific, ethnographic research. Work by organisations such as the African Food Security Network have contributed greatly by creating an overall 'snap-shot' of the state of food (in)security in Southern Africa through their eleven city, nine country baseline study. This, being a huge step forward (in comparison to the vague, quantitative studies that had gone before), was still lacking as it was impossible and impractical to ground such a broad study with an analysis at a household level.

In order to understand how households increase their resilience in the face of growing food insecurity I knew I had to spend a substantial amount of time in my chosen field site and specifically in a household. I did not feel that a survey or questionnaire would give me adequate insight as to the various strategies that individuals engage in, as many of these strategies do not involve food directly. For example, it was through consistent time spent in a household that I noticed that one woman in particular was always sent to buy meat at the butcher. This was because the butcher was attracted to her and as a result always gave her bones with more meat on them.

My subject of food (in) security also delves into a very complex (and personal) webs of poverty, vulnerability and hardships. These are areas of people's lives that I would only be privy to if I spent time in developing trust and relationships in the community. In addition, I feel ethically obligated to 'earn' access to this information through the investment of time and energy into the community I am working in. Throughout my research I was open and honest as to the subject and purpose of my research. All individuals have been guaranteed anonymity through the use of pseudonyms and clearly communicated informed consent.

Tembisa – There is Hope

According to the *History of Ekurhuleni* "Tembisa, (is) a bustling township with new roads, plentiful housing and exciting recreational projects under construction" (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality: 15). Many of the residents I spent time with would strongly

disagree with the municipality's description of Tembisa. They would refer to Tembisa as a township/informal settlement on the East Rand of the Gauteng Province in South Africa. In order to provide any analysis around issues of food security in South Africa, it is vital to contextualize the history, geography and the ideological space that constitutes the field-site.

According to the 2011 South African census Tembisa is approximately 32.44 km² with a population of roughly 348, 693. The gender ratio is 53.79% male and 46.21% female with a black African population of 99.58%. The predominant first language is Sepedi (34.50%) and isiZulu (25.04%)[1]. Tembisa, established in 1957, falls under the Ekurhuleni Municipality the fourth largest metropolitan municipality and fifth largest township in South Africa.

Tembisa comes from the Zulu word "Thembisa" which can be roughly translated to "There is Hope". Tembisa's history mirrors the history of many South African townships starting with forced relocations, one of the many political weapons the Apartheid regime utilized in order to maintain the segregationist state. Although not much has been written about Tembisa, there are many residents that were a part of the initial relocations in 1957. Mike is one of those residents. His family was forced to move from Waterkloof (near Pretoria) to Tembisa in 1957. His mother was a domestic worker in the city and his father worked on the mines. Mike lived in Tembisa from 1957 till the mid 1990's when he saved up enough money to buy a house in Kempton Park, the closest suburb to Tembisa, where he lives today with his wife and three children. With deliberate irony, Mike describes the Apartheid government as attempting to create a "labour aristocracy" in that people from surrounding areas (Alexandra, Edenvale, Germiston, and Kempton Park) were relocated to Tembisa for one main purpose: "We were forced to move, to be located in an area where we can supply cheap labour". The main industries in the areas surrounding Tembisa at the time were metal, oil refineries, breweries, the railway and brick making, with domestic work being the occupation for most women. The planning of Tembisa deliberately did not include adequate infrastructure for the relocated population. In addition, the abandonment of the pass laws and the relaxation of influx control after 1994 resulted in people arriving to Tembisa from other parts of the continent (and country) and an even greater population increase. This served to put even more strain on the

[1] http://census.adrianfrith.com/place/77324

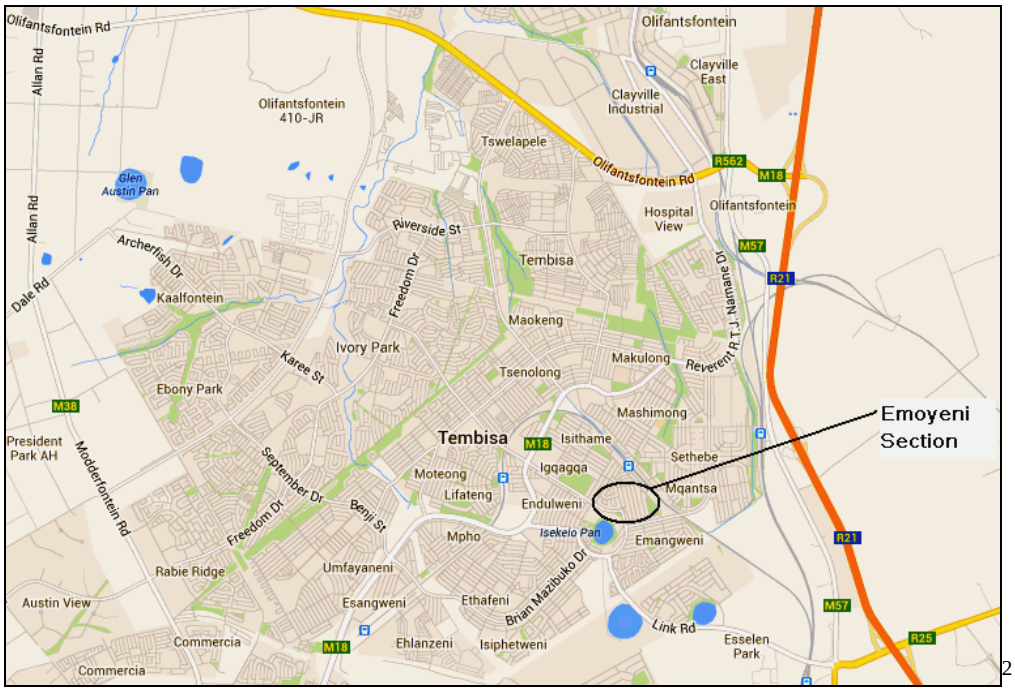
inadequate infrastructure. These inadequacies have left a legacy that is still evident today. "The very process that guaranteed wealth in the economy (i.e. the migrant labour system) simultaneously produced poverty and patterns of unemployment that still hobble South Africa" (Collinson et al, 2006: 195).

Geographically there were eight sections (with an estimated population of 50 000 in total) that were separated, mainly by tribal/ethnic lines. Not only were there policies to enforce national segregation of people according to race, there was a further attempt to segregate black Africans on the basis of ethnicity. Mike explains how "Apartheid made us discriminate against each other", how it was people from the homelands that were "recruited" as they were expected to do demeaning municipal work, such as refuse removal and sanitation. People were separated and chose to live in particular sections based on their 'tribal' and kinship lines. This made movement difficult, for example Mike's uncles were Shangaan, he looks coloured, and he identifies as Zulu but speaks Sotho. However, over the last six decades the demographics of Tembisa have shifted. Today, Tembisa still remains a location where the vast majority of residents are black; however, there is less segregation along ethnic lines and more segregation based on class and income. There is not only the presence of standard government housing but also large houses and rented rooms. The population has increased dramatically as has the presence of shops and retail complexes.

The history of Tembisa and its current context of lack of service delivery, poor housing, high rates of crime and unemployment, and dissatisfaction with the government, echoes the sentiments of many of the 'locations' in South Africa. Townships, slums, informal settlements are an integral part of how cities, especially Johannesburg, are constructed both physically and symbolically. "62% of African urbanites live in informal, autoconstructed, makeshift shelters" (Pieterse, 2013: 21) and this 'slum growth' show no signs of slowing down, let alone stopping. Therefore it is important to locate the context of Tembisa within the greater context of urban South Africa and 'the real city'. There are multiple ideas and constructions of 'the city' and in some ways locations such as Tembisa represents more of 'the real city' than Johannesburg. Tembisa houses a population that, on a daily basis, needs to enter into conversations with various spaces, whether it is a man who sells vetkoeks (a traditional

Afrikaans pastry) to passers by on Tembisa main road or the woman who commutes to Johannesburg city centre to work in an office or the taxi driver who traverses all the spaces in between.

My interest lies in how individuals are able to negotiate these various spaces and the other individuals that inhabit them. My focus will not be on issues of service delivery and infrastructure deficit in Tembisa but on how, in the face of limited access to basic services and inadequate infrastructure, some residents of Tembisa are able to carve out a viable life for themselves. Although I situate my field site in the greater context of Tembisa, the locus of my fieldwork was in Emoyeni section (see map below). Emoyeni section is very similar to many of the other sections in Tembisa in that it is mainly residential with scattered 'spaza' shops (an informal convenience store), informal traders, churches and home industries. Emoyeni section is convenient as it is situated near the railway station, which is both a site for public transport as well as an informal market with vendors selling fresh fruit, vegetables and meat. Given the size of Tembisa I strategically chose an area that I felt was 'manageable' in that I would be able to allocate ample time to the various households I found myself in.



[2]

[2] https://maps.google.co.za/

Interviews

I conducted over twenty in-depth, semi-structured interviews with residents in Tembisa. The residents were from diverse backgrounds and played different (often multiple) roles within the community. I interviewed adults who are heads of households; business owners; vegetable vendors; employed and unemployed; long-time residents; community leaders and former residents. As there is very little of Tembisa's history that has been documented, I conducted two life-history interviews of residents who were forcefully relocated to Tembisa at its inception in 1957. Interviews centered on living conditions, access to income, access to food, household composition, roles and responsibilities within the household and coping strategies.

Other than the specifically targeted life history interviews I found interviewees using snowball sampling. I worked from one household in particular and radiated outwards, creating connections through the constant activities of the many members of the nodal household. Although this method of contacting individuals to interview does limit the range of households I had access to, my aim is to create as full and thorough understanding of all the daily negotiations that all members of the household have in order to provide food at the end of the day. In addition, I also conducted multiple interviews with the same individuals as I found that when you start a conversation about food every aspect of political, economic and social life becomes relevant.

Some of my semi-structured interviews were recorded with a digital recorder, however my day-to-day conversations and observations with individuals and groups were recorded in a notebook after the fact as there was always an apprehension that I would be mistaken for a government official. In addition there is an innate difficultly in speaking to individuals about their food security and the food security of their household as this subject relates to all aspects and hardships of their daily lives. Often individuals create access to food using illegitimate or what they perceive to be embarrassing methods that they were reluctant to share with me at first. Participants were guaranteed anonymity through the use of pseudonyms.

I was particularly aware of how I was perceived in Emoyeni and how my age, class, race and gender as a 28 year old, educated, Indian, queer female living in Johannesburg was read by others. However, over time as people got used to seeing my face in the location and word spread that I was not a government official and I was talking to people about food, people became more willing to talk about their daily hardships and share their frustrations with me. My position as an 'outsider' assisted me as individuals took time and care in explaining various aspects of their lives in great detail, in particular, cultural norms as a way to 'educate' me.

Participant Observation

Much of my analysis hinges on information that was gathered through participant observation. By spending time in my field site (in houses, shops and taverns), I was able to observe the daily negotiations at play. I also attended various community gatherings such as meetings, weddings, funerals, anywhere where eating was done, in order to gain an understanding of how individuals mobilise within the community and the logistics involved in producing a community event. It is through the lived experiences and everyday practices of people that we can observe the complex routes that they create and use to navigate through life's daily adversities.

As with most townships in South Africa, Tembisa was designed to have only one main road running in and out, the artery connecting it to other parts of the metropolis and along which the pulse of the city is felt. The main road is constantly alive with activity, children getting to school, street vendors peddling their wares, people heading to the city to be a part of the daily urban hustle. Emoyeni section is slow to wake up. With the children having gone to school and the employed en route to work, what is left are the unemployed youth visiting neighbors or killing time outside the tavern and take-aways; mothers and pensioners queuing patiently outside of the bureaucratically grey government offices to receive their monthly government grants and the buzz of the local informal economy braiding hair; frying chips, fixing stoves and servicing cars. It is in this context that I insert myself.

My days and nights in the field centered around and emanated from one household in particular. Phindi and her family and friends opened up their home and lives to me. I had met Phindi through work with advocacy organisations working on issues around gender-based violence and she offered to be my chaperone and translator for my time in Tembisa. Phindi, a thirty-something year old South African woman, who was born in Kwa-Zulu Natal but moved to Johannesburg in search of work, is an active member of her community and her home is a locus for activity in Emoyeni section. She lives in a home that she inherited from her grandfather and shares it with her sister (and sister's child), her uncle and 3 tenants. Phindi is sporadically employed but spends most of the time sitting with her sister Bahle outside of the house socializing with friends, reprimanding municipal workers and keeping themselves plugged into the pulse of Emoyeni section. Through their socializing they are made aware of everything that is going on in the section whether it be a discount on maize meal at a particular shop, what government tenders are being issued, who is being beaten up by their boyfriend and who the sangoma put a curse on. This was the ideal place in which to situate myself as it seemed as though all information passed through this household en route to its intended destination.

My daily routine seemingly consisted of much of the same, 'hanging out' outside the house, visiting others and being visited. Food sourcing and preparation was only central to the day's activity if it was in the context of a particular event (a birthday; a wedding), otherwise very little time daily was spent on shopping and cooking. A substantial portion of time was also spent waiting. Waiting at the South African Social Security Association offices for the dispensation of grants, waiting at the clinic for assistance, waiting at the hospital (because the clinic could not assist, then being sent back to the clinic), waiting in grocery queues at the beginning of every month. This time spent waiting provided the ideal opportunity and created a space in which to open up conversations about the daily struggles of urban life. Most evenings were spent either in the home or around the corner at the local tavern drinking beer and playing pool. Although my presence was extremely noticeable at first (both in the community and in the tavern) I very quickly became a 'regular'. It was at the tavern where I

had the opportunity to engage with men in the community, while of course being territorially watched over by Phindi and her friends.

Phindi, being an active member of the community, has also formed a group of women that works to provide assistance to anyone in need in the section. For example, this group supports women through cases of domestic violence and rape, assists the elderly with their household chores and helps families in raising money to cover funeral expenses. Being associated with this group did affect the way in which individuals perceived me as it increased my visibility and often visibility is treated with a certain amount of suspicion. However, being connected with this group also allowed me increased access and a level of trust within the households and friendship groups I found myself moving in.

During the weekends time was spent at various community functions, such as church services, preparing food for a wedding (or a funeral) and more visiting and 'hanging-out'. The weekends were also the time that Phindi's child spent time in her house (Phindi's child lives at Phindi's mother's house). I was able to observe three generations of women from the same family, their interactions, their conflicts and their generational differences. By becoming a trusted figure in one household ultimately led to me being invited to attend a variety of social functions from birthdays to watching the young Xhosa men return from initiation.

The nature of my research is innately sensitive as the topic of food security is deeply embedded in the subjects of poverty and powerlessness. Entering peoples' homes and broaching these subjects created a very complex dynamic. However, the more time I spent in Tembisa the more individuals felt comfortable sharing their stories with me. Their experiences form the basis of this report as it was only through fully understanding the ebbs and flows of daily life that I could even begin to piece together the state of food (in) security in Tembisa.

Limitations

As a result of food being so connected to every aspect of human experience it was important to limit my focus on particular aspects of food security.

Although I did not initially make the active decision to focus on female-headed households, I found myself in a field-site where the majority of the households were run by women of various ages. I feel that this is indicative of not only a historical feminization of poverty (to be discussed in more detail later) but also serves to illustrate the widely held stereotypes of gender norms within households that regard women as the 'responsible nurturers' of family member and the primary preparers of food. Thus, focusing on female-headed households reflects the reality of the majority of households in Tembisa and the daily burdens of their attempt to provide food. To illustrate this the Department of Agriculture states (2002:23), "Nearly one third of all South African households are female-headed which are [sic] considerably poorer than male-headed households."

The aim of this investigation is to focus on the strategies whereby women in my field site were able to access and provide food, not on the particulars of the food itself. I have chosen not to take into account aspects of nutrition and the specifics of what or how much food is provided. It was my goal to capture the strategies prior to the acquisition of food and the actions that enabled food provision as opposed to a nutritional analysis. I have also placed an emphasis on food as opposed to beverages. Alcohol and its consumption are a part of the everyday reality of those living in Tembisa and although I will make reference to its consumption where relevant to my focus, it will not be central to my analysis. In this context, the importance of 'the tavern' is as a venue for relationship building. The tavern also allowed me access to the perspectives of many men in the community.

The aim of this research is to create an increased understanding of how it is that individuals and households engage in economic and social processes in an effort to increase their resilience in the face of rising unemployment and food prices. **Food Security – Roots to Shoots**

With the current socio-political climate in South Africa being interpreted by many as one of poverty, unemployment, insufficient access to health and education, and rapid food inflation, access to food and water is often marked as a key indicator in which to judge the vulnerability of an individual or household/community/country (Jacobs, 2010)

The concept of 'food security' is a fairly recent one that can be traced to the development literature of the 1970's in its reference to global food security, with the concept of household food security being dated to the 1980's (Altman et al, 2009). Over the past decades definitions and thoughts around food security have undergone a number of criticisms, re-articulations and re-evaluations. Some of the shifts since the 1970's, as identified by Devereux (2001) has been at the level of analysis; the scope of analysis and the methods of assessment of food insecurity. Although the majority of writing around food insecurity speaks to food at a global and national level (the production and distribution of food), there has been a steady rise of literature that focuses on the production and distribution of food at a household and individual level. There has also been a shift from a narrow 'food first' scope, where the material quality of food was placed centrally to individuals ability to access food, to a more 'livelihoods' perspective where individuals are situated in the current capitalistic context and their ability to generate an income is more central to their ability to access food. Arguments around food security are no longer framed around a failure of agriculture, but around a failure of livelihoods and a shift from understanding the supply of food to the demand for food. Devereux (2001) illustrates the changing methods in how levels of food insecurity are assessed indicating that there has been a shift away from 'objective' measured indicators to more subjective indicators (the use of self-reporting and documenting of perceptions).

Central to these shifts is the influential work of economist Amartya Sen. His work *Poverty and Famines: As Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (1981) is often cited as essential in understanding the major theoretical shifts in the conceptualization of poverty and hunger. His analysis marked a distinct move away from a Malthusian logic of hunger (that there are too many people and not enough food), to a logic of access and entitlement (that is enough food but for a number of reasons, there is differential access to food). He maintains that,

> *Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat. While the latter can be a cause of the former, it is but one of many possible causes (Sen, 1981: 1).*

Although Sen's restrictive definition of entitlements being limited to legal rights is problematic, this idea of 'entitlements' can be used as a lens through which to view access on a global and national level, as well as a community and household level. It is also important to bear in mind that Sen advocates for greater access to resources and power in order for the poor to improve their access to food. However, he does not adequately interrogate the unequal distribution of those resources and power within the household. As I will discuss in the section 'The Feminisation of Poverty', it is important not to neglect the dominant socio-cultural norms when entering a discussion around food security, as it is those norms that tend to exclude women through the unequal power relations within the household when it comes to decision-making around the purchasing and distribution of food.

In order to facilitate discussions around food security, it is important to clarify a number of definitions. Shirin Motala in her article "Giving realization to the right to food' (2010: 4) clearly lays these out as follows:

Hunger: defined by the FAO as the consumption of less than 1800 kilocalories a day

Under nutrition: describes the status of a person whose food intake is inadequate both in terms of quality and quantity, leading to deficiencies in energy, protein and essential vitamins

Malnutrition: related to both under nutrition and over nutrition

Food security: is defined by the World Food Programme (1996) as a situation at individual, national, regional and international level when "all people, at all times have physical, social and

economic access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food". Food security exists at many levels, including national food security and household food security.

National Food Security: is determined by policies relating to food production and trade policies, particularly in relation to food.

Household food security: is determined by several factors, including household composition, wealth and livelihood strategies pursued, geographical location and institutions such as markets and social networks (Jacobs, 2009). It is all impacted on by many external factors, including energy costs, which in turn can impact on agriculture production costs.

With regards to these definitions it is important to state that my interest is in the actions that people undertake in order to access food. The reasons behind choosing to eat a specific food or having access to a particular type of food is important as it is indicative of the political, economic, social and ecological context of that individual and although this will come up in various aspects of my research, it is not my main focus. I have chosen not to include any nutritional profiling or analysis on what gets eaten, but focus specifically on how that food got to be there. My goal was to determine the various factors at play that allowed for food provision in general, not necessarily what food or how much food was provided.

The subject of food security and vulnerability to it, is an extremely complex and multifaceted one, one that has been discussed and critiqued extensively on many different levels. Since food is central to every individual's survival it is understandably connected to all aspects of life. One cannot talk about food (or access to food) without incorporating the social, economic, political, historical and environmental landscape, the interconnectedness between these various factors, and then embedding the analysis within the systems in which food exists. This is a herculean task. How hunger is assessed, interpreted and combated is entirely dependent on the interplay of these factors. Although quantitative studies conducted by multiple disciplines have assisted those attempting to understand food insecurity in order to combat it, they often paint the lives of 'the vulnerable' with very broad brush strokes. In

addition, food security and its impact is something that is constantly shifting and transforming and as a result needs to be viewed through a lens that takes into account this dynamic nature.

I support Hendrik's (2005) call for local level and in-depth qualitative study of household's experiences under 'normal conditions'. An ethnographic engagement with the daily struggles of individual's and household's negotiations with food (in) security is lacking. As a result various attempts by governments and civil society often fail to address the needs of the people they are attempting to 'help'. It is through determining how households, within a specific context, currently engage with the multidimensional, context-specific constraints of access and procurement of food that interventions can be made to enable individuals, households and groups to strengthen their resilience to the multiple vulnerabilities they face. Poor households operate on different levels of 'survival' and it is by fully understanding the coping mechanisms that are utilized that one can identify where the particular points of conflict lie within the greater food system.

Literature - Words are sweet, but they never take the place of food[3].

Any research about or around food unleashes a 'Pandora's box' of complexities as food is intrinsically embedded into almost every part of human existence. In some ways I felt that I had 'bitten off more than I could chew'. In an attempt to digest the enormous amount of literature on food (in) security I chose to separate my reading into bite-size, thematic portions.

My reading began with Tom Standage's work *An edible history of humanity* (2009) which gives a fascinating overview of the role of food in causing, enabling and influencing successive transformations of human society. Food is used as a lens with which to view

[3] An Ibo proverb

history of human kind, including how humans chose to organise, trade and develop. Jane Guyer's *Feeding African Cities: Studies in Regional Social* (1987) is considered a seminal text on the greater food systems at play and served to contextualise the history of the food system that exists today in contemporary African cities. Diana Wylie attempts to historically contextualize the role of food within a South African context in her work *Starving on a full stomach: Hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa* (2001). She illustrates how hunger was used as a vehicle of the South African apartheid state to exercise and spread ideologies of cultural racism. It explores the role of food as central to group identity, in particular as a marker of differentiation between particular races, classes, genders and geographic regions. Also it looks at how concepts of nutrition and hunger were tackled in South Africa over the last century. This work situates the current geopolitics of hunger (in South Africa) in a historical context as the contemporary experience of hunger is a result of decades of political and socio-economic decisions being made by various actors.

The research conducted by the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) served to provide me with a deeper understanding into the state of contemporary food security both in South Africa and in the region. Their eleven city, nine country survey created a holistic overview and assisted me with refining my area of inquiry. Their survey, which focused on: urban household composition, household expenditure, the link between poverty and food security and determinants of household food insecurity, provided me with insight into what were the urban poor's main obstacles in accessing food. Although this research filled a glaring gap by being able to provide a rich quantitative analysis of the household food security of the urban poor, it lacked in providing a household narrative of food provisioning strategies. Leonie Joubert's book *The Hungry Season: Feeding Southern Africa's Cities* (2012) in some ways takes the research conducted by AFSUN and grounds it in the real life stories of eight, diverse, South African families. Through these stories Joubert explores the lived experience of hunger and the strategies that various households engage with on a daily basis as an attempt to increase household resilience to food insecurity.

Relevant to my research was a broad range of literature that not only looked directly at food security but also delved into changing household composition, the nature of African urbanism and gender relations within South African urban communities.

In order to position my research at a household level ethnographies such as Bank's *Home Spaces, Street Styles: Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (2011) and Murray's (1981) *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho* assisted in giving insight into how South Africa's history of migrant labour has shaped the current household dynamics and the importance of the rural and urban household dynamic. *Rogue Urbanism: Emergent African Cities* (2013) a recent volume edited by Edgar Pieterse and AbdouMaliq Simone grapples with the complexities of theorizing 'African Urbanities'. The articles in this volume not only gave me a fresh perspective with which to interrogate the functioning of modern cities but also gave me insight as to how urban dwellers attempt to navigate and produce life in the city.

Since households are a microcosm of society it was important for me to frame my research using a gendered lens. The experience of hunger is not the same amongst all poor people nor is it the same within a household. Sarah Mosoetsa's work *Eating from one pot: The dynamics of survival in poor South African households* (2011) as well as the Agenda volume *Gender, food and nutrition security* (2010) explores the role of women within households and communities and how greater pressure is being put on woman but more specifically grandmothers in ensuring access to food. Mosoetsa's work highlights the household as both a site of refuge and a site of conflict given the South African context of inequality, unemployment and poverty and the important role that is played by the informal economy.

In addition I read various government reports and presidential speeches that dealt with the state of food security in South Africa and possible solutions. Much research has been conducted around notions of food (in) security around the world. A multitude of surveys and quantitative methodologies have been employed that have produced statistical data and a broad analysis of hunger in the world. The quantitative documenting of levels of hunger and food insecurity has always been problematic due to the complex nature of defining what

exactly constitutes food insecurity. For example, various studies in South Africa have results ranging from 12.2% of the population being food insecure to 52% of the population (Altman et al, 2009).

In my reading, what has been lacking with regards to research on food security (especially in Africa and South Africa in particular) is ethnographic analysis at a household level. Much of South Africa's policies that deal with food security are developed from research which provides broad overviews of household income and expenditure and household consumption. There seems to be a vacuum in terms of research conducted in urban areas as well as a distinct lack of empirical data with regard to the status of food security in South Africa. Furthermore clear categories of 'urban and rural'; 'formal and informal economies'; 'nuclear and extended households', are used with not a lot of attention paid to the grey areas in between. It is in these grey areas that I am most interested.

In addition most literature focuses directly on the exact nature of the food that is eaten, that is, issues such as what is the food, where was it purchased, what is its nutritional content. My focus however, is not on the physical or symbolic nature of the food but on what were the various negotiations at play that created the opportunity for individuals to gain (or create) access to it. It is only when there is a full understanding of the entire food system at both a quantitative and ethnographic level that interventions can be made more effective and contextually appropriate.

CHAPTER 2

Survival in the City

> *"A city (whether global or not) is not simply a string of infrastructures, technologies, and legal entities, however networked these are. It also comprises actual bodies, images, forms, footprints, and memories. The everyday human labour mobilized in building specific city forms is not only material. It is also artistic and aesthetic. Furthermore, rather than opposing the 'formal' with the informal', or the 'visible' with the 'invisible', we need a more complex anthropology of things, forms and signs in order to account for the life of the city in Africa." (Nuttall and Mbembe, 2008: 8-9)*

Before even approaching a discussion around how households in Tembisa deal with food security under conditions of poverty, it is important to frame specifically what is meant by the terms 'poor', 'urban' and 'households' as each of these terms are vitally significant in how food provision is perceived and lived.

Who are 'the poor'?

In my initial proposal I was aiming to interrogate what I called "strategies of the 'urban poor' in achieving a semblance of food security". Upon further reflection and reading it became evident that the idea of a homogenous 'urban poor' is a loaded and politically contested term. This is firstly in how 'the poor' are defined and secondly, how this category is mobilised by various bodies and utilised for particular ends. "The poor" has come to represent "those seemingly excluded from the [South Africa's] transition" (Naidoo, 2007:58).

The definition of 'poverty' and 'the poor' is an important factor to take into consideration. Historically the idea of 'the poor' has been framed in a number of ways, mainly dependent on who is doing the framing. For example, when the church's voice is the loudest, 'the poor' are referred to as objects of pity and charity with calls for the 'non-poor' to be generous in their

treatment of ‘the poor’. When the voices of state authorities are the loudest ‘the poor’ are seen as threats, people that needed to be excluded or eliminated to restore public order. And when ‘the poor’ are framed by economists, they are seen as a potentially productive resource that could yield profits for the general good (Wylie, 2001).

In her study of households in two communities in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Sarah Mosoetsa (2011: 48) found it useful to place poor households into three categories: those that were declining, those that were coping and those that were improving, with each of the categories being based on access to resources, assets and opportunities. Although Mosoetsa’s categorisations are analytical abstractions, and are therefore limited in their capacity to reveal the full range of household trajectories, she does highlight the “fluidity of poverty” in that “households move in and out of poverty according to the threats, risks and shocks that they face at any one time” (48).

Mbembe (as cited by Ross) frames the lives experienced by the poor as a sort of “raw life”, “the distress of experience deprived of power, peace and rest” (Ross, 2010: 5). This “raw life” is epitomised by instability and structural violence and temporality is orientated to the immediate present. “The result for many extremely poor people is a kind of ontological insecurity and the production and contestation of forms of rawness that may appear to be self-willed but are in fact historical” (Ross, 2010: 211).

In order to target interventions and work towards the Millennium Development goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger, the definition of poverty is framed by the World Bank as individuals living on under $1.25 a day (Ravallion, 2009) However, the poverty line of an individual shifts depending on the country, area, cost of living, their family circumstance, cultural practices and access to social capital. For example, the requirements for survival in rural South Africa cannot be equated to those for survival in urban South Africa. Also, this statistic hinges on the idea of monetary income as the universal indicator of wealth and subsequent wellbeing, which is not always the case.

Ashwin Desai’s book *We are the Poors* (2002), tells the story of ‘the poor’ living in an Indian township in post-Apartheid South Africa. His definition of ‘the poor’ is grounded in

individual narratives of hardship and struggle. Desai defines "the poors" as the "unemployed, single mother, community defender, neighbour, factory worker, popular criminal, rap artist and genuine ou [good human being]." He maintains that although South Africa's history of Apartheid and inequality has resulted in race being at the forefront of any struggle agenda, class is now the marker for the dispossessed and disempowered. In this context the collective identity of 'the poor' was mobilised by those in the community to resist evictions, retrenchments and service cut-offs. In addition Desai brings to the fore an emic definition of 'the poor' which is based on self-categorisation. This has significant relevance in South Africa as the state offers state funded social grants on the basis that the applicant meets specific criteria. Identifying as poor and proving poverty by the state's criteria can potentially increase an individual's access to resources.

In the context of this particular research, my focus will be on the 'food insecure'. However, the 'food insecure' and 'the poor' are very closely linked. Sen (1981) emphasized the roles of access within any food system. That is, that although sufficient amounts of food are available to populations, it is the inability to access that food that causes hunger and in extreme cases, famine. This access can be limited by many things for example, geography and political power but the most prevalent factor that dictates levels of access in a neo-liberal, market economy is income. In South Africa, especially in urban areas, individuals are reliant on purchased food as there is very little time, space, land and skills to subsistence farm. As a result people are more sensitive to fluctuations in food and fuel prices. It has also been established that poor people have to spend a larger portion of their income on food (Rudolf et al, 2012: 16). As a result of this complex relationship, reducing poverty is a crucial facet of any effort to reduce food insecurity.

Therefore, in South Africa very strong parallels can be drawn between those defined as 'poor' and those defined as 'food insecure', although tensions do exist between these two terms as there are not entirely congruent. As a result it is important not to conflate these two definitions as one cannot assume food insecurity from a context of poverty and vice versa. For example, an individual may have no access to monetary income but may have a thriving food garden or access to social capital whereby they have access to food. Or a person may have access

nominally ‘sufficient’ income (i.e. above the poverty line) but choose to not spend that money on food. In sum “poverty creates food insecurity, worsens existing types and levels of food insecurity and may also be a consequence of food insecurity” (Devereux et al, 2001: 67).

Within a Southern African context the African Food Security Urban Network conducted a baseline survey that sheds some broad light on the relationship between poverty and food insecurity. This consisted of eleven cities across nine Southern African Development Community countries between 2008 and 2009 to ascertain quantitative data around the level of food security in particular areas (Frayne et al, 2010). Prior to this, levels of food security in South Africa were inferred from General Household Surveys, National Food Consumption Surveys and Income and Expenditure Surveys. These baseline surveys (based on a cross-tabulation of multiple measurement scales and indicators) tend to paint a general picture of food insecurity with “77 percent of poor urban households surveyed reporting conditions of food insecurity”; that poverty and food insecurity are directly correlated; that the size and composition of the household impacts levels of food security and that food security has a gendered dimension to it with female-headed households being more food insecure than male-headed households (Frayne, et at, 2010).

The recognition that women experience poverty differently to men is vital in the analysis of the food security of households, as I go on to discuss below.

The Feminisation of Poverty

> *“It’s difficult to find good help for my business. Some days they come some days they don’t. They are always late. I don’t hire women. Their boyfriends are always coming and wanting things for free. They give me problems. Sometimes they have children. Then they have to take the children to the clinic or to school”*

These are the words of Jacob, a twenty eight year old, Eastern Cape born man that now runs a successful stand that sells vetkoek on the pavements of Tembisa. At the surface Jacob has

chosen to break-away from the traditional gender roles by learning how to bake from his grandmother and spend his days making vetkoek. However, he continues reinforce gender stereotypes by his policy not to employ women.

A disparity in access to employment, education, income, credit and earning capacity between men and women is an almost universally acknowledged reality. And since there is an increasing reliance on purchased food, an ability to earn an income is central to any likelihood of achieving a level of food security. The institutionalised marginalisation of women has served to exclude women from accessing spaces to exercise decision making power. Much has been written about the feminisation of poverty and that women are perceived as the traditional nurturers and caregivers in the domestic sphere and are more susceptible to structural violence.[4] The feminisation of poverty in Tembisa is a lived reality for many of the households I engaged with. The roles and responsibilities of women within the home illustrate that the image of the stereotypical 'mother' is still alive. Subsequently the vulnerability to food insecurity is clearly gendered. Tembi, a close friend of Phindi who is a young unemployed woman that lives with her grandmother, expresses this as an extension of gender differentiation established in rural cultural practices and then brought into town:

> *At the rural areas the boys do nothing. They look after the cows and sleep. And by the time they come back from the cows the women have to have the food ready. It's our culture. Women are working more than their husbands*
>
> *If a woman cooks rice for 2 days, she wants divorce* - Mike

However, one cannot make the assumption that due to the gendered nature of wage labour and the feminisation of poverty, the majority of female headed households will always be far more food insecure than male headed households. "Women have more ways of making money when unemployed as compared to men" (Cross and Altman, 2010: 33), this is said in relation to women's role in the informal economy as well as with regards to accessing social welfare.

[4] "Structural violence refers to structural problems such as poverty, gender inequalities, or social status that impede personal agency and interfere with people's ability to access basic needs" (Brenton, et al, 2011: 82).

Although women are more excluded in the formal economy, they have access to spaces in the informal economy such a street food vending, home industries, hair salons, sex work and more access to state safety nets such as child-care grants. As Bank (2011) points out, although women often rely on men for income, women should not necessarily be framed as vulnerable, passive victims of their disadvantaged positions; rather, they should be seen as playing an active role in sustaining and shaping their various exchange systems. This said, it is still important to note that by 2010 the official rate of female unemployment was 27.3% in comparison to male unemployment (27.6%) (Altman & Ngandu, 2010: 55). In Tembisa every household I spent time in relied on at least one government grant (received directly or indirectly through a family member) as part of their regular household income. In almost every case it was a female in the household that received the grant (mainly pension or child-support grants). Although in some cases this serves to increase the woman's economic power, it also causes tensions and conflict between the genders and the generations as it is often a pension grant that the household relies upon.

As is evident in my research my focus has been on the key roles that women play within the maintenance of households both as the 'nurturers' and the providers of income (monetary and otherwise). Oldewage-Theron et al (2006) in their research on coping strategies in the Vaal Triangle in Gauteng noted that "maternal buffering" was a frequently used strategy in households' attempt to combat food insecurity. This is where the caregiver (usually the mother or the grandmother) limits their intake of food in order to provide for children in the household.

The issue of the feminisation of poverty has been the subject of much scrutiny. Governments, policy makers, civil society and academics, all hold a certain amount of agreement that women's experience of poverty differs from that of men. As a result of traditional gender roles, differing access to employment, health and education, control of resources and decision making power on all levels, women are generally harder hit by political, economic and environmental crises. Much criticism has been targeted at national policies because although it has been widely acknowledged that poverty is deeply gendered, policies tend to be gender neutral with no attempt made to close the gender gap. Policies tend to treat poverty as a

homogenous category without taking into account the complex, differentiated experiences of poverty (Ruiters & Wildschutt, 2010).

When looking at resource management within households, it is important to ask who brings in the income, how is it distributed, who decides how to distribute it and who it benefits as often it is the vulnerable groups that lack the decision making power around the distribution of resources.

> *The politics of food are highly gendered. Women are often understood as the primary food managers in charge of purchasing, growing, cooking and consumption within the home or homestead. While gendered debates around challenging the "rightfulness" of this social role that women play is important, the politics in Southern Africa are a reality. This means that any discussion around food and food security has to involve women in their various capacities. Loots (2007: 85)*

Households

In this research my aim is provide some insight as to how it is that households are working (or in some cases not working) to provide a level of food security. In order to do this it is important to acknowledge and analyse the nature and role of 'the household' within a South African context as the shifting nature of 'the household' is a key factor when attempting to determine the nature of food security.

In some literature 'households' are defined as those people that share at least one meal, that is, "eat from one pot" every day (Mosoetsa, 2011) rather than those who merely inhabit the same physical integrated structure (what I refer to as the 'home'). This understanding of 'household' needs to undergo a re evaluation, as I feel it is not an adequate definition when working in areas that have fluctuating levels of food (in)security. For example, Phindi's home consists of three adult family members and four tenants. Food is not shared on a consistent basis as access to food is not always constant; however, when there is food it is shared. This

sharing is sporadic and unpredictable. So, although they all do not share a meal everyday, I would consider them as part of the same household. In addition, when access to food is dire, individuals sharing a home sometimes have to fend for themselves in that they take advantage of individual opportunities that are presented to them.

The household is related to, but not congruent to 'the home', which may be conceptualised as a physical structure or a symbolic space. The 'home' as a physical structure is vital in the assessment of food security as its structure influences the level of vulnerability experienced by the residents. For example, if a home does not have access to clean, running water, it is less likely that food will be adequately washed therefore there will be a higher likelihood of the consumption of contaminated food. The presence of a refrigerator could indicate that the residents are able to store food safely and as a result could choose to buy food in bulk. The 'home' can also be interpreted as a symbolic space, a space to provide a sense of belonging, which is very important when taking into account the history of migrant labour in South Africa (Banks, 2011). The symbolic boundaries of the home are important as they define who has access (and who does not) to the resources of those that comprise 'the home'. The 'home' in its composition also has an impact on the level of food in/security experienced by the residents. Whether the household is comprised of family members or tenants; if it is female or male centered; the presence of children and pensioners all has an impact in how the household is maintained and how resources are distributed (Dodson et al, 2012).

Ross, in her work *Raw life, new hope: decency, housing and everyday life in a post-apartheid community* (2009) views "the household, [as]… an analytic category, a way that social relationships of a particular kind can be envisaged and measured" (89). The household is viewed as a fluid entity that structures and restructures itself to capitalize on opportunities. It is also a site for increased gender differentials regarding the negotiation and contestation of traditional gender roles and power dynamics. As a result the household can be a site for security and co-operation as well as a site of conflict and competition. The changing nature of the household and livelihood systems was initially cited as a contributing factor for increased food insecurity but the adaptations of these systems have also served to act as strategies to cope with hardships.

The role that household composition plays in its capacity to secure food and its complex relationship with varying levels of food security will be discussed in more depth at a later stage. It is important to note that in addition to the physical and symbolic significance of 'home', the geographic location of 'the home' is vitally important. As a result of South Africa's history of systematic segregation and migrant labour, households have been structured in particular ways that serves to complicate the relationship between rural and urban households. Much work has been conducted around the rural-urban relationship and the fact that rural-urban cannot be viewed as binary (Crush, 2009; Murray, 1981; Wilson & Ramphele, 1989). Although I will not delve into the complexities directly, when discussing the role of both food and monetary remittances across and between rural and urban households (and increasingly across urban and urban households) it will be increasingly clear that urban households cannot be viewed in clearly bounded terms.

The nature of the rural-urban connection has always been a complex one. During Apartheid there existed a strong economic tie between rural and urban households with remittances being sent from family members employed in the cities to their families in the rural areas. However, as a result of high unemployment this urban to rural flow of assistance is becoming increasingly rare with those living in urban areas unable to sustain themselves in the cities as the cost of living is high and support is lacking.

Understanding the urban household and its ability (or inability) to make itself resilient in a context of ever-present job insecurity and rising unemployment is essential for any attempt to tackle the predicament of unequal access to food.

However, households are a microcosm of society. One cannot assume that the household is a homogenous entity that offers security in the rising tide of poverty, hunger and vulnerability. Many theorists, researchers and writers use terms such as "altruistic collectivity" and "welfare maximization" and include a gendered dimension with "maternal altruism". This assumes that 'the household' acts as a collective unit and unites in their activities to improve the situation of all those in it. This is not always the case. Sarah Mosoetsa's work amongst households in two different areas in KwaZulu Natal shows that households are also sites of conflict and

tension, where income, distribution and access are all controlled by unequal power dynamics. Control and allocation of resources within the household is "a complex process which has to be seen in relation to a web of rights and obligations" Kabeer (1994) as cited in Mosoetsa, 2011). Dreze and Sen (1989) define cooperative conflict as "co-existence of congruence and conflict of interests providing grounds for co-operation as well as for disputes and conflicts" (11). Sen asserts that one cannot assume that all parties work together towards a collectively agreed upon goal. For example, within a household there may be a perception of co-operation in that individual members seemingly cooperate, however there will also be elements of conflict with regards to gender divisions of labour, income distributions and roles and responsibilities.

Big City Life

By 2030 nearly 50% of all Africans will be living in urban areas (UN Habitat, 2008: 34). In addition two-thirds of South Africans already live in urban areas. The Johannesburg-centered Gauteng Urban Region is considered the largest urban area in South Africa (136). The rate of urbanization in South Africa has far surpassed the ability of cities to absorb and be able to provide adequate housing, employment and various basic services to the urban population. This is not only increasing the burden on urban infrastructure but it is increasing the burden on the individual's ability to rely on family networks and community support.

The impact of urbanization on food security (and vise versa) has many different facets that bring together issues of urban infrastructure, social support, access to land, the global economy and local politics. Theorizing and interventions around issues of food security are generally acknowledged to have had a rural bias and to have been orientated more towards a concern for the production of food (as opposed to an emphasis on increasing access to food). Crush refers to this marginalization of the urban food security agenda as the "invisible crisis" (Crush, 2009). State and civil society interventions have prioritized the plight of communities living in rural areas and emphasized interventions involving increasing small-holder production and national production of crops/food. For example, global development agencies and philanthropic foundations such as the World Bank and The Alliance for a Green

Revolution in Africa target their investment in sub-Saharan Africa at small holder farmers as the key to solving food insecurity in the region (Crush, 2009). Policies such as the Southern African Development Community Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and Food Security Framework both acknowledge that poverty is widespread and experienced differentially. However food security is still framed firmly as a rural issue with the difference between urban and rural food accessibility rarely taken into account.

This rural bias is misplaced in the current demographics of African cities. Currently the majority of people considered 'poor', reside in cities around the world where there exists a basic needs deprivation. For example the South African 2011 Census (41) shows that only 57, 2% of dwellings in the Ekuruleni Municipality (the municipal district that houses Tembisa) have piped water inside the dwelling and 15% of households do not have flush toilets connected to the sewerage system. As a result there is an increasing concern around issues of food security in the urban context. Access to clean water and sanitation goes hand-in-hand with levels of food security experienced in a household. Without clean water it is difficult to have clean hands, clean food and a clean environment.

I will briefly discuss some of the factors that make it increasingly difficult for the inhabitants of urban areas to achieve a semblance of food security for themselves and their households citing examples in Tembisa. These are just general descriptions of the difficulties that individuals encounter in attempting to achieve food security in an urban context. How they engage with these difficulties and try to navigate around and through them will be the crux of my discussion.

Food in the 'Market' System

In Johannesburg not unlike most cities, "cash is king". Many people migrate to urban areas with the hopes of gaining employment, receiving a salary and using that salary to support themselves and their families. People have to pay for most things including housing, transport, rent and most importantly food. In South Africa the majority of people purchase

their food from shops. Due to many factors (for example, access to land, water and equipment), it is difficult and unrealistic for most urban dwellers to grow their own food to subsidize their diets. Opportunities to barter for food are also limited as those who have access to food would rather exchange the food for money (as opposed to other products or services). For example a fruit vendor I encountered had very strict rules about eating his own stock: he would sometimes go to bed hungry instead of eating some of the fruits and vegetables he sells. This is indicative to the importance of ensuring that the potential sources of cash are prioritised over temporary hunger. A reliance on the market economy and purchased food has also resulted in household income and the price of food being key determinants of food security. This dependence on a cash economy (and thereby a dependence on purchased food) has also resulted in income being a deciding factor when it comes to household food security. Whether an individual receives money from formal employment, informal employment, state transfers, aid or even illegal activities, it is vital for household to receive an income for survival. On average an urban household also tends to spend a greater percentage of their household income on food than rural households (Devereux et al, 2001: 75), thus the urban poor are increasingly vulnerable to market forces that they have no control over, such as inflation and increased food prices. For example, the combination of the rapid food price inflation and economic downturn in 2008 contributed to a rise in the proportion of hungry South African between 2007 and 2008 (Jacobs, 2010)

But not everything is worse in the city, in some ways availability of food in urban areas is better (even though access to that food may not be). Cities have larger supermarkets that have the ability to bulk buy and therefore can sell food for cheaper. There is also more competition between retailers which allow the consumer more opportunities for price comparisons and bulk buying. However, these supermarkets are often inaccessible (especially to a population that is reliant on public transport) and do not offer credit (which is essential for those with an inconsistent income). Informal street vendors and spaza shops are more accessible, can sell food in smaller quantities and are able to offer credit and the possibility of bargaining down prices, however, they tend to be more expensive than supermarkets.

Every food insecure household cited in this research identified a lack of income as the greatest hindrance to accessing food. With South Africa's unemployment rate being 32% (Mosoetsa, 2011: 1), urban dwellers pivot their attempts to carve out their livelihoods and purchase food around the informal economy. This constant negotiation between informal and formal spaces as a way in which to create opportunities to improve household resilience and diversify livelihood strategies will be discussed later in the light of food security strategies.

Urban Living Conditions

In the household I stayed with, there are six adults and one child living on the property. Two adults live in the main house and the rest rent individual rooms that have been built on the property. There is one shared bathroom and one tap. The main house has a freezer but no refrigerator. None of the individuals have complete housing security as the renters rent rooms per month and the owners of the house are frequently unable to pay their rates so run the risk of the municipality evicting them. This living situation is not uncommon in Tembisa. This lack of housing security, cramped living quarters, limited access to water and sanitation and inability to store food dramatically affects the levels of food security in households. Adults and children are more susceptible to disease and infection, and the lack of access to health care facilities and educational institutions means that the poverty cycle is likely to be perpetuated (Brenton et al, 2011). For example, when the water is cut off in Tembisa, residents have to borrow water from various parts of the location. As a result of this labour intensive work, water is used sparingly, hence hands are not washed adequately, neither is food. When individuals get sick they spend hours queuing at the local clinic which generally provides them with inappropriate medicine that has to be eaten after a meal. Due to a lack of food security and ability to provide healthy nutritious foods, the efficacy of the medicine is decreased and individuals remain sicker for longer, with rate of infection increased due to cramped living quarters.

Every day life in the urban landscape

The ‘big city lifestyle’ is also a key factor when differentiating the difference between food security in the rural areas and food security in the cities. The city is spread out with people having to commute to get to work or to find work. City living is seen as fast-paced with people perpetually on the move with a relatively high cost of living when compared to most rural areas. This hustle and bustle view of the city ensures that the idea of fast-food has been embedded and has flourished. People rely on fast-food and road side food for many reasons. Often, it is because there is little or no time to cook or that storage of fresh produce is problematic. Fast-food and street food is also often cheaper than it would be to cook at home. Fast-food fills a gap in the urban lifestyle, it is available quickly and cheaply and conveniently, all the things that are needed for an urban dweller.

Although the draw to the consumption of fast-food is often material, there is also an ideological aspect to the appeal of fast-food. Fast-food is also aspirational. It is marketed as a core ingredient to modern, affluent living. Fast-food retailers can be found on every corner of the city, it is convenient, cheap and cool. The availability and accessibility of fast-food in the cities as compared to rural areas makes for a different challenge when having to address food security issues in urban areas. Although the presence of cheap, fast-food chains technically increase access to food for the urban poor, the food that is purchased is low in nutritional value and is more likely to lead to undernourishment.

A city is often conceived of as a giant living, breathing organism filled with face-less, name-less people: as a place where you don’t know your neighbor, crime is rife and where pollution a given. The increase of household isolation and breaking down of kinship networks have all played a role in decreasing an individual’s social capital and support structures (Cross & Altman, 2010). However, through this research I would like to create a more nuanced perspective of life in the city.

The City of Gold

With all the negative aspects of 'the city', that is, unemployment, poverty, lack of infrastructure and congestion, why is the rate of urbanization showing no signs of stopping or even decreasing? When speaking to Tembisa residents it became clear why there is an increasing trend to want to be a part of 'the city'.

It is better to be unemployed in the city than unemployed in the rural areas. Those people are backward and there are no opportunities. It's boring and everyone knows your business - Phindi

At least here [in the city] you can clean someone's garden for money. There is no money to stay in the city but in the rural areas it's bad - Tembi

Even though opportunities are lacking in urban areas, there is the understanding that there are more than what would be available in the rural areas. Cities give the poor access to more platforms with which to engage for example, a more diverse range of people which could potentially lead to an increased opportunity to generate income.

However, it is important not to create a binary between rural and urban spaces as there often is an overlap. With South Africa's long history of rural/urban migration often households are stretched between both spaces with individuals having homes in the rural and urban areas. As a result there are often transfers that take place between these households as they are neither static nor constant. Many people I have spoken to in Tembisa return to their family homes in the rural areas at least once every few years (when they can afford it). Jonathan Crush's (2012) *Migration, Development and Urban Food Security,* clearly outlines the complexities of this rural urban relationship and the nature of the transfers between them. In the past many rural households had come to depend on remittances sent by family members that migrate to work in the city. However, in the current economic climate of rising unemployment, it is becoming increasingly difficult for households to depend on those transfers. Although Crush's research delves into the changing nature of household remittances, the household that

I resided in received very little assistance by any family regardless of where their family was based.

Living in the city is also an attempt to shrug off rural ‘backwards’ roots with a desire to don all the characteristics of a ‘modern’, educated city dweller. There is a status attached to living in a city, even if life in the city is not all that is imagined in the hopes and dreams of someone who chose to travel and live in the city.

Johannesburg (affectionately known as ‘Jozi’) specifically offers an additional lure in that it is known as “eGoli - The City of Gold” and functions as South Africa’s economic hub. Historically people migrated to Johannesburg during the gold rush in search of wealth and opportunities to be found in and around the gold mines. To this day, the rising levels of unemployment and inadequate infrastructural support is not enough to deter those who still want to find their fortune in Jozi. Living in the city is seen as one step closer to achieving wealth and prosperity which cannot be found in the rural areas.

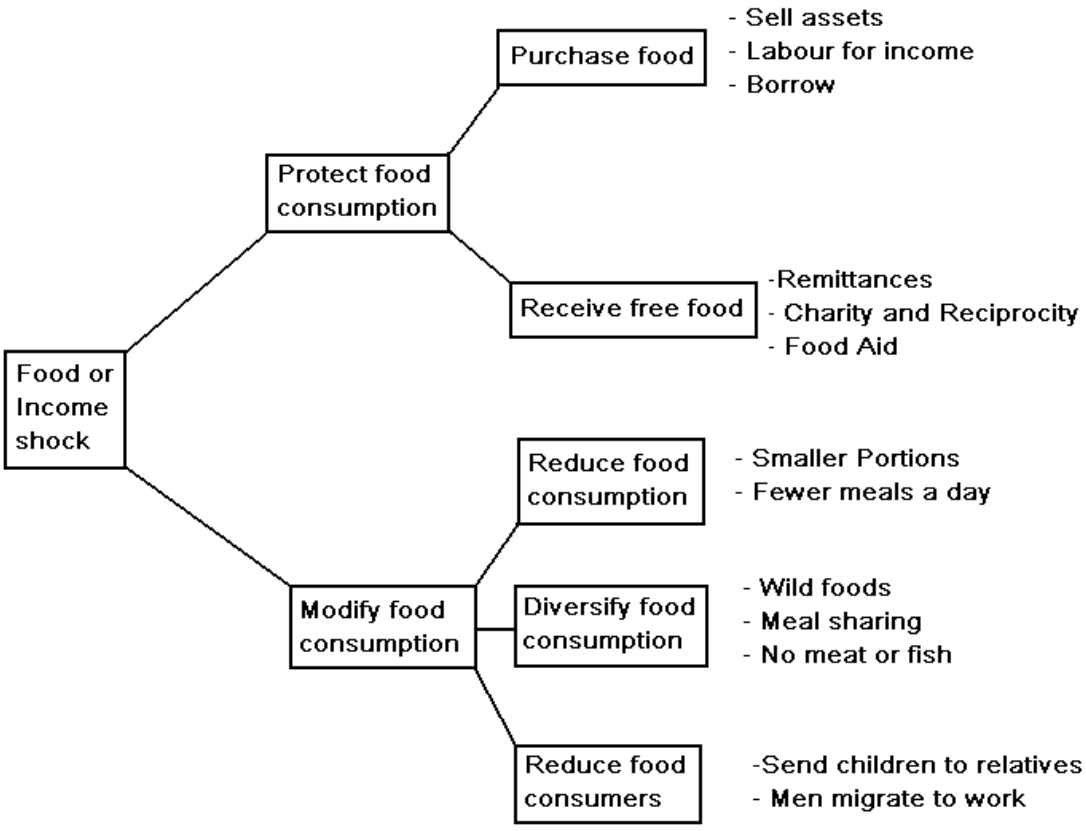
CHAPTER 3

Ukuphanda – "To make a plan"

Everyday life in Tembisa can broadly be described as a life navigating an assortment of scarcities but the one thing that is compulsory and non-negotiable is food. Food is key to survival and the acquiring of food using whatever means you have at your disposal is what drives the actions of many of Tembisa's residents. These strategies are multi-faceted and highly complex. Every individual is in a constant state of assessment and reassessment of themselves, their resources and whatever leverage they have or they can build for themselves. I would like to paint the picture of the multiple strategies used by the women I spent time with in Tembisa. As much as many of these women are victims of their circumstances, they are also active agents who make decisions to engage with people and spaces in strategic ways in an attempt (that is not always successful) to put food on the table everyday. Below is a diagram taken from Devereux and Maxwell's (2001) "Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa" illustrating the 'food coping strategies' that were engaged in, in areas where there was a food or income shock. The term 'food shock' refers to something that affects the availability of or ability to access, food. This could be taken to include sudden price rises in food, climatic situations that affect the production of food or the loss of income when a household member loses the ability to trade labour/services for income.

This diagram clearly represents some of the actions that food insecure individuals and households pursue when faced with limited access to food. Although this diagram does maintain a rural bias it still is a useful tool in assessing the various activities that individuals and households engage in to try and soften the blow of a food or income shock. Many of these activities will come up in the discussion, however, my focus lies in how it is that women create the opportunities that allow for these actions to take place. How are some women able to maximize their assets (in the broadest definition) to enable them to, for example get 'labour for income' or 'receive free food'? In addition I will place many of these activities within a modern, urban context for example many women in Tembisa do trade 'labour for income' and

this labour comes in many forms such as opening home industries, gaining employment in the formal market and sex work.



Abdoumaliq Simone (2004) makes a distinction between traditional views of 'infrastructure' and what has come to serve as the functioning 'infrastructure' in contemporary, urban African cities. He focuses on the notion of "people as infrastructure" (2004: 407). Traditionally infrastructure is seen as the physical resources of a city which enables the city and subsequently the residents to be productive, that is, the water systems, roads, electric cabling. It is through the use (or often manipulation) of this infrastructure that residents are able to be useful in the sense that they can pursue livelihoods and take care for their families. However,

in Tembisa, like in many of the poorer areas of South Africa, this infrastructure is either non-existent or functioning inadequately. South African townships are beset by failures in service provision, with strikes and protests increasing in frequency and violence. Simone argues that as a result of the lack of infrastructure in the traditional sense, a "highly urbanized social infrastructure" (407) is being constituted which empowers residents to create spaces and relationships that are highly flexible and mobile which they can use to navigate their landscapes and 'get things done' with limited means. Residents "engage complex combinations of objects, spaces, persons and practices. These conjunctions become an infrastructure – "a platform for reproducing life in the city (408).

When people have little in the way of physical assets and resources, their greatest asset is themselves and the various networks they create and draw upon at strategic times in strategic ways. This "infrastructure" that is created serves to situate individuals in a complex web of modalities that have to respond to fluctuating political, environmental and social changes and be able to absorb various stresses. One of the major differences between this type of infrastructure and the more traditional definition is that these networks are seemingly invisible. Additionally what I draw from Simone's use of 'people as infrastructure' is that it not only highlights individual attempts to maximize outcomes through the engagement in social relationships of various forms but strategic engagements with space and time. He highlights not only the relationship between people but the relationships of people with the urban landscape.

The power of social capital has become the urban poor's greatest defense against food insecurity. This is nothing new. Moore and Vaughn's study of the Bemba people in the Northern Province of Zambia (1890 – 1990) show how pivotal gifting and bartering was used between households to ensure food security. Households were not clearly bounded units when it came to food consumption. Joint housekeeping amongst the women of the community served to ease the burden of food insecurity and childcare. Leonie Joubert's recent book *The Hungry Season; Feeding Southern African's Cities* (2012), illustrates the same understanding of social capital but places it in a contemporary urban South African setting. It is clear that the poor in South Africa still heavily rely on kinship networks and reciprocity in order to

maximize their food security. However, with the increase in mobility of individuals living in urban areas and the need to go where ever the jobs are, an incredible strain is being put on kinship networks. As a result, instead of relying on familial relationships, the urban poor are becoming more and more reliant on non-familial relationships, for example, owners of the local shops (for credits and loans), church, schools and soup kitchens.

The category of people that have to adopt this fluid and adaptive way of life is referred to as a precariat by Waquant, "an amalgamation of people who lack social organisation and access to secure wage labour employment. They now mostly live by their wits, depending on part-time casual employment, welfare grants and hustling in the informal economy" (Bank, 2011: 28). Moore and Vaughan's (1985) illustration of the use of tactical employment strategies of people in Nyasaland during the famine of the 1940's speaks directly to this idea of 'the hustle'. For example, domestic work was one of the lowest paid jobs that women could access, however during the famine it was more important to access food than money and domestic employment gave these women access to rations from their employers.

Mike (part of the first group of individuals and families relocated to Tembisa in 1957) tells a similar story in a South African context:

> *My mother was a domestic worker. She would bring the leftovers from work. We didn't care what it was we would enjoy. As young boys we would wait at the train station for domestic workers to get leftovers. Maybe that's why we thought white people are kind.*

It is important not to romanticize this notion of sharing, reciprocity and 'people as infrastructure', as I feel that Simone sometimes does. Many residents in Tembisa work tirelessly to create temporary stability and security; this is in the face of poverty, social and institutional failures, unrelenting structural violence and reduced opportunities.

I arrived at Phindi's house and there was no water. Water for the area has been cut-off without warning and with no indication for how long this would last. This is a regular occurrence in

Tembisa. She and her sister started talking with the three male municipal workers that were digging up the road and it was established that there was a leak in the pipe that had to be fixed, and there was no indication of how long this would take to fix. The conversation between the sisters and the men then moved on to politics with the workers advocating for the African National Congress and the sisters maintaining that there was no point in voting for a party that did nothing for them. For half an hour there was back and forth, heated but friendly debate around all matters of politics from voting, foreigners and jobs, with no more mention of the water pipe and its need to be fixed. There was an unspoken understanding that it will happen in time. However, upon declaring our goodbyes, an offer from the men was proposed. For R2000 they can reset the water meter and connect it such a way that water from Phindi's house will not register with the municipality. Tempting as this may be, the sisters laughed them off and did not take them up on their offer "They're drunk and full of nonsense". After half an hour more of digging, they placed warning tape around the hole and drove off leaving their empty beer bottles behind. When they came back later, Phindi continued the friendly even flirtatious conversation about all manner of things, and although this time and effort conversing with the men did not pay off with regards to her water being turned on any faster they did buy her some cool drinks.

As much as this scene illustrates the importance of creating personal relationships, it also shows the need of individuals to constantly negotiate the spectrum of their personal visibility and invisibility. To be able to form relationships and networks with people, individuals are constantly communicating through how they dress, where they walk, who they talk to and how they talk to them. Sometimes outspoken, sometimes in the background watching things unfold, every individual is a constant absorber and disseminator of information. In the same light, in South Africa (as with many other countries) it is often in the best interest of the vulnerable to remain under the radar, especially from the ever-present eyes of the state. With the proliferation of illegal electricity connections, squatting, undocumented migrants and unregulated economies it is not in the best interest of residents of Tembisa to draw unnecessary attention to themselves.

"African cities don't work, or at least their characterizations are conventionally replete with depictions ranging from the valiant, if mostly misguided, struggles of the poor to eke out some minimal livelihood to the more insidious descriptions of bodies engaged in near-constant liminality, decadence, or religious and ethnic conflict. A more generous point of view concedes that African cities are works in progress, at the same time exceedingly creative and extremely stalled. In city after city, one can witness an incessant throbbing produced by the intense proximity of hundreds of activities: cooking, reciting, selling, loading and unloading, fighting, praying, relaxing, pounding, and buying, all side by side on stages too cramped, too deteriorated, too clogged with waste, history , and disparate energy, and sweat to sustain all of them. And yet they persist" (Simone, 2004: 1).

Hunting and Gathering in the City

Hunting and gathering food in the urban jungle is a highly complex and calculated engagement with the food system at a whole. In order to analyse the food that is on the table at the end of the day, it is important to know how it got there. Since my interest lies in the individual's engagement with the food system, I will concentrate on the final stages at the end of the food's journey—it's purchase and consumption (though not necessarily its disposal). Although I will touch on the idea of urban food gardening and a few individuals who grow their own food, my emphasis will be on the system that the majority of the people in Tembisa engage in, the 'market' system.

Audrey Richards work *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939) is considered a seminal ethnography in this field, it attempts to contextualize the role of food and diet and its impact on kinship patterns, livelihoods and political and economic organisation of the Bemba's community. Her work explores the relationships between regional and local processes, the relationship between household consumption and the greater economy, the impact of labour migration and the changing nature of sexual division of labour. *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia*

1890-1990 by Megan Vaughan and Henrietta Moore's (1994) is in fact a restudy of Richard's work. Where Richard's predicted that the introduction of the market economy and the subsequent dependence on bought food and wage (mainly migrant) labour would lead to a complete unraveling of the Bemba's traditional kinship structures. Vaughan and Moore show how the introduction of a cash economy did not break down kinship structures, but actually highlighted the flexible and innovative nature of kinship relations. Strategies were developed with regards to working the land and distributing resources that enabled individuals and households to maximize their food security.

Both Richard's and Vaughan and Moore's work maintains its relevance in the case of Tembisa as participation in the cash economy by residents of Tembisa has also led to the construction of innovative and complex relationships in the pursuit of individual and household food security. The majority of people in Tembisa purchase their vegetables, fruit and meat. This is the urban way, but how are decisions reached as to where, what and from whom the food is purchased? African Food Security Urban Network's research into where residents in some informal settlements mainly purchase from showed that an overwhelming majority of individuals frequent supermarkets for their monthly shopping; however they purchase their daily fruits and vegetables from informal street vendors. In Tembisa, these vendors are situated conveniently along the main roads, by the train station and a few fill their trolleys with specific produce and travel door-to-door alerting people with their distinctive bell ringing. The produce, though specialized between vendors, are actually quite general across the board. At any given group of vendors you will find the staple vegetables (spinach, tomatoes, onions, potatoes, green peppers, chilies); fruit (oranges, apples); meat (cheap cuts of chicken feet and intestines) sweets and single cigarettes. All the produce is arranged neatly grouped together offering the consumer the option of purchasing the items in singular or multiple forms. In addition vendors often buy certain products in bulk from formal retailers and then repackage it into more accessible portions For example one can buy a very small quantity of paraffin, enough to cook a single meal. In this situation both the consumers and the vendors have adopted their trading practices in order to cope with increased competition (from the expanding supermarkets) and rising cost of food in a context of decreasing income.

Refrigeration and storage is generally problem in Tembisa, along with a rat problem in Emoyeni section so vendors need to purchase as much as they know they can sell and individuals need to buy only enough for the next meal. Across the board the price of the produce on the informal market is more expensive than when bought at a commercial retail store. My first question was why do households not purchase slightly larger quantities for cheaper? The answer was, transport, storage and capital.

In South Africa, transport accounts for large portion of an individual's budget, whether it is for the use of a personal car or buses and taxis. In Tembisa the local Checkers supermarket is on the periphery of the location and is most easily accessed via taxi. Also purchasing in bulk requires transport in order to carry the groceries home. Most households do not have the capacity to store large amounts of food and the ability to buy in bulk requires an initial capital investment which is difficult to provide in an income insecure environment. As a result, most residents choose to only frequent the large stores around once a month to purchase their dry goods such as maize meal, tea, sugar and soap and use local street vendors for their daily provisions. Local vendors also offer the benefit of personal relations and opportunities to buy on credit which is vital for a household with an inconsistent income.

The purchasing of street food is a common way that many households feed themselves. As mentioned before 'plates' are too expensive for most households to buy on a daily basis. However, when taking into account the amount of time, energy, ingredients and electricity saved by not cooking, street food often fills the gap. For example, when Phindi's house did not have electricity, she explained it is easier, quicker and cheaper to go to the spaza and buy R15 chips for both of us to share than to purchase paraffin for the stove, oil and potatoes and prepare it herself. Also, there are particular vendors that are willing to sell on credit and various street food vendors that are known to give larger portions. For example, a portion of fried chips, a liter of cool drink and a loaf of bread costs approximately R40 and can be shared between 4-5 people. Though not necessarily nutritious, this meal would fill the individual's stomach for less (per head) than it would cost to cook the same meal. Many formally unemployed women in Tembisa cook food and sell it at taxi ranks and on the side of the road. The standard plate is R25 and consists of pap, meat and salad. The food is generally cooked

on wood/coal stoves or paraffin stoves as electricity is too expensive. These plates are usually bought by taxi drivers or police officers are they are seen as to be too expensive for the average resident. So although it is usually the employed taxi drivers or policemen that purchase 'plates' on a daily basis, I have observed that women often group together and purchase plates between themselves to share.

> *"We don't eat kotas (kotas being a quarter loaf of bread that is hollowed out and filled with chips, processed cheese and meat) because we have children. We eat half the kota and leave the other half for our children. It's better to buy chicken livers – because that way R10 can be for the whole family."* - Phindi.

There are certain foods and household items that are considered standard. When asked what were the first things bought when money is received, the answers were generally: maize meal; soap powder; tea; oil; sugar and a braai pack (a pack which contains some pieces of meat). The women that I spoke to all knew exactly which shops had specials on which items and exactly how much that item costs. This is indicative of how essential price comparisons are in households with limited and inconstant budgets.

Price comparisons go beyond the face value monetary cost of an item. When purchases have to be made, women use whatever leverage they have, for example sending the most attractive woman to buy from the shop with the lecherous shop owner as they know he will give her bones with more meat on them. The decision as to where, when, with whom and how food is purchased entails a constant weighing up of the cost benefits of one option versus another, but not simply in a monetary sense. The purchase of food brings into play one part of a greater social network, one that has to be constantly evaluated and cultivated. The purchasing of food either in formal supermarkets or informal vendors speaks to Sen's notion of 'access'. Both supermarkets and spaza shops (not to be viewed as dichotomous) come with advantages and disadvantages to the urban dweller; these get assessed and compared and utilized in the light of creating an improved access to food. Once again the issue lies not with the availability of food as there are always shops of various kinds filled with food, but rather in gaining access (financially, geographically and temporally) to that food.

We are what we eat

One method of coping with food or income shock is evident in the change of diet both in what is eaten and how often people eat. Meals become fewer and the variety less. Most days in Tembisa start with a cup of sugary tea and some bread with the next meal being dinner. The priority is for children to have eaten something before they go to school (where hopefully they will receive lunch) and to have something to eat before they go to bed. Often mothers will skip meals in order to be able to provide their children with a meal. This 'meal' may not be nutritionally adequate but the importance lies in having "something" in the stomach.

The food that is bought also alters depending on what time of the month/week it is. For example, at the beginning of the month when many people receive their income (be it in the form of a salary or a government grant) people are more likely to eat out or purchase more/different cuts of meat.

In the beginning of the month I can buy cake or bananas or KFC for the children to make them happy. At the end of the month it's not there, says Thando, Phindi's 69 year old grandmother who cares for herself and four grandchildren with her pension and rental income.

Unequivocally the first thing that is bought when money is received is a 12,5kg bag of maize meal. This is regarded as the most versatile staple and can be used to provide a filling meal at any time of the day.

> *In the past food was cheaper. Eating healthier was cheaper. We could buy everything that we want. Now you either have mealies or rice. Now we eat pap because you can eat it all day. Income was a little but food was cheaper. Now income has increased a little but food prices have increased a lot. But as long as you have maize meal you will be fine. You can make soft porridge for breakfast and eat pap the rest of the day* - Thando

Meat is considered a very important part of the diet. The meat is seen as the main event, the priority, whereas the vegetables are the sides and the starch -- usually pap or rice – is regarded as the thing that "fills the stomach". With the rising cost of food generally and meat more specifically, dietary changes have had to be made. Rather than cutting out meat entirely, people have chosen to rather purchase cheaper-cuts of meat. Cuts such as chicken feet and intestines make up the majority of meat in residents diets with 'braai packs' being also considered an ideal. The cheapest cuts of meat in Emoyeni are sold at one particular home-enterprise. Every morning a truck would leave to the city and pick up discounted bins of 'cheap-cuts', that is chicken heads, livers, feet and intestines. This truck would then return to the house where a queue of residents was already forming. Residents and local vendors then buy the meat by weight. 'Braai packs' generally contain various combinations of boerewors (sausages) and chops. Phindi also often purchases turkey as it is sometimes cheaper than other cuts of meat. It is generally common knowledge as to when particular shops are having specials on meat (in particular braai packs). When plating, the majority of the plate is taken up by the starch (be it rice or pap) with the meat and gravy (made using stock cubes) over the starch with possibly one vegetable side.

The variety of food in the day-to-day diet is also exceedingly limited. This is understandable because, as mentioned previously, vendors sell a limited range of produce. Also, discounted hampers are available that provide what is considered the essential for every household (maize meal, sugar, oil, soap powder, stock cubes and tea), and this limits the range of what people are likely to obtain.

Steyn (in Crush, 2011) suggests that in South Africa there are four distinct types of diet: Western South African Diet; the rural African diet; the urban township diet; and the urban Indian diet. However this attempt to classify something that is as broad and variable as diet is not very illuminating as these four 'diets' often overlap and change due to many factors (Crush et el, 2011: 23). For example, in one weekend the household I was staying in purchased KFC (fast food); had what was referred to as 'traditional food' at a funeral; and ate take-away pap and meat from the local spaza shop with chips and Indian achar (pickle).

It is clear that when it comes to what food to buy and where to buy it, there is a constant assessment of one's financial situation and a weighing up of priorities. Women move fluidly between the informal and formal economy perpetually creating a cost-benefit analysis in their heads and acting accordingly. Decisions are also made on where personal relationships are able to be drawn on and used to maximize benefits.

In some cases the decisions that are made with regards to dietary choices may not seemingly make economic sense however, as mentioned previously, food is part of a great social and cultural web of meaning. For example, an individual described the eating of meat as a "cultural obligation",

> *"But the people are poor but they are eating meat every day. It is a cultural obligation. Lebola, it is expensive both ways but you have to do it. If a family head dies, you have to slaughter a cow which can cost R7000. Families have to save money for their son's initiation. It's expensive but you have to do it"* – Mike.

Often families will find themselves deeply in debt after fulfilling these cultural obligations; however, these obligations are seen as providing social capital, a huge factor that needs to be taken into account when budgeting for food.

Studies also indicate that when there is an opportunity for poor households to spend a little more money on food it is more likely that they will spend it on better tasting, more expensive calories as opposed to maximizing the intake of calories or micronutrients (Banerjee, 2011: 23). Money is also allocated to things such as cellphone airtime, cigarettes, fast-food, and clothing rather than food as often there are more important things than food. These "indulgences" should not be seen as irrational, impulsive decisions but rather a weighing up of priorities.

> *"We are often inclined to see the world of the poor as a land of missed opportunities and to wonder why they don't put these purchases on hold and invest in what would really make their lives better. The poor, on the other hand, may well be more skeptical*

about supposed opportunities and the possibility of any radical change in their lives. They often behave as if they think that and change that is significant enough to be worth sacrificing for will simply take too long. This could explain why they focus on the here and now, on living their lives as pleasantly as possible, celebrating when occasion demands it" Banerjee, 2011: 38).

What is evident is that the consumption of food plays a greater role than just nutrition for the body and this has to be factored in when making decisions about what food to purchase.

Changing Household Composition

With increasing unemployment and a lack of access to basic services, the household becomes a site for potential security. Households are complex spaces that are constantly being reconstituted not only as an adaptation to increasing hardships but as a result of those hardships. The rise in unemployment has led to the increasing mobility of the urban dweller. Individuals are required to go where the money is, even if it is further away from their family and kinship support networks. This is not a new phenomenon. South Africa has a long and well documented history of migrant labour that has affected household composition (Ross, 2010)

Although many of the households in Tembisa do maintain a semblance of the traditional 'extended family' model, that is, that residents live with a kin group that extends beyond the nuclear family, including, with grandparents, cousins and other family members. The extended family support system has becoming more and more overburdened. Increasingly, households are comprised of a combination of family members (direct or extended), friends and strangers (Ross, 2010).

For example, Phindi's household is made up of herself, her sister, her uncle and 4 rooms that are rented to strangers (South African and foreign nationals). These social networks are far more fluid in nature and are based on temporary necessitated co-operation. Individuals

utilized these complex relationships to navigate themselves through a fluctuating landscape of competition and compromise, conflict and co-operation, enabling temporary stability long enough to get things done. In Phindi's case, she charges R500 per room per month (that is R2000 in total per month), in return for this the tenants have access to a small room and a communal bathroom/tap and are not required to sign any formal lease. It can be argued that this loose arrangement is not ideal as neither party is legally guaranteed any form of housing or income security with no legally binding document (for example a lease) to hold all parties accountable. However, in some ways it is ideal as both tenants and landowners are not locked into mandatory commitments that they might not be able to fulfill. The ability to maintain a stable yet fluid lifestyle is essential when dealing with constantly changing landscape of various vulnerabilities. It is important not to assume that just because households are being comprised less and less of family members that there is a lack in support and solidarity within the household. For example, a burglar had broken into one of the outside rooms on Phindi's property and had stolen the refrigerator and the stove. Although the items did not belong to Phindi, the surrounding neighbors found out who the perpetrator was, he was tracked down and beaten and stabbed by not only the members of the household but also members of the neighborhood. In addition, when it comes to food, the tenants share food on an ad hoc basis as and when they have. Evident here is an understanding of fluctuating and strategic co-dependence.

Tsotsis (thieves) must know they can't come to my house. If they steal from my house we will find them- Phindi.

The increase in female-headed households can also be viewed as a product both of historical circumstance but also as an adaptation to current hardships. In South Africa female-headed households are poorer than their male counterparts with 43, 8% of households in South Africa being female-headed.[5] The reason for the increase in female headed households has often been cited as being due to the increase in male labour migration, non-marriage, widows and AIDS-related deaths with the burden of care being place on the older members of the family, usually grandmothers.

[5] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0310/P03102008.pdf access on 08/01/14

The history of the rise in female headed households and the reasons for it is thoroughly documented; however my interest lies in how these households use their composition as a way to improve their food security. Female headed households are often described as the most vulnerable, the 'poorest of the poor', however I would like to argue that although they are poor, they are poor in different ways and not always to their disadvantage. Although the situation of a majority of the households I spent time in mirrored arguments made in the 'feminisation of poverty' literature, that was women were responsible for looking after the children, the elderly and the sick, maintaining the house (cooking and cleaning) and providing for male relatives. The majority of the houses were also owned by women. For example, two female headed households properties were owned by widows whose husbands had died and had left the property to them, one of the houses had been previously owned by the grandfather and was inherited by two of the granddaughters (as historically women were not allowed to purchase land). The majority of the incomes from all these households were from renting outside rooms that were built on the property. This relatively stable income gives the household an ability to budget.

In South Africa, women also tend to have an increased opportunity to receive state transfers in the forms of grants, in comparison to men. Moesoetsa (2011) found that 45% of households in her study based in Kwazulu Natal depended on grants. The available grants for South Africans are as follows: grant for older persons (R1260 a month); disability grant (R1260); war veterans grant R1280); care dependency grant (R1260); foster child grant (R800); grant in aid (R290); social relief grant[6]. These grants play a central role in constituting the income of the urban poor and subsequently impact on how households are constituted, how decisions get made and when purchases are made. In South Africa it is estimated that more than 16 million people (22% of the population) are receiving some type of state funded grant[7]. Ferguson (2007) and Guyer's (2004) work looks at this tension between 'informal' economic life and 'formal' state structures, importantly noting that the relationship between the formal and informal has become increasingly blurred. Though entirely inadequate, more women have

[6] http://www.sassa.gov.za/index.php/social-grants accessed on 10/02/14
[7] http://www.moneyweb.co.za/moneyweb-2013-budget/the-case-for-social-grants accessed on 10/02/14

access to a child-support grant from the state (men are eligible to receive this grant; however very few proportionate to women apply). These social support grants often are central to household income, however they do require documents that many women find difficult to get. For example, to apply for a child care grant the applicant needs a birth certificate, proof of residence and an identity document, and often documents are required from the father of the child as well.

Grants are so vital to the income of poor urban residents that often individuals will sacrifice their long term health in order to maintain the grant. For example, if an individual is diagnosed with HIV/AIDS they are only eligible to receive a disability grant in if their CD4 count is below 50 or they have a major opportunistic infection (a CD4 count is a measure of the strength of a body's immune system and used to track the progression of HIV). It was explained to me by a pastor in the local church that co-ordinates a HIV support group that often individuals will purposefully default on their HIV treatment in order to keep their CD4 count low so that they can still be eligible for their grant. In addition, the treatment needs to be taken in conjunction with healthy food. Taking the treatment on an empty stomach is not advised. As a result, when there is no money for food, people often have to default on their treatment.

If you are healthy, there is no guarantee of a job. If you sick, you have your grant every month. It takes a long time to die from AIDS it takes a short time to die from hunger - The Pastor

Since food is something that is needed on a daily basis, strategies to provide food are more geared towards the immediate future rather than a long term strategy. In this case economic security is prioritized over health security.

This reliance on grants as often the sole form of income for households has resulted in not only a change in the household's power dynamics but also in its structure and the individual responsibilities within it. With an increasing reliance on mothers with child support grants and the elderly with access to pensions, women and the elderly have become central to the

financial stability of a household. This deviates from the traditional role of the man as bread winner and woman as caregiver; the young as earners and the old as retired. In some ways, grants are viewed as "the new husbands" (Banks, 2011: 186), as with the increase in unemployment, the state can provide a regular household income in a way that a stereotypical husband cannot. However, the increase in the economic importance of women and the elderly does not necessarily translate into an increase of their status. This differential access to state grants has become a site of conflict between the genders and between the generations. In addition it cannot be assumed that women who receive child care grants from the state necessarily spend the income on their children.

> *Women don't use their child care grant for the children. They play Makati (cards). It's so embarrassing what they do with grant money. - Thando*

Grandmothers with their access to state pensions have become central to household formation. Grandmothers have become key caregivers and providers to their families especially when having to provide for grandchildren. This has resulted in greater overcrowding in households and greater income insecurity. In many households, this move to cluster around those with a reliable income is not seen as only a "coping/survival strategy", but more of a maternal obligation and an adherence to traditional values and gender roles. It was often said that grandmothers are seen to be more selfless and will put the needs of their grandchildren before their own as opposed to young mothers who will be more likely to spend their income (mainly in the form on child-care grants) on themselves.

> *Youngsters are not using their child support grant. They want to do their hair and nails, older people want to buy school uniforms or mielie meal*- Thando

> *Older women let their children live their lives without burdens. The grannies take their burdens because young people weren't given much, they didn't give them education, their fathers weren't there, so we will take their burdens and they can go live their lives.* - Thando

This image of the ‘selfless responsible’ grandmother is echoed by many vendors in the informal sector. For example, older people (especially women) are more likely to be able to buy goods on credit, the reason being that they have a guaranteed stable income (pension), they are less likely to spend money on leisure activities and drinking, and they are less likely to be a ‘flight risk’ as they are well known in the community. In addition, it is less likely that a pension grant will be revoked (a child-care grant can be revoked if it can be proven that the recipient is not looking after the child). In this regard it is the social and economic stability and physical immobility of an individual that allows her to create networks based on trust that can increase her access to food.

With regards to food security, the shrinking of one household (by sending the children to live with their grandparents) frees up more income to be spent on food. However, by shrinking one household, another household is increased which results in limited household resources being spread more thinly across more people. However, the choice between which household is shrunk and which household is increased is carefully calculated based on the amount of income that is received, the distribution of that income and what other assets are at the households disposal (for example, social capital).

Tension is evident both between genders and between generations. For example Thando (Phindi’s grandmother) has a daughter who is married and working. When her daughter tries to give her money she has to do it without her husband knowing about it as her husband insists that if she gives her mother R500 then she is obliged to give his mother R500. This is as a result of most male-headed households abiding by the traditional gender norms of men as the ‘bread winners’ and ‘decision makers’ in the household (even if it is the woman that is the sole income earner). There is also tension being felt between the generations as although most grandmothers that I have spoken to feel that it is their duty to look after their family, some are feeling exploited by their children who only visit them after they have collected their pensions. I asked a young male that I met at a tavern that his father owns, what he does, to which he replied with pride, “I eat my father’s money”.

When it comes to household food security, the composition of the household is vital. The household comprises of a precarious balance of assets, needs, risks and benefits. Not only do the roles and responsibilities of each individual in the household need to be weighed and measured, but the inter household dynamics need to be taken into account as households do not operate in isolation. Whether individuals or households choose to co-operate with each other in particular ways is based on mutual benefit, either real or perceived.

Visiting friends and family in Tembisa is a vital and essential part of building a social infrastructure and network of support and connection. "Being busy is what is required to get things done, and it is also a way of just getting through every day, of 'making do'. Being busy is part of a strategy of maintaining networks and managing opportunities" (Barac, 2013: 48). The act of sitting outside your house, though seemingly passive is very much an active engagement with the society. It is a way to been seen and to communicate happenings in the community. In one day of sitting outside the house we were immediately plugged in to all the news of the day from a sangoma roaming the streets and possibly cursing houses, to talking with the municipal workers as to why the water had been turned off, to sharing information of a municipal fund to assist small businesses that Phindi had heard about. Through visiting, information is shared, as is food. It is social etiquette to offer guests something to eat and drink even if there is very little to offer. Phindi shared with me that she visits family less because of this obligation. She feels bad as she knows that her family is obliged to 'make a plan' and does not want to put that burden on them, therefore she has had to limit her visits.

The social engagements that took place during the day also gave insight as to how these women have created a network that can be relied on in times of need and how that network is slowly built through strategic engagements. Bank's (2011) illustration of the "rhythms of the yard" serves to demonstrate how the yard as a location becomes a platform for women to construct feminized networks of support.

During the day many women 'popped in' for a visit. Even though the food was being cooked and would be served in a few hours, it is considered polite to offer any guest something to eat. The guest had brought with her a bottle of beer that was shared with those who wanted some.

The host had a bone with meat on it that was cooked for the previous night's dinner. This was passed around with some salt and the guests (and host) helped themselves. This feeling of inclusion and being part of a greater network of households ensures that when community events are held or hardships are faced, there is a group of women that can turn to each other for support, solidarity and assistance. However, this group of inclusion is generally formed at the exclusion of others. There is inevitably someone that is gossiped about or excluded based on either a social faux pas (such as borrowing a heater and returning it broken); gender (men are not typically seen in homes socializing with women).

This use of the household (including the outside areas and pavements outside houses) as a space for interaction between landlords and tenants, friends and family, households and the greater community, a space where social life is reproduced and resources are contested, is what Leslie Bank refers to as the "rhythms of the yards" (Bank, 2011: 190).

Diversified Livelihoods and Income

In Joburg money makes the world go around. Without money we don't have life. You must find a way to make money- Phindi

The most conventional method to put food on the table is to gain employment. This is the method that most people aspire to. The dream is to get a job with a consistent monthly income in order to buy groceries from the shops and indulge in fast-food and restaurant eating occasionally. However, given the high rate of unemployment in South Africa and especially Tembisa, this is not an option as a third of SA is unemployed (32%) (Mosoetsa, 2011: 1).

Each and everything that you touch, is money. If you have no access to work, you must beg. Access is about education, an ID book, a matric [high school completion] certificate – Tembi.

As a result of this dream of a single, well paying (including benefits), secure job being out of reach for the majority of people in Tembisa, individuals tend to diversify their livelihoods and

income sources. Through various examples I will illustrate how women are engaging in a number of livelihood strategies both informal and formal, both legal and illegal in an attempt to create an income both monetary and non-monetary to increase their access to food.

Accessing employment opportunities in Tembisa seems to rely entirely on who you know and utilising those social connections. During my time in Tembisa I followed the journey of Bahle, who, after many months of back and forth phone calls and interviews finally secured a job working for the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department. Interviews were held and although she had no knowledge of these interviews nor had she applied for an appointment, she was called by the office and asked to interview. She is in possession of a matric certificate and a driver's license (two documents that are not common in Tembisa). It was only after she had interviewed and made some enquiries that she had realized that it was her uncle who is a social worker in the department that put her forward for the interviews.

Similarly, I interviewed a woman who was currently in a short-term 5 month contract building large chicken coops for the government. She received this job through a connection of a family member. However, although this job could be perceived as formal employment, this contract is a part of a tender process whereby the company that received the tender is 'contracting' people on a casual basis. She is supposed to receive R3000 for her work but she only receives R500 and although she would like to report this to a legal body, she cannot risk jeopardizing her job and the little income she receives from it.

Being employed, whether in the formal or informal sector is a rarity in Tembisa, especially for women. The 'feminisation of poverty' is a lived and very real experience for job-seeking women in Tembisa. For example, I spoke to a young man who runs a successful business selling vetkoeks (like donuts) at the side of the road. His biggest problem is having reliable employees. He candidly stated that he does not employ women as they (or himself) often are harassed by their boyfriends, they fall pregnant and cannot work and if they already have children, looking after them disrupts his work schedule. If a woman manages to attain employment or start her own home-based enterprise, it is often through the use of a family connection or the calling in of a favor.

However, the dream of formal employment is not always realistic. Ayanda, who is one of the few women in her family that has formal employment at a company that manufactures and packages spices explained to me that it is sometimes not strategic to be employed.

> *It's easier sometimes to be unemployed. When you are employed you use more. You have to wash and change your clothes everyday. At home you can wear the same towel all week. Life is much easier to those who stay at home than working. You can eat everything at the location. At work there is only big shops. At the location you can eat pap and tea, you can't take pap and tea to work.*

Also, those that are employed are highly visible within their communities and within their families. When there are weddings and funerals it is common knowledge of who to go to in the family. Those few who are formally employed have the social obligation to provide for their family. Often one salary is spread very thinly and inconsistently amongst multiple households. This often occurs in the way of remittances, groceries, loans, gifts and payment of children's school fees. Although this obligation to provide is often a burden as there is not much to go around, it is also seen as a way to build social capital. Being respected in the community by being able to cover the funeral costs of a family member allows that person access to social capital and leverage that can be called upon when needed.

The benefit of formal employment allows individuals to open accounts where they can buy on credit. Although there are not many grocery shops or food providers that allow you to purchase on credit, there are shops that allow you to purchase clothes and furniture on credit. Being able to buy your child's school uniform on credit indirectly affects the food security of the household as it enables you to free-up more cash to spend on food. As a result, often those with access to accounts are used as middle men when they buy clothing or furniture for their family or friends (who do not have access to accounts) and are paid back.

Having a consistent income also allows individuals access to a bank account. However, I have noticed that bank accounts are not the norm in the various households I have spent time in. In

order to have a bank account you have to provide an ID document, a pay slip and a proof of residence, all of which are uncommon for most of the residents I have spoken to. There also has to be a minimum amount of money in the account at all times to keep it active and cover the bank charges. Banks are perceived with a significant amount of distrust. They are seen as institutions that are designed to take your money and "keep an eye on you". This constant negotiation between trying to be invisible versus trying to maintain visibility is a way of being and a theme that is constantly present in the lives of the food insecure in Tembisa.

Formal employment allows individuals a greater amount of freedom when it comes to the ability to access food and provide food for themselves. However with formal employment also comes a greater responsibility to their family and friends. Many who do not abide by these social expectations are frowned upon by the greater community. It is mainly the older generation that enforces these social norms, as many of the younger generation who are employed (who are few and far between) feel more of an obligation to themselves and their immediate family (siblings and parents) but rarely further than that.

In Tembisa, as in most of South Africa, the formal economy plays a minor role with regard to employment opportunities. Due to the unreliability of the formal economy most residents have retreated into the informal economy, into households and all the space in between. Many of the women I interviewed earn an income from jobs such as recycling, domestic work, and home-based self-employment such as hair salons and being food vendors. Income from this kind of work is highly irregular and inconsistent and can often be quite dangerous. I spent time with one woman who recycles in order to provide for herself and her grandchildren. She has a trolley that she wheels around Tembisa collecting tin, plastic, paper and glass which she exchanges for money. The compensation is extremely low when taking into account the amount of labour that goes into the collection of these items. This work is also extremely dangerous as she has to wheel her trolley on busy roads and she often has to walk through vacant dump sites in order to find recyclables. For her, the risk is worth it in order to do what she feels is her maternal duty to look after her children and her grandchildren. When asking her niece what she thinks of her aunt's work she says,

"People don't do recycling because of all the walking and the sun and pushing the trolley. You are jailing yourself. Too much suffering for money. It's not worth it. She wakes up early, maybe don't eat anything. Her hands are suffering." In response her aunt says, "you are going to grow up one day and realize".

The informal economy is a risky one. The income is inconsistent and low, there is minimal job security, the working conditions are often dangerous and there is little to no infrastructural support. It is important to note that there is no clear dichotomy between the formal and informal economy. We cannot assume that one is the norm and the other the periphery, that the formal economy is the ideal with the informal economy playing the 'back-up' role. In fact, in Tembisa it is the informal economy that is the norm with the lines between formal and informal becoming increasingly blurred. People are creating hybridised economies where they can strategically engage with different parts of the system depending on what would benefit them at particular times. What support is available is in the nature of relationships formed and various social ties. For example, although Phindi would never take up recycling work herself, she does keep any recyclables she has for her aunt. The informal economy also allows for individuals to remain 'under the radar' of the state's watchful eyes. By dealing in cash, not signing any contracts or leases and having no formal affiliations, they are able to live in a highly flexible and mobile way. I spent time at a salon where a Zimbabwean woman works. She has no work permit and supports herself and her family in Zimbabwe with her work as a hairstylist. The informal economy is an ideal space for her. All her dealings are in cash, she sends money home through family and friend connections without having to worry about the concerns of customs, tax implications and work legislation.

There has been a discussion of how individuals engage in aspects of the formal and informal economy in ways that deal with food security directly (gaining an income to purchase food) or indirectly (strategies to save or free-up cash in order to buy food). Sometimes the relationship between income and actual food is even more direct and cyclical (the selling of food to make money to buy food). Bahle for example runs a home-based enterprise whereby she makes food hampers and sells them. Once a month she bulk buys polony, processed cheese and ham and maize meal, creates hampers that incorporates these and then sells them for R300. Her

main overheads are the produce, the packaging and the transport to purchase the produce. Even though buying in bulk seems like a logical way for individuals to save money on shopping, buying in bulk requires transport, upfront capital and storage, all of which are not accessible to majority of the people who are food insecure. Bahle, by covering these costs, can sell these smaller hampers at a reduced cost; additionally, she allows her customers to pay at the end of the month. Bahle knows the names and addresses of all her customers and only sells to a limited number of people most of them being acquaintances of sorts. She does this because offering credit is both the appeal and the risk of her business. Ensuring that she has personal relationships with her customers lessens the risk that she could experience as if they default on their payment she knows where to find them. The selection of particularly processed goods for her hampers also lessens the levels of risk in her business as processed meats and maize tend to have a longer shelf life than fresh goods. In this way Bahle is able to provide herself with an income and provide her customers with a much needed service.

Another example of making money out of food are stokvels. Stokvels have been in existence for decades. Stokvels can be described as a revolving credit association where members of the group help each other to save while simultaneously taking part in a social function. I was a part of a food stokvel that consisted of approximately 15 women that live in Emoyeni section. Every Monday one of the women would cook a meal generally comprising of pap, meat and a vegetable side dish. The woman responsible would pay for all the expenses (ingredients, paraffin for the stove) which would not exceed R100 and serve the food out of her kitchen using her own cutlery and crockery. The food would then be sold for R30 a plate until the food ran out. The other women in the stokvel are obliged to support the endeavor by purchasing a plate but the rest of the food is sold to members of the public. On the day that I was involved with the cooking, a profit of R500 was made (20 plates were sold minus the R100 initial cost). What stood out for me through the process of shopping, cooking and selling was the constant negotiations that took place. The menu (pap, spinach and chicken livers) was decided on the basis of what were the cheapest ingredients, how accessible those ingredients were and what kinds of food were culturally appropriate.

Almost every ingredient was bought at a different shop. As we were walking, we were paying no transport costs so were losing nothing by walking across Emoyeni in search of the cheapest spinach. However, Phindi knew exactly where to go. Through word of mouth and personal experience it is almost common knowledge where goods are the cheapest.
Every person we encountered was told about the food stokvel and was asked for support. Those with airtime on their cell phones were busy spreading information about the meal. The cooking of the meal was the communal effort of many women even though the day's takings would only go to one household.

Households depend on an income that is derived from a number of sources and is more often than not dependent on the informal economy. As a result of the irregularity of income it is extremely difficult for households to budget accordingly. It also cannot be assumed that all the individuals in a household pool their various incomes. For example, Phindi and her sister pool their income; however, their uncle (who lives with them) contributes only sporadically to the household and he is not expected to contribute. As a result, household budgeting is calculated on a daily basis with little thought being given to the next week, let alone the next month.

Survivalist Livelihoods

In a context of poverty and unemployment many women rely on "survivalist livelihoods" (Wojcicki, 2002) in order to provide for themselves and their families. This is often the exchange of sex for money (or food, drinks, a place to sleep). This is not to be confused with commercial sex work. Women that I have spoken to that engage in transactional sex do not identify themselves as sex workers and neither does the community. Wojcicki (2002), is clear in her separation between 'survival sex' (the bartering of sex to meet survival needs) and commercial sex work highlighting stating that there is a clear distinction made between 'prostitution' and transactional sex. Transactional sex is less stigmatised than commercial sex work in the eyes of the community. It is viewed as women having to do what is required of

them in order to support their households and its functional nature is more emphasized when spoken about.

The realm of 'survivalist livelihoods' is a dangerous and risky one, especially for women. With the high instances of assault and rape in South Africa, the threat of violence is a daily risk. This combined with the fact that the majority of transactional sex negotiations occur in taverns and shebeens (illegal drinking establishments) whilst under the influence of alcohol makes the practice of these livelihoods even more hazardous. Not only is the threat of physical violence a possibility but also the risk of HIV transmission and unwanted pregnancy as women who rely on survival sex for income or food provision are less able to negotiate condom usage.

It is important to note that not only sex but flirting is used as a tactic to assist with household income and food security. For example, as mentioned previously, the prettiest woman is sent to buy meat from the shop owner that is known to be lecherous. This ensures that she will receive bones with more meat on them.

> *You stand on the corner and ask for R2 "toll gate", can you buy me cooldrink? He will be touching you in a way you don't like but you do it for the R10 for cooldrink. You will be full of smiling. You flirt for that R10 and you go buy gizzards (chicken intestines) to cook because he won't come back and ask you where the cold drink is* – Phindi.

Most of the women I have spoken to have boyfriends that provide money and food for their families. Even those with husbands still have boyfriends as husbands are not seen to be providing for the household. It is considered ideal to have multiple boyfriends rather than a husband as it is likely that the majority of the husband's income will be given to the girlfriends that the husband has. What one looks for in a boyfriend and his roles and responsibilities sparked an incredibly vibrant, at times humorous, discussion between Phindi and Tembi (with their grandmother laughing and shaking her head throughout).

> *In the old days the husbands would go to work and come home and give the wife the money. Women would decide how the money gets spent and give the men money to spend. Husband would work in the mines. Now men lie about how much money they make; and they have other girlfriends* - Tembi.

The acquiring and maintaining of boyfriends is a vital strategy in the maintenance of many households in Tembisa. The criteria of what to look for in a boyfriend was as follows: employed, ideally not from Tembisa so that you only meet them on the weekend and there should be many boyfriends but they should not know about each other. Having multiple boyfriends serves to increase the resource pool that a woman can have access to.

There is no love now. You are lying if you say you found love. Once the man quits the job, there is no love - Tembi

The places to meet potential boyfriends are mainly in the tavern and at community events, the majority of which are male dominated. The responsibilities of these boyfriends is to take women out on dates, buy them clothes, give them money for food, pay to get their hair done. In return the women are expected to provide for their boyfriends sexually and to cook for them especially when they are 'babalaas' (hung over). In addition to the money that these 'boyfriends' voluntarily hand over, many women have derived strategies of their own in order to access this money. For example, at the tavern men send women to the bar with money to buy the drinks for the table. As the men are drunk already they will not notice if the women keep the remaining change. Women are also known to pickpocket some men when they are dancing.

> *You can rob a man 1000 times. You can make R200 in a night. Men are careless with their money. At night you don't use this pocket, you use this pocket (points to her bra). Women know how to take money from your pocket. You must keep your drinks on you. You can't trust anyone* - Phindi

Another tactic that is used by women I have interviewed is to casually suggest to a girlfriend that she needs to get her hair done; in response the girlfriend will put pressure indirectly on the boyfriend to pay for the trip to the hair salon.

As mentioned the risk of violence and abuse is common as it is argued that when a woman accepts a drink, she is obliged to reciprocate in the form of sex as she has "drunk his money" (Wojcicki, 2002: 267). This understanding of reciprocity speaks to a greater problem of patriarchy and gender inequality in South Africa. Much work has been done on the subject of gender-based violence and discrimination. In this research I would like to emphasize the risky nature of transactional sex and the ways in which women are attempting to navigate that risk. Women are using whatever means they have at their disposal to form various relationships, each with their own terms and conditions, rules and responsibilities in an effort to combat their individual and household food insecurity. I met many women (Phindi included) that received payment for marriage. About ten years ago a Nigerian foreign national offered Phindi five thousand rand to marry him in order for him to be able to live and work in South Africa. This marriage of convenience suited both parties and so the agreement was made and Phindi has not heard from him in over six years.

Although women are disempowered in many ways in that they tend to bear the brunt of violence and poverty, I was also told many stories of women storming into shebeens to fight their husbands and boyfriends for money.

> *Some men get money every Friday and then go to the shebeen. You have to go in and take the money. They let you take the money, because when he is hungry and has babalas he will come to you for food. Sometimes he leaves me with the phone so I can see how much money he is drawing. It doesn't matter whether they are your husband or your boyfriend because at the end of the day they are your responsibility* - Tembi

Many women I have spoken to engage in transactional sex as it is seen as a socially acceptable method to supplement one's income. In as much as there is often co-operation and collaboration between women, there is also conflict and territoriality between women.

> *You don't want to share your boyfriend. You have to fight for your boyfriends. You beat your boyfriend and you beat the girls. You don't ask your sister while she is fighting, you just fight with her. We sometimes don't drink because we have to keep check on our boyfriends. Too much drama. Even if you can get a man from the church he will have girlfriends*- Phindi

Although many women spoke to having a rich sugar daddy as the ideal, there was also a very strong desire to gain employment to provide for themselves and their children. Men were seen as being unreliable in general and not to be depended on.

> *We need to find a job and work for yourself and quit the boyfriend thing. We put up with a lot of wrong because of money. Need to make our own money. We need to work for ourselves and our children and leave the dog to be a dog* - Ayanda

Community Events

The act of eating has historically been seen as a vehicle to build community. Through the sharing of food between families and neighbors, community events are a way to provide individuals with a feeling of belonging and sense of inclusion: "those who eat together are by this very act tied to one another by a bond of friendship and mutual obligation" (Fiddes, 1991: 38). In the same regard community events are also a way to illustrate exclusion and separation between those who belong and those who do not.

In Tembisa, weddings and funerals are two very important events both because of their social significance and because of the space they provide in terms of creating opportunities for social interaction and 'deal-making'. The space that is created at these events in relation to household food security is multifaceted.

Funerals and weddings engage in matters of food security directly in the sense that food is provided at these events. The families of the deceased (or the couple to be wed), provide a

meal which usually consists of pap, meat and some salads; there is no set menu as it depends on what the family can afford. The ingredients for the meals are comprised of ingredients that are purchased in the city, as well as produce that is brought to the city by family who are still living in rural areas. The meals are traditionally prepared by the women of the family, however in recent times catering companies are used more frequently to prepare and distribute the food as it is both more convenient and having the meal catered is a sign of class.

This meal is open to all as it is not considered appropriate to turn away individuals who want to give their respects (in the case of a funeral) or offer congratulation (in the case of a wedding). Though this does cause complications when serving food, portion sizes are calculated on an ad hoc basis dependent on how many people arrive. The order of serving is prioritized with the elders of the family and religious figures being served first, the rest of the family including children and the rest of the crowd last. While no one is turned away from food, the portions may get smaller over the course of the day.

Now you go to funerals to get food. In our time you couldn't take the food home. Now you can take food home because of poverty. In our culture the bones must remain in the yard – Mike.

The attending of community events primarily to eat is something that is not stigmatised by the community. It is seen as necessary and acceptable given the current crisis of food insecurity. In some cases individuals bring containers to take portions of food home with them to share with their family. However, these events not only provide food, but a platform to socialize and create connections. Weddings and funerals last most of the weekend with a lot of time being spent either singing, eating or socializing between the various social groups. These moments serve to create various platforms for individuals to create for themselves opportunities to improve their situation in a number of ways. For example, for some women, funerals are seen as a space to meet potential boyfriends that are not from Tembisa. So in order to prepare for this possibility, women would ensure that their nails and hair are done before the funeral in order to attract a boyfriend that would potentially be able to provide them with increased security in the way of money and groceries.

The food provision at a wedding or funeral is also an expression of status by a family. The greater it is in quantity and quality, the greater the amount of social capital gained by the family. There is a very close connection between food and the status of a family which can be used to paint a family in a positive or negative light. For example, a funeral was held in Tembisa for a young man who had died. There were mixed feelings about whether or not to attend the funeral as the man was known to have rich friends (a positive factor as it creates an increased opportunity for many women to find wealthy boyfriends), but it was also suspected that he was HIV positive and as a result the food was assumed to be dubious. Events held in the community are always socially loaded with attendees constantly weighing up the pros and cons of every event.

Weekends in Tembisa are usually focused on various community events whether they be it weddings, funerals or church services. The provision of food at these events ensures that individuals are able to access food in a socially more acceptable way (as opposed to begging or going to soup kitchens[8]). These events play multiple functions in terms of impact on household food security as not only is there an immediate provision of food, but opportunities are created to secure a more long term access to food in terms of the social networking that occurs.

Co-operation and compromise

In South Africa the 'right to food' is something that is enshrined in the Constitution. However seeing that this is a right that the majority of South Africans have little or limited access to, what are the measures that have been put into place by both the state, civil society and religious organisations in order to better ensure that it can be exercised?

In Tembisa, the government-run schools are theoretically supposed to provide meals for the children, but these meals are often sporadic and nutritionally inadequate. In some of the

[8] Begging and/or going to soup kitchens are generally the last port of call for the households I spent time in as begging is deeply stigmatised. To beg is to admit to not having family, friends or social network.

schools feeding schemes are offered for children whose parents are unemployed. This does take some of the pressure off the parents when it comes to the daily provision of food for their children; however, during the weekend and school holidays, this pressure is increased. In addition, many children would rather take money to buy food during the day as being part of a school feeding scheme stigmatizes the children as being poor which is embarrassing for them.

In Tembisa the religious institutions, mainly the church, are more known for their outreach in terms of food aid. There are some churches that receive donations from local stores and run soup kitchens once a week. It was mentioned by a pastor that you will only see women in a queue for food as the men are too embarrassed. Women will receive the food and take it back to share with the household. It was also noted that the government is known to give food parcels when elections are imminent in an attempt to garner votes. The provision of food aid and assistance (both by government and charities) is riddled with rumors of corruption and dishonesty. For example, it was said that many charities lie about how many people they are assisting. Also, it is alleged that the middle men who receive goods for distribution keep the items and sell them for profit.

In Tembisa, sources of institutional food-aid are few and far between; however, there is assistance offered from community groups. For example, the women who are a part of the food stokvel have also formed an informal group that volunteers in various capacities around the community. Some of their actions consist of: helping the elderly with domestic work and grocery shopping; assisting women in reporting rape cases; and collecting money door-to-door for families that cannot afford a funeral. In addition, some of these women have a fairly consistent income in terms of rent; as such, when they receive the occasional food hamper from their children's school or the government, they often donate them to the elderly. Within this group there is a clear understanding of the important role the elderly play as many of their mothers are looking after their children on a daily basis. Although I have mentioned previously that there is often exploitation and abuse of the elderly, there is also a fierce defense of aged. For example, there is an old man that lives in Emoyeni section. He has lived in the same house since the early 60's. His main forms of income are his pension and the rent that he receives from tenants that live with him. He mentioned that he only sees his son after

he has received his pension. He has trouble keeping up with his rates, electricity and water payments and often the municipality tries to evict him. In response, Phindi told me:

> *If they take away the house and sell it we will get together as a community and tell the person who moves in: "Move in. But tomorrow you will be dead. We will burn you in the house". No one wants to die. The police will come twice. We will break the windows, use petrol bombs and the people leave. And Mkulu [old man] has his house back. We do it because we want old people in the location* – Phindi.

Women from the group check in on him every few days to ensure that he is ok. Although they cannot offer him much in the form of monetary assistance, they can offer him security to a certain degree.

In times of desperation many people, especially the elderly turn to the 'mashonisa' or 'loan sharks'. These illegal lenders are usually owners of successful businesses in Tembisa that offer loans with extremely high interest rates (up to 50% per month). When whole families are in dire circumstances and there is no support or sharing (as there is little or nothing to share) loan sharks are seen as the last resort. These mashonisa (which literally means "to sink") are in a position to take on risk and give immediate cash loans without requiring much in the way of paperwork. They often take the individual's identity book or bank and grant card as collateral and resort to violence if the loan (and the exorbitant interest) is not paid back. Although 100% interest rates may not seem cost effective in the long run, people borrow money from the mashonisa as they are not eligible to receive loans from banks and they generally borrow small amounts for urgent day-to-day living expenses. In this regard the priority is in providing for the immediate present at the expense of accruing long-term debt.

The daily attempt to carve out a life in Tembisa is met with a constant need to co-operate and compromise especially with regards to an individual's personal ideals, even if it means as a last resort turning to a mashonisa. In addition, residents of Tembisa have to assess on a daily basis their levels of co-operation and conflict with particular individuals and whether or not they can use these negotiations to their advantage. These daily negotiations became evident in

the way in which local South African residents engaged with the local (often foreign), business owners.

The attitudes I have experienced around foreign nationals in Tembisa has been mixed. With the recent xenophobic violence being fresh in the minds of all people living in South Africa, I did expect tension. I observed that the majority of the people selling fruit and running salons were foreign nationals from various parts of Africa. Many of the corner shop owners were of Indian or Pakistani descent.

There is a level of scorn for foreign nationals as they are seen to be either exploitative or willing to be exploited[9]. However, there is also an understanding that foreign nationals do not have access to social support in the form of family and friends. When it comes to food provision foreign nationals are seen to only need a little as they are only providing for themselves. This is seen as an advantage for some and a disadvantage for others as they cannot rely on others to share with them if they are ever lacking.

Even though there exists a level of disdain for foreign nationals, there is an acceptance that when resources are scarce you have to create platforms of co-operation wherever you can find them. In Emoyeni section there is a corner-shop that sells a variety of household products and goods that are considered essential (maize, paraffin, oil, canned goods). The owner is Pakistani and he is spoken about with contempt by the residents. He is known for exploiting his staff, selling products that are past their sell-by date and not offering credit. However, he also sells the cheapest paraffin in the area. This creates conflict in the minds of women I have spoken to as although they do not want to support his business, he sells the cheapest products (with no connection to the fact that by exploiting his staff he saves money, thereby reducing his overheads and enabling him to sell products more cheaply). Every interaction with this business can be seen as the weighing up of priorities in the minds of the customer. There is an understanding that when there is a limited income and resources are scarce, you have to be

[9] As a person of Indian origin, I was initially taken aback by being referred to as ‘umlungu’ (a white person) by passers by. It was clear that the scorn felt towards the Indian and Pakistani shop owners did not translate in to scorn toward me. I was seen as sharing more characteristics with a middle class white South African than the foreign business owners who can exert more control over the daily lives of the residents.

strategic in the way that you engage with people and spaces in order to provide the best possible outcome for yourself. For example, although Phindi has had multiple altercations with the store owner, this does not stop her from buying from the shop. Instead she will send others (often children) to buy on her behalf. In this way, Phindi is using the resources at her disposal to navigate complex relationships in order to provide herself and her household with essentials.

> *Foreign people will push trolleys and sell vegetables. We are born here so we know our government has to give us something. They don't know anything about South Africa; they have no family and no support. People don't like foreigners because if they are underpaid they will fight and quit. Foreigners will work for anything and be grateful so the employers will rob South Africans even more. They don't have families so they don't have to make so much because they don't have to feed a lot of people. Even at the shops they won't hire locals. Locals will only do the job they are hired for*
> - Phindi

CHAPTER 4

Interventions

There are numerous interventions that the state, civil society and residents have experimented with in order to tactically address urban food insecurity. The most widely propagated intervention being the encouragement of urban agriculture. Urban agriculture and the encouragement of growing of urban food gardens is a strategy that is cited as a way to reduce food insecurity of vulnerable groups. The idea is for each household/area to maintain an individual/communal garden which the local residents either use to supplement their diets or sell the produce in the community. In Tembisa there are currently non-governmental organisations engaging with co-operative farmers that produce locally grown fruits and vegetables. The municipality is participating by providing interested residents with seed and workshops. It is important to note that many of these community meetings are attended mainly by mainly women and elderly women in particular.

This is not a surprise given that, as suggested in the previous discussion around urbanism, young people see farming as backwards and old fashioned and women are perceived to be more likely to 'make a plan' and develop home industries to provide for the household (Devereux et al, 2001: 77). Tembi said to me that "gardening is for grannies." Evidence of this was a community meeting I attended that was hosted by a local non-governmental organisation. This monthly meeting was held as a platform to encourage and support local farmers and gardeners. The majority of the attendees where women over the age of fifty. In addition, only two households I spent time in maintained a garden and both residents were well into their seventies.

> *Grannies grow up in the Transkei so they know about planting so when they see the children suffering, they plant. We are from here we know nothing about planting, we don't even want to learn how to plant. Grannies they are too strong. The things that they were eating from long time to now makes them strong and we don't want to eat it.*
> - Tembi.

There is an ideological aversion to the act of farming and growing one's own food. Urban food gardening is often framed by those promoting it as a poverty alleviation strategy as opposed to a 'sustainable development' model. In this regard the idea of growing your own food is closely tied to the idea of being poor. In this regard many residents do not want to grow their own food as a matter of pride as they do not want to be associated with poverty.

Also, many South Africans have lost touch with the history of farming and their relationship to the land.

> *"We are from Pretoria. Our mothers and fathers were working in the white man's gardens. We knew what was a beautiful place. The Basotho will plant mielies in front instead of roses. We used to laugh at them. When we see someone using their whole yard to plant mielies and vegetables, to us that person is stupid."- Mike*

In addition there are many practical obstacles to residents growing their own food. As a result of previously discussed issues of apartheid geography, Tembisa is located in an area with poor soil, irregular access to water and in Emoyeni section, a rat problem. For me what stood out was a lack of housing security. Living under a constant threat of eviction, households find it difficult to plan for the month let alone invest in planting vegetables that take months to grow. In the case of urban food gardening, it is essential that broader social justice issues such as access to housing are addressed first.

Conclusion

In order to meaningfully engage in issues around food security it is vital to recognize how food is inextricably linked to the broader socio-political context. This paper has aimed to address one key question, how do woman create opportunities to increase their access to food?

In the beginning of this paper I cited a diagram taken from Devereux and Maxwell's (2001) *Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa* illustrating the 'food coping strategies' that were engaged in where there was a food or income shock. This diagram served as a simplistic illustration of the various food-coping strategies that I observed in Tembisa. However, what this diagram fails to recognize is that at the root of many of these strategies there is a complex network of negotiations at play, negotiations that can only be observed through deep ethnographic research.

What was the most revealing insight regarding the socially creative modes of food provision, was the extent to which women had to constantly assess and recalibrate their levels of visibility or invisibility depending on where they were, who they were engaging with and what they wanted out of the negotiation. In some cases it was in the best interest of the woman to be invisible, especially in the eyes of bureaucratic institutions such as banks or the municipality; however, when it came to accessing government grants, it was strategic to be visible enough (and to identify oneself as 'poor') to access the grant but still maintain a certain level of anonymity so as to not be watched by the state. In addition, to declare oneself poor in order to access a grant bears with it no social stigma, but to declare oneself poor and beg, does, there is a fine line that has to be tread. This spectrum of visible versus invisible was also true when navigating personal relationships. Visibility in the community brings with it a higher status with increased access to social capital (which often leads to an increase in financial capital as visible community members are more likely to attain credit from local businesses). However, with community visibility also comes an increase in responsibility and expectation as prominent members of the community are expected to offer support and assistance where they can.

Therefore, before any strategy listed on Devereux and Maxwell's diagram can be implemented this negotiation has to occur. Whether it be 'purchasing food' or 'reducing food consumers' all these are strategic decisions that take into account levels of visibility as well as a negotiation of risk. Whether it is worth risking long-term damage to one's health by not taking the prescribed antiretrovirals (but being able to access a more immediate disability grant) but not having access to cash to purchase food or pay rent, is a risk that many residents of Tembisa have to negotiate. In addition, this research also highlights the growing dependence on 'hybridised economies' where people strategically choose which parts of the formal and informal economy to engage with. The overarching theme of this paper is the importance of personal relationships. Highly complex relationships are formed, manipulated and called upon at strategic times in strategic ways. Ideas around relationships, economies and risk cannot be viewed as static as they are becoming increasingly fluid.

Throughout this ethnography I have aimed to illustrate the nuanced strategies for food provision in Tembisa and as a result how difficult it is to conceptualise and implement effective interventions to combat rising food insecurity in Tembisa (and South Africa). The question that I am constantly struggling with is how do we fix this. In this regard there has been a multitude of suggestions from the complete overhauling of the food system, to the increase of food production at a global level, to local food production and nutritional education at a community level. These are all effective long term strategies to deal with food insecurity.

However, it has become clear through the course of this study that it is only when the institutional and structural inequality embedded in society is addressed that there can be an effective, sustainable way to address food insecurity. In a context where the main provider of food and the primary carer in the household is the most disempowered, there is little that can be achieved in decreasing levels of food insecurity. Steps need to be taken to 'defeminise poverty' such that policies designed to address poverty alleviation take into account the dominant socio-economic discourse that currently serves to isolate women. This

defeminisation of poverty needs to go further than just economic empowerment. A fundamental shift in patriarchal values held by many communities in South Africa is needed.

By developing more site-specific, holistic ethnographies around food security at a household level, communities, governments and civil society will be better positioned to create interventions that are culturally appropriate and more effective.

In the words of AbduMaliq Simone (2004):

> *A specific economy of perception and collaborative practice is constituted through the capacity of individual actors to circulate across and become familiar with a broad range of spatial, residential, economy, and transactional position. Even when actors do different things with one another in different places, each carries traces of past collaboration and an implicit wiliness to interact with one another in ways that draw on multiple social positions. (408)*

It is through this that individuals in Tembisa create a semblance of food security for themselves and their households.

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