

Title: Analysing Street food in Uganda from a Transformative Social Innovation Perspective: Street Food, Urban Poor, Empowerment, Social Innovation

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Abstract:

Food is an essential part in the everyday social life. Food and foodways, taken together represent the ways in which people relate to one another as well as the spaces in which they live. As urban spaces transform, people's ways of sourcing for food, eating and the sociocultural meanings of food also change, food cultures become fused, reinvented or improvised to engender new gastronomic spaces (Lee, 2017; Low and Ho, 2017). The focus of this study was a street food known as 'the Rolex' in Uganda. This is a street food that fused different food cultures to create a new product. It is made with chapatti (Indian origin), omelette (introduced in Uganda by the British) and a combination of vegetables including onions, tomatoes, cabbage and pepper. Uganda is a developing country where employment opportunities are rare, there is insufficient labour demand due to inadequate firm creation and growth. New responses to poverty reduction such as the 'Rolex' to help poor household to earn income in informal, low investment activities are needed in Uganda.

The objective of the study was to analyse the transformative dynamics of street food in Uganda with a focus on the Rolex. Transformative dynamics are here conceptualised as the forces that stimulate change within a system (Haxeltine et al. 2013). The data for this study was collected using the qualitative approach. Data collection was conducted in period of three weeks in December 2017 and January 2018. It consisted of semi-structured interviews with the street food vendors in Kampala. The study examine the origin and local significance of the 'Rolex' to the everyday socio-economic life of Ugandans. Street food is rarely associated with social innovation or transformative change, therefore the novelty of this study lies on the Weick's (1984) idea that small wins could create the momentum for larger scale changes. The findings of the study contribute to the understanding of social innovation in street food and the role it plays in transforming the socio-economic lives of the poor.

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