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Zongo and the community of work and life in Accra, Ghana

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Introduction

This paper is the result of a so-called *Lehrforschung* (student research), an obligatory part of the studies in MA Sociology at the University of Bielefeld. The general topic of our research project is “Modes of Mobility in Ghana”. It is concerned with different types and aspects of mobility, like social, spatial, cultural mobility, everyday mobility and political mobilization. The supervisor of the student research is Dr. Nadine Sieveking. The first two phases of the student research, which include “Regionalanalyse Westafrikas” in the winter term 2008/2009 and “Lehrforschung Phase 1” in the summer term 2009, were devoted to theoretical issues and methodical preparations for 10 weeks of fieldwork and data collection in Ghana.

Before I went to Ghana I knew that I am interested in the phenomenon of Zongo in Accra and nowhere else. I had read one book called “Landlords and lodgers. Socio-spatial organization in an Accra community” (Pellow 2002). This book guided my interests. At first, I thought about doing research on health programmes in Zongo. Very soon I understood that such a research theme could be quite difficult to handle for me. That is why I came to the decision to change my topic to *everyday mobility of Zongo people*. With this topic in mind I started fieldwork at the end of July. I use Georg Elwert’s definition of fieldwork: “Unter Feldforschung verstehen wir eine Forschung, bei welcher sich die Forscherin oder der Forscher in den Realkontext des zu Untersuchten hinein begeben” (Elwert 2003, 6).

As a methodological approach to data collection and analysis of the student research I chose Grounded Theory. The basic idea of Grounded Theory is to go to the field avoiding theoretical assumptions at the beginning of the project. It means that the researcher has to be quite open in order to be able to explore a certain phenomenon and to reveal new aspects (Strauss 1994).

Asking people about their daily activities, I developed a preliminary idea of what can be understood as *everyday mobility* or *mobility in everyday*. Then, by the methodology of Grounded Theory I had to develop some kind of concept of *daily mobility*, which is still grounded in data. I had always difficulties with this topic and with my research question, which was “patterns of daily mobility of two Zongo communities”. During the whole process of the student research I had doubts concerning the way I had to conceptualize “everyday mobility” and my research question, especially because I didn’t know how, in this case, I should describe the collected data. Open coding, which is one of the principles of Grounded Theory, was quite helpful for me in order to find a way out of this dilemma. So at the end of analysing my data, it was finally clear for me how to conceptualize everyday mobility and which patterns of daily mobility can be identified in Nima and Mamobi. By open coding, and then by axial coding I found important and especially – it seemed to me - relevant categories, which then became so-called core categories. These core categories, that is, “Zongo” and “Everyday life theory of Zongo” are foundations for the structure of this paper (cf. Strauss 1994).

So in the following part of this paper I will describe methodological considerations of the student research. This part is about how I conducted my student research. It is about how I found my research question, how I collected my data and how I analyzed them.

Then, in the third and fourth part I will illustrate important patterns of “Zongo daily mobility”. In the part “Nima and Mamobi in the shadow of the Zongo” I will try to introduce the phenomenon of “Zongo”, of what “Zongo” is and how “it functions” in the everyday life of the inhabitants of Nima and Mamobi.

In the part “Everyday life theory of Zongo” I will introduce the perspectives of my informants. I will introduce their “Zongo theory”, which explains daily struggles of “Zongo people”.

The final part “Community of work and life” is concerned with some theoretical considerations, which “abstract” from the data level (cf. Strauss 1994). Still, the idea of “community of work and life” can be seen as a concept “grounded in data”. It also can be seen as a central pattern of daily mobility of Nima and Mamobi.

The topic of “everyday mobility of Nima and Mamobi” is tightly connected with the general topic of the student research “Modes of mobility in Ghana”. It combines different aspects of spatial, social and socio-economic mobility. It is especially interesting to observe everyday mobility in such localities as Nima and Mamobi because, in a sense, these localities exist “for their own”. In local discourse these communities have their own dynamics, which differ from the dynamics of the dominant majority of the Ghanaian nation state. Nima and Mamobi are like cities, with their own boundaries, in the city of Accra. But the relation between these is not one of equality, but rather a relation in terms of center and periphery.

2. Field research, methodology and methods

2.1 Positioning

It was a very lovely morning. Farida¹, Ann, Deborah, and me were walking on the beach and picking up different shells. I was looking for big and rare shells while my friends were waiting till the water of the ocean goes back so that they can get very small baby shells. They wanted to take all these small shells home and put them into a bottle, because they wanted them to grow up inside of it. They said to me that after some time they become big and beautiful. Then they can use such shells for designing their houses. Suddenly two old foreigners attracted the attention of Ann. She, Deborah and Farida (who wasn't really exited of this idea) immediately forgot about their shells and went to have a small talk or even a flirt with these old guys who were sitting on the beach and drinking beer. I followed the girls. The talk was as usual about the origin of foreigners, about what they do here. Both parties were interested in each other. They asked about the age of the girls, about what they do for a living, where

¹ all names in the paper are invented by the author

they live and so on. I was gently listening to their conversation but didn't try to take part in it till they started to ask me about my name, religion, origin and about my occupation in Ghana. I answered on all questions they had to me, that I am from Kazakhstan, that I am a student of sociology at the Bielefeld University doing a student research concerning everyday mobility of Nima and Mamobi. Of course they told me that they don't know anything about Kazakhstan, but that they had heard of this country, that it was one of the republics of the former Soviet Union, said one of them.

They were very interested in that I study sociology, because (what a surprise!) one of them was also a sociologist working at a university in Norway. Now it was his turn to tell his story. He said that he and his college came to Ghana two weeks ago and they are providing some educational services in low income areas such as James Town. He said: "You cannot imagine how it is difficult to see how people live here in Ghana especially if you are from such a rich country as Norway. People are so poor, they live like rats, but I have to do my work and I do it with a good feeling, because I know I help people to improve their life. I am very glad that my country provides development aid to Ghana. The only thing is that almost everything goes into the pockets of the state or government people". Then the other guy started to talk and he said: "I am going to teach English at schools in James Town. I visited James Town last week. Little children touched me with their dirty hands and I didn't feel myself like being able to say them that they shouldn't do this, because their hands are very dirty". We started to talk about different things till the guy, who was a sociologist, asked me about how I do the fieldwork. I answered: "We normally do it with qualitative methods, with participant observation; we observe what people do and how they live. We try to understand their lifestyle from their perspective. We do different types of interviews. And how do you work?" He answered that he usually does research with quantitative methods. Then he asked the girls in which relationships are they with me. They said that they are responsible for me and take care of me. After that, one of them said or asked very ironically: "How do you like that you take care of her and she observes and then writes about you, you are responsible for her and at the same time you are her data? Do you know that? Don't you mind?" and my friends said: "No we don't, she can write about us, we don't mind. There is no any problem"².

This account demonstrates the unequal and asymmetric quality of relationships between western collaborators of development cooperation and local people. They for instance invited me to visit them in Norway but they forgot to invite Ann, Deborah and Farida and when they asked if they also could visit them in Norway these two old men laughed about Ghanaian girls in Norway. It also shows my discrepant relationships with the girls. It is not so clear in which relationships are we with each other. At that time for instance these were not only professional relationships. I shared food with them, and they with me, and we talked about different personal things. I was telling them about me, and they told me about their life in which I was very interested professionally. Their stories were very important for my research and the problem was if they knew about that, then would they allow me to write about them? So it was a very difficult dilemma for me to use such data or not.

² Field notes of the 12th of September

The story I wrote as a vignette at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates a well established European perspective on African countries shaped by the legacies of colonialism and African perspectives on Europeans, who are often attracted by local people. At the same time it shows challenges of qualitative methods in terms of ethical questions.

2.2 Access to the field

What are my data, how I found them and how I developed my student research and my research question with what kind of field access and how I understand the notion of fieldwork, will be made clear in this part of the paper. I shall say that while collecting data I used a mix of methods (Lachenmann 1995).

My field access and my research question are very interrelated and very dependent on each other. I just let myself being guided by the field and through this process my main interest developed. I was writing into my field notes note book what was unclear for me. The better I knew my field or the closer I was to the object of my research the more questions I had. That is why I was asking the people who belong to the field questions when I found something new about my topic. So my field access was changing. With the changing access to the site my central questions were getting clearer.

So I started my fieldwork through the contact of one of the employees of a German development organization in Accra. My first informant, who works as a guard in this organization at the 28th of July 2009 accompanied me to one of the so called “Zongos” in Accra, Shukura, where he lives. From the first time there I understood that Islam plays an enormous role in that area. Islam can be seen as one of the criteria for a place being defined as a Zongo. My informant speaks very fluent Arabic and he learned it in a *Makaranta* (Arabic school) in Shukura. As I came to the Shukura compounds, neighbors were greeting him in Hausa language. Hausa speaking areas are seen as Zongo areas in Ghana or even in West Africa. My informant Ibrahim very proudly walked through the Shukura’s compounds and was introducing me to different people there. He was telling me, that he knows everyone in Shukura and everyone knows him. Maybe he wanted to show that he could be irreplaceable for me, as Elwert notes:

“Die Leute, die sich am intensivsten um unsere Freundschaft, Anerkennung und auch wirtschaftliche Kooperation bemühen, sind im Allgemein weitaus weniger zentral integriert, als wir ihren Bekundungen zu entnehmen glauben. Durch den Kontakt mit uns werden die altmodische Alte, der Kindergelähmte, zur Feldarbeit unfähige Beobachter, der religiös eifernde Katechist, der als Dieb oder Schwätzer gebrandmarkte Außenseiter aufgewertet. Sie werden Makler des Kontakts zwischen Erforschten und Forscher und damit auch Makler ökonomisch relevanter Interaktionen für ihre Mitbürger. Dies kann unter Umständen sogar ihren ökonomischen Status verbessern“ (2003, 23).

So after a small talk with one of the Imams in Shukura and a prayer, Ibrahim immediately commanded me to give money to the Imam. It was an unexpected situation to me. I wasn't ready to this. I was scared, alone and inexperienced in this situation in a small stranger's room among two natives far from the place I initially lived in Accra. I didn't know what to do and there was no help to expect. I gave money and it was too much – unfortunately at that moment I didn't have small coins. They both were very happy and I felt myself being used. To avoid such situations, where the field researcher is strategically manipulated we need to have what Georg Elwert calls *Orientierungswissen* (knowledge for orientation). For Elwert *Orientierungswissen* means a special knowledge which helps us to anticipate other's perspectives (Elwert 2003, 9).

Talking to different people in different social spheres and positions provided me with various perspectives on the phenomenon. Such aspects as education, Islam, problems with basic infrastructure, crime, market and others were always present when I talked to someone about Zongo. So I thought that my research question had to be somewhere inside of these themes or it had to unify somehow these aspects. It means that when I posed question in my research, answering these questions would enable me to describe all these aspects from the point of view of the question. Talking to different people in Accra, I understood that if I wanted to explore the phenomenon of “Zongo” in Accra I should go to Nima and Mamobi.

2.3 Naming the field – the problem of language and ascriptions

After a few interviews there in the most popular Zongo in Accra, Nima, I found out that something is wrong with “urban everyday mobility of Zongo people”. Every time I was introducing the name of the research theme people laughed or they looked at me showing doubts and mistrust. One of my research assistants, Jacob, who is very familiar with social surveys, questionnaires and social work, said that my topic is not very interesting. He said I should pay more attention to the history of Nima, to the real historical facts of this specific quarter. Full of doubts I started to think carefully about what could be wrong. At that time I started to reflect the process of the research in my field notes notebook, which I simply called “the reflection of the research”. I also started to write down all questions or everything that was unclear for me during the research. The first question was “What is everyday mobility”. In the interview I asked people about where they go everyday, what do they do everyday, what their everyday activities are. So I had a very preliminary definition of everyday mobility. I defined it like everyday activities and so on. The second question was “what is everyday life”. Because the month of Ramadan was near and I thought whether it is everyday life during this month, when people are fasting and when Islamic practices rule especially the everyday. At this time I also didn't know in which aspects of everyday mobility I am interested. I didn't have a concrete research question and I started intensively looking for it. What was wrong?

The most important for me was the discovery that “Zongo people” is an ascription and that Nima is not necessarily Zongo. It was totally wrong to call people who live there “Zongo people”. When I was

in Germany I thought that Zongo is a name of a quarter. So when I came to Ghana after a few interviews I understood that Zongo is an attribute or a quality of a certain place. So I decided not to use the word Zongo anymore. In my reflection of the 24th of August 2009 I wrote:

“Nima is not necessarily Zongo. The word Zongo has a lot of unpleasant and negative ascriptions like poverty, notorious place, crime, drugs, ignorance; “it smells bad there”; “people live there like rats”. That is why it is problematic to call people “Zongo people”. It is like people who live there get immediately and automatically all these attribute”³.

Then I started to live there. My gate keeper was a very important person in that area. He was a very successful young businessman. He had contacts to many influential people in Accra like football players and even some politicians. Some people told me that he is like a star at that area where he lives – everybody knows him. Typically as a lot of people there, he worked in the informal sector of the economy. He was buying and selling different things such as computers, i-phones, i-pods, usb sticks, tv, mobile phones and so on. He had a very nice car⁴ and he always was ready to give me a lift everywhere I had to go even when I didn’t want that. Sometimes when he was driving me in his car through the streets in Nima and Mamobi it was like a performance for the people around. One could see this as an important strategic step toward his business career. This step had to show the importance of his personality in the business world.

The first days I was just writing my field notes and I also was learning about the place where I lived. I was collecting “knowledge for orientation”. Learning to orient myself was like learning the language: learning to talk to people and to name things and places. The name of the place where I lived is Nafiu, it is located in Mamobi near the 15 Bob Street⁵. Mamobi is also “Zongo” and it is just next to Nima. I must note that the first days there my own mobility was very limited, because I didn’t know the way to get out of the place where I lived. And also I didn’t know how to come back, because the roads there are mostly not roads but paths between the compound houses. One can see that these roads were developed by the needs of the inhabitants there and not by the administrative decisions.

I also had problems with the language. A lot of people there who worked on such paths next to my compound, could speak English but at the beginning they were not enough welcoming to help me when I was lost. After the hospitality I saw in other parts of Ghana, I had the opinion that people in this place mistrust foreigners or strangers. Some people were surrounding me. These were Farida, her friends Deborah, Ann, Amina and Faruh. Farida was Faruh’s girlfriend. Since the first day I came they decided that she is responsible for me for the time I spend there. Faruh also asked me if I would like to know how to cook African food. Perhaps it has to be connected with my role as a young girl or the way people saw me there. I should tell that the whole time I’ve spent there I had more chances to

³ Field notes of the 24th of August 2009

⁴ At that time Volkswagen Polo seemed to me as a very expensive and even luxurious car.

⁵ An Nafiu is one of Alla’s names. If someone pronounce this Alla’s name before entering a ship or another transport this person will be protected from any risk or danger. I didn’t know about the meaning while I was in Ghana. This knowledge came to me occasionally and later.

observe women's ways of life than men's. I could be at Deborah's Beauty Salon, for example, as long as I wanted without any problem. Maybe because of my gender and because of the norms of the Islamic world which doesn't give enough room for maneuver for this role I had very limited access to male spaces, however.

From the first day there they asked me if I wanted to learn a little bit or "small small", like they say, Hausa, just some greetings forms and goodbye forms. They told me that it is necessarily for me if I wanted people to trust me. One could say it was one of the important steps towards my recognition in the locality. So every time I passed people whom I saw everyday I was telling them in the morning: „Ka na Lafia“ and they were answering me: “Lafia lau”, which means: “Fine morning”. I found it interesting that when one says good morning or good afternoon or good evening the answer is always fine morning fine afternoon and fine evening. Sometimes they even tried to speak with me as if Hausa were my native language. Farida who was often behind me told me that the answers in Hausa very insignificant and I should just repeat them without knowing what I said. Of course the first word I learned in Hausa was “Baturia”, which is the female form of “white” in Hausa. These forms of politeness which I could easily learn were not enough to understand the talk. So I always had to ask for a translation. Hausa language dominates almost all spheres of life in that area. Without having a good command of Hausa I could get only a preliminary picture of what is going on there, even if a lot of them speak fluent English.

2.4 Conceiving the field as a social space

It was the month of Ramadan as I already mentioned before. I couldn't sleep at night. Several times I was hearing voices from the Mosque and I was listening how people were waking up and were walking to the mosques for the morning prayers. One of those nights I thought I found my research question. I thought it could be interesting to know which cultural rules and norms guide everyday mobility. The next week I thought that with this question I will have to reduce my data because it is clear that such Islamic practices as daily prayers guide everyday mobility, but there are not only Muslims who live there. Other cultural rules and norms were invisible for me and I didn't have any possibility to look for them because of the few weeks left for me to stay there.

One problem concerning my research question was whether Nima and Mamobi are one place or not. I did some interviews in Nima. I did an interview in Nima District Assembly, but I lived in Mamobi. I started asking people if it is one place or not. They told me that the way people live, work, earn money, relax, build families, houses and so on is the same, so it is for many of them one place. In sociological terms these characteristics qualify the two quarters as a single social space. So I decided to treat it as a one place even if there are two names.

Then I came back to Bielefeld. I again started to think how to define everyday mobility, if it is social or spatial or both. Then I decided to change everyday mobility to mobility in everyday life. Finally my question concerned relevant patterns in mobility of everyday in a Muslim dominated quarter in Accra.

2.5 Methods of data collection

I am approaching by tro tro Nima. I am almost in Mamobi. I can hear a mosque. I see a lot of women on the street with headscarves. One woman who is sitting next to me also wears a headscarf. I can smell her perfume. There are a lot of cars, motorcycles, bicycles, people, and female street hawkers on the road with a lot of different things like fruits, fish or materials on their heads. The road is very broken so broken that it is difficult for me to write. I can see the market on both sides of the roads. Food animals like big goats are running around.⁶ On the left side of the road I see the Sahel Sahara Bank. On the right side I see a very beautiful jeep. The amount of cars on the road is getting bigger. I am passing Forex Buro, Hamdullah East House and Imam Khomeini library sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran. I am passing Forex Buro, Internet café and banks like UT Bank, Intercontinental Bank and Western Union. Everywhere there is written in Arabic letters. Men are selling oriental carpets and prayer carpets. These carpets don't look like handmade. There is a meat shop called Alhagi Adamu Meat. I arrived⁷.

The above is one of the examples of the field notes I wrote during the fieldwork. I used different methods, such as participant observations, informal talks (structured and semi structured), and partly narrative and biographical interviews. These different methods were interrelated with each other and constituted the field(work). Just before I started my fieldwork I prepared some questions for the interviews concerning my topic. These questions were about biographies, daily activities, occupation of people who live there in Nima and Mamobi. I also asked the same questions people, who don't live there. I talked to people who only work there and to people who came to the suburb just recently. I talked to females as well as to males of different ages and religions with education and without. I did an interview with the collaborator of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. I talked to an Assembly Man of East Mamobi. I tried to get as many perspectives as I could. I've collected newspaper articles concerning Nima and Mamobi and Zongo in general. I've collected stories, narratives through different types of interviews, informal talks, and participant observation. Unfortunately I couldn't use all data I've collected. I found semi structured and partly narrative interviews as a very convenient way of getting information. According to Elwert an interview gives the representation of the self, which people provide about their society. Each representation of the self materialises societal becoming and changing (Elwert 2003, 28). Despite a lot of information I got from the interviews I couldn't neglect participant observation as a method. Thanks to participant observation I could get information as, for instance, regarding professional knowledge (berufliches Wissen) which is not so easy to explain with words. „Die Grenze des sprachlichen Zugangs wertet die Beobachtung auf“, - writes Gerd Spittler (Spittler 2001, 10). Without living there I wouldn't have the full picture of people's life in the settlement. During the time I've spent in Ghana I did different types of field notes.

⁶ Later I found out that these big goats are not goats but sheep.

⁷ Field notes of the 17th of August 2009.

I used what H. Russell Bernard calls field jottings on the spot and the diary (Bernard 2002, 367 f.). I was doing such jottings everywhere I could. I found the most easiest and comfortable way to do field notes in the internet café. From there I could observe the market outside and what do people do inside of the internet café. I could see what kinds of people use internet and what for do they do it. I was able to type part of my field notes immediately into the computer and send them via e-mail to a person I trust.

And of course I wrote every evening in a diary while I lived in Nafiu in Mamobi. Russell Bernard writes that the diary helps to deal with loneliness, fear, and other emotions that make fieldwork difficult (Bernard 2002, 369).

Participant observation was very important for me because I could observe what people do and what they wouldn't tell me in formal interview situations. So learning the way into my house and out of it I've tasted a little bit more their life style. Without living there I wouldn't be able observe that people there prefer to go to the mosque for daily prayers, instead of doing this ritual at home or everywhere else. It wouldn't be possible to get all this knowledge only by interviews.

Furthermore my data are stories and narratives of my informants whom I've met during the fieldwork, because my informants are at the same time actors which construct, negotiate and interpret meanings of their social world.

2.6 Methods of data analysis

For describing the student research and answering the research question, I selected some interviews. I analyzed them regarding the question "patterns of mobility in everyday". I used the excerpts of the interviews and of the informal talks in order to illustrate actor's perspectives on the issue. Field notes and articles, but also interviews and informal talks I used for a systematic contextualization. The chosen data I analyzed with Grounded Theory (see Appendix, Fig.1). That means that I coded the chosen material by open coding. Then I looked for interrelatedness or non-interrelatedness of these codes. I tried to unify them under different categories. I unified some codes under the category "Zongo". This category illustrates what the phenomenon of "Zongo" is about. Other codes found their way into the category "Everyday life theory of Zongo". This "Zongo theory" explains the struggles of the "Zongo life" from an actor perspective. So in this paper I have two core categories. In the concluding part of my analysis, "community of work and life", I try to reflect some results of my research from two theoretical approaches, one by Simmel, the other by Evers / Schrader.

3. Nima and Mamobi in the shadow of the Zongo

During collecting my data I was very concerned of what is *Zongo* for its inhabitants and also outsiders. What does *Zongo* mean for people who live there and for people who don't live there? What does it mean to live in a *Zongo* quarter? How can I understand the differences between a *Zongo* suburb and

non-Zongo suburb, and how are they socially constructed? Is *Zongo* a name of a certain locality or a characteristic? So, in almost all interviews that I conducted in Nima and Mamobi, two areas which are very well known as *Zongos* among Accraians, I asked people if these settlements are *Zongos* and in which terms they are *Zongos*. I was concerned if they are still *Zongos*. Because there are a lot of recent migrants coming from different places not necessarily from the North and not necessarily with the Moslem background. Because of this I even had the idea that *Zongo* is transforming and Nima and Mamobi are no longer *Zongo* suburbs. Later, I rejected this argument, because I could not find prove in my data.

So, in this part of the paper I will try to illustrate with examples from my interviews, newspaper articles and my field notes, what the phenomenon of *Zongo* is about and how Nima and Mamobi are still *Zongos*. I will also introduce the semantic field of *Zongo*.

3.1 Zongo and others

I started exploring the phenomenon of *Zongo* simply with the question of what *Zongo* is. In my first informal talk to my research assistant, whose name is Justin, I found out that *Zongo*, in local discourse, is a certain locality where people of different tribes, with certain migrant backgrounds live together. They are mostly Muslims and they speak Hausa:

“When you talk about *Zongo* in Ghana you talk about a collection of tribes living together. People migrated from different places to settle down. They are Muslims. In Ghana, mostly these people speak Hausa. The dominant language of the *Zongo* is Hausa. The religion mostly is Islam” (Informal talk with Justin on the 14th of August 2009, §1).

Then I accidentally interrupted him and said: “But it is a stereotype!?” So I provoked another important code, concerning the question of what “is” *Zongo*. This code is an etic one:

“It is a stereotype, but that’s what the *Zongo* is. When you talk about *Zongo* there are mostly stereotypes, but you cannot do without it. You understand?” (Informal talk with Justin on the 14th of August 2009, №1).

In my second interview, with two women, there was a similar definition of *Zongo*. But this time one could see in the following segment of the interview some kind of clash of “*Zongo* people” with “local inhabitants” Ga, and even with the state of Ghana:

“It is *Zongo*. Nima is *Zongo*. It is because of the Muslims, the Hausas. They are so much. They are of majority in Nima. That days Nima was Ga place. Nima is in Ga, in Ga language, but the Hausas came. Hausas are majority in Nima, that is why they call it *Zongo*. Anywhere you go to *Zongo* the Hausas are always dominant. They are majority. Ni-ma. Ni is a name in Ga, the name of the chief; ma is a Land in Ga. Nima is different people, different background, and different cultures. If you are quite, you cannot live in Nima. Nima is a place, where people are too roughly. Nima has its local food. Others come to buy our local food. In Nima you will find that, what you will not find in

residential area and in other parts of Accra. Nima is different because it is *Zongo*. Like I said Nima is too hush. When you come to Nima you can see people fighting. Police are scared to come to Nima and to do an arrest. Here in Nima we have a good people. We have good footballists, we have teachers; we have good people in Nima. Any kind of people we have. It is a *Zongo* because the Hausas are dominant here. When you come you hear Hausa language everywhere in *Zongo*. Most people speak Hausa. We all speak Hausa here, because it is a dominant language. The majority of the people who live here are foreigners. Most of the people are traders. Some people go to Nigeria, they buy things and then they sell, some go to Togo and then they sell things here. We are free here. Nima is free. Nobody cares what you do. But there are places which are not like that. Nima is a free movement. Anytime nobody will ask you anything, you can do whatever you want.” (Int. with Stella and Judi at their compound on the 18th of August 2009, № 2).

At the end of the interview they also said that people who live in Nima came from different places such as Nigeria, Niger and so on. Some of them are Fulanis, others are Yorubians. They came here, according to these ladies, for *greener pastures*.

In the interview one can also see that Nima as *Zongo* locality is seen as a community with its own order of things, different from other places of Accra and Ghana. It has its own dynamic and rhythm of life independently from the existing order of Ghana. “Ordinary Ghanaians” in contrast to “Zongo people”, perhaps, recognize and accept the administrative practices of the Ghanaian state. Compared to “Zongo people”, such ordinary Ghanaians are often looked at as people who have “captured the state” (cf. Wimmer 1997, 637). In contrast to “Zongo people” they are also accepted and recognized by the state. “Zongo people”, according to my data are more or less “*free people*” – free, independent *and* deprived of the resources and services of the state (Wimmer 1997, 641). That is why they are often self-employed and work in the informal sector of the economy. That also means that mostly they don’t pay taxes. They are partly illegible for the state (cf. Scott 1998, 3). People in Nima, i.e. “Zongo people” are still foreigners for the dominant population of Ghana. But they also see themselves as foreigners and “others” by certain criteria. So they are foreigners and “others” by self and other definition.

3.2 Acceptance, security, and stereotypes

In the next informal talk which I did in Nima with three men there was almost the same pattern of what *Zongo* is, but with some new aspects. According to one of these men:

“*Zongo* is different tribes together. They live in *Zongo* because in *Zongo*, whatever your tribe is or whatever your religion is, you are accepted. When you migrate, you are in danger. When you come from different place, you can easily settle in *Zongo*, because you are accepted. We pray five times a day. We believe in togetherness, solidarity and support. ‘People of *Zongo*’ are very brave. If you

lived in *Zongo* you can live everywhere. ‘Zongo people’ are everywhere in the world. They are in Germany, in Italy, in Afghanistan, in Russia”⁸.

In this description of *Zongo*, one can see some kind of a “security” aspect. One of my informants explicitly mentioned the word *danger* in combination with *migration*, *settling down*, perhaps in a culturally new place, and *acceptance*. So, in a culturally new order of life, where newcomers and local people are foreign to each other, somehow it leads to certain distrust, which can be in some ways even dangerous for both sides. In *Zongo*, where almost everybody is a foreigner or stranger, the figure of the stranger is not so unusual anymore. In a situation, where everybody is a stranger or different, a stranger is not really a stranger anymore - and therefore he is acceptable and not dangerous. In a sense, differences among different people are made invisible, because difference is a norm.

In the segment of the interview with Stella and Judi that I quoted above, there is also the same aspect of security. They said, that in Nima you can do whatever you want, nobody cares. So there is some kind of solidarity or consent between people, which live, at first sight, without rules. That is why they say they are free – free from rules. I would also suggest that they have different rules, not administrative rules dictated from above or the state. My thesis is that these *community rules*, which help to orient and to settle easily in this locality, were created by the diverse people⁹ of *Zongo* in order to reach a certain degree of acceptability among each other, which allows these “different people” living together enjoying a certain “security”. Difference and estrangement don’t mean danger anymore in such a situation.

On the other side, in both interviews and also in the interview I did with Ann, on the 20th of September 2009, there is another aspect of security and freedom. There is a statement that people who live in Nima and Mamobi are very brave and that after you have lived in such communities as Nima and Mamobi, you are able to live everywhere:

“*Zongo* is a very nice place; really is a very nice place, because when you are living in *Zongo*, you will learn how to tolerate any nonsense that comes your way, when you are living in *Zongo*. Even when you tell somebody you are living in *Zongo*, that person will be afraid of. That person won’t even cheat you. Because of the area that you are living, that person will be afraid to cheat you. Because he will think: oh, this girl must be very hard because since she is living in *Zongo* this is very hard. Because you cannot live in *Zongo* with the fear for heart you cannot be a couch living in *Zongo*, you must be bored when you want to live in *Zongo* you must be bored, you must not be a couch” (Int. with Ann on the 20th of September, № 3).

So, in this segment of the interview, Ann implicitly talks about self- and other-definitions of the community and of the people who live in the community. According to her, *Zongo* is a very nice

⁸ Field notes of the informal talk on 17th of August 2009.

⁹ Diverse people means in relation to the dominant majority in Ghana, which somehow is seen more homogenous in contrast to *Zongo* diversity.

place. But my argument is that *Zongo* is a certain locality and has a phenomenological quality, and not a physical place.

“I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts“ (Appadurai 1996, 178).

Zongo can be a property and gives people who live there certain characteristics. So, if someone says that he lives in such locality or neighbourhood, then it means that he or she automatically gets these *Zongo* qualities ascribed by self- and other-ascriptions (Appadurai 1996, 179). By other-ascriptions in local Ghanaian discourse *Zongo* means a place, where it is very difficult to survive and also dangerous to live. Ann also explained to me what people of the city of Accra think about Nima and Mamobi:

“So I think that *Zongo* is a nice place. Nobody will harm you. I can’t live in Mamobi and thief will come and drop a knife on me....but somebody may just get up take a knife and go to the residential area and: ‘bring your phone bring your money’. But somebody will see me in *Zongo* and he will not think that I am having so much money that he will have to put a knife on me to take my money or my phone” (Int. with Ann on the 20th of September, №3).

So, nobody will think that people in *Zongo* have money. It is very interesting and intriguing that in this way exactly the stereotypes that describe Nima and Mamobi as slum and insecure areas, also give the people living there security and safety. In public discourse there is often an image of *Zongo* as a slum, for example one journalist writes:

„In Ghana a slum is usually called *Zongo*. It may have a different name like, Mallam or Kao Kudi but it is still a *Zongo*” (Owusu, 2007).

That is why if someone lives in *Zongo*, he must be a very brave person to be able to survive. So, through other-ascription *Zongo* people started to believe that they are really very brave people by nature. In this way *Zongo* is a primordial category. But in the interview Ann took my attention to another aspect of *Zongo*. On my question if she is a “*Zongo* girl”, she answered:

“No, no, no, no I am not a ‘*Zongo* girl’. You cannot tell somebody: ‘I am a *Zongo* girl’. But when you do something, there are some reactions you will do in a certain way [for instance imitating Hausa]¹⁰ that person will think, oh that girl is a ‘*Zongo* girl’, but you yourself you cannot refer yourself to be a ‘*Zongo* girl’. That is what I was saying, when you say, that you are a ‘*Zongo* girl’, somebody sees you to be a notorious person, a fearful person, who can take a knife anytime you like. But I, for instance, I cannot use a knife, I can’t, look at me... I can’t even kill a hen, that’s alone to use a knife on a human being, so I don’t classify myself to be a ‘*Zongo* girl” (Int. with Ann on the 20th of September, №3).

¹⁰ She mentioned that before in the interview.

So, Ann knows these *Zongo* ascriptions. She and my other informants know exactly what is “Zongo”, how “Zongo” works against and for the people who live in Nima and Mamobi. They know when it is useful to present themselves as “Zongo people”. But on the other side they know that it can be wise to hide one’s “Zongoness”. For example, Faruh, who is a trader, told me that he often hides that he is from *Zongo*, because a lot of his clients wouldn’t have business with him, if they knew that he belongs to a *Zongo* community¹¹.

That means that *Zongo* is not only a primordial category, but its constructed character is somehow understood in everyday life.

4. A sociological everyday life theory (Alltagstheorie) of Zongo?

According to Grounded Theory after open coding of some interviews I explored quite important category for my research. I called it *everyday life theory of Zongo (Alltagstheorie)*. I could find *Zongo everyday life theory* in almost each informal talk, in almost each interview I had with the people who live in Nima and Mamobi and with outsiders of the community. I listened to the *Zongo theory* even without mentioning the word *Zongo*. I could find it in the newspapers and in the local academic literature about *Zongo*. So, this category became a key category of my research. This key category according to my data is one of the key elements of the interactions in the local *Zongo* discourse.

In the interview I had in Nima with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, Charles on 20th of August 2009, my informants talked very explicitly about the life in *Zongo* and its interconnectedness with the global postcolonial discourse, development discourse and s. o. I found it very interesting that they see a connection between the difficulties of their individual life in *Zongo* and such global discourses as development, economic interdependence, and colonialism. In their narratives these ordinary people described their life with regard to such discourses. They even base their argumentation on these theories, which were developed in sociology, political and economic sciences. So it was much unexpected for me to hear about these theories from the people of this very local community, from the first sight, isolated from the rest of the world. In this theory, one can find similar arguments, to the arguments of world system theory, of a push pull model of migration theory, and dependency theory. In the following I will try to introduce some of the basic ideas of this *everyday life theory of Zongo*. The first one concerns the connection between Islam and education and the second one the connection between education and development.

4.1 Being Muslim – being uneducated

¹¹ Field notes of the interview with Faruh on the 10th of September 2009, §6.

Two important codes concerning the *everyday life theory of Zongo* are *Islam* and *education*. By axial coding of some of my interviews¹² I found out that somehow Islam serves as an explanation of why a lot of people in such areas as Nima and Mamobi are normally without much education. As Justin said:

“Zongo has problems in terms of secular school education. They want to go the Arabic way. The print media, tv and others promote the importance of education. The government over the years has tried to promote the importance of education” (Informal talk with Justin on the 14th of August 2009, №1). In one of the newspaper articles concerning the political life in Zongo communities “Partisan politics in our Zongos”, the author writes about uneducated “Zongo people”, who are often used by the politicians as banks of votes. Because of the illiteracy they are often getting involved in local political conflicts. There is also a definition of Zongo, which says:

“Zongos are communities in the country where a whole myriad of different ethnic groups, particularly those from the northern parts of the country, reside. In most cases, most of us are of Islamic extraction” (Daily Graphic, Saturday, August 29, 2009, p. 14).

After this definition he writes:

“During political campaigns, our parents, because most of them were illiterates, were always used only to swell the ranks, without deriving any returns on what they invested regarding their time, money, charisma, influence, fluency/articulation and energies” (Daily Graphic, Saturday, August 29, 2009, p. 14).

So, in this article the author talks about the “Zongo people”, who usually, in contrast to politicians, are illiterates and that is why, according to the author, the politicians can easily use them as banks of votes to win the elections. As usual, the author defines Zongo community as an Islamic one. After defining Zongo community as an Islamic one, he writes that the most of “Zongo people” are illiterate. This is a usual pattern of the interpretation, which is very often present in a local discourse. Compared to “Zongo” Muslims, politicians, so to speak, state people, could get an education (cf. Wimmer 1997, 637). Children of these politicians also could get an education. They even “were abroad seriously studying in some of the first-class universities – the Harvards, the Cambridges, the Wales, the Oxfords, MIT’s” (Daily Graphic, Saturday, August 29, 2009, p 14). “These people rule us again”, - writes the author. As one can see the author is with “Zongo background”. So he clearly understands how important education is, in order to receive political, social and economic resources and to be able to foster “development” for his community. He writes:

“This is an opportune time for us to educate ourselves and our children to any higher level that we can afford, because without education we can never enjoy life as they do” (Daily Graphic, Saturday, August 29, 2009).

¹² Interviews with Stella and Judi on the 18th of august 2009, with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, Charles on the 20th of august 2009.

Another good example which also contains the pattern of the interpretation of “being Muslim – being uneducated” I could find in the interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma and Charles. This time one can see it as a part of a complete theory of why “people of Zongo” are uneducated and, moreover, why their parents – early “Zongo people” – didn’t have much education, as Muhammed Haji explained:

“Because of the religion – Muslim religion. Some of the Muslims, they don’t go to school, but they have a reason. The early missionaries from the West, to be precise the Portuguese, the Germans, Britains. Well, well they came with Christianity. So they encouraged our people to bring them to school. Doing that they imposed their religion on them. I will give you an example. This current vice president of Ghana John Mahama. He is from Muslim background, but they converted him to Christian, because he was attending missionary school” (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

And further, another participant of the interview, Charles added:

“Let me try to explain to you. From the beginning, the reason why ‘Zongo people’ didn’t have education. Because a lot of them migrated from Nigeria, Mali. That places are Muslim countries, so they brought in Islamic religion here. So after some time the missionaries came into this country. They tried to divert everyone. That is the reason why our parents took a lot of us from school. That is the reason why!” (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

4.2 An idea of development

Other important codes of the category *everyday life theory of Zongo* are *education* and *development*. My informants understand that education can bring upward socio-economic mobility. So, if in the previous part of the interview they explained to me that because of Islam, they couldn’t get an education in this part they explained to me that the illiteracy of “Zongo people” brought the “backwardness” of *Zongo*. As Muhammed Haji said:

“This brought a setback of Zongo people. So you know anyone who has known, is not well educated. Actually he will not get enough money to take care of himself. So it resulted for them to be doing small small, labours. They will be cleaning offices, gutters and they will be paid small small amount, you see? Some of them are watchmen, some of them are popping around. They will be looking around for find something to do for money. They work in the so called elite people’s houses. They employed them by 4 o’clock to 5 dollars 5 o’clock they need report, you see so we do lesser work we are paid peanuts.” (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, §4).

After that, they started to talk about the disparities, regarding the development of the North and South:

“Charles: So the rate of developing is very very small. I will give you one example. Look at the northern part and the southern part. It was Kwame Nkrumah. He brought education into the North, that’s why a lot of people had the chance to go to the school. In terms of education there is a gap which is a problem for hundred years between the Northern and the Southern part. Education is being established in the Southern part whereby the Northern part was neglected. Well, to me it is intentionally by the colonial masters. Simply, because the most of their resources were at the South. These western people, you know, they liked the sea side, where the sea is, they always liked to see beaches. So they preferred the South and West area more than the North. So they didn’t travel to the North.

Muhammed Haji: Let me give you empirical example. It is hardly you will see a rail in the North. So all the places that you see a rail, it means there is either cocoa or magnesia, bauxites, diamonds and all these things for them to ship them to the ports and carried away.

Denjuma: So they preferred this things they preferred, where the minerals are, where the mineral resources you know the western they preferred, where the minerals, like gold like diamond like...are, so they can make some money

Denjuma: Magnese, bauxite and all these things, so they preferred the West and the South more than the North. That is why the North was lacking they were out of school those days yeah. So this side was having a lot of things more than the North. So it was Nkrumah who came and started forcing them to go to school

Mh: Actually he wasn’t forcing them he brought really true education” (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

This part of the interview shows an interesting constellation of two different positions concerning such a big authority as Kwame Nkrumah. Denjuma said that Kwame Nkrumah started to force them to go to school. It means that some of them didn’t really want education and, maybe, that was because of Islam, as I introduced this argument in the previous part. On the other side, Kwame Nkrumah’s modernization programme meant, at least, for some people, a certain act of violence, which is still in the memory of these people. So Denjuma explained:

“It is an insult, because during those days the teachers used to go to the houses and invite, I mean, the audience, to bring their babies to school. That’s how it was” (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

So, my informants see a connection between education and development, even if it was sometimes forced development. Anyway they are aware that education can be a very good instrument in order to obtain a certain socio-economic resources, as Muhammed Haji explained:

“Basically the type of work that they do in the Zongo community is just jobbing do small small works ok? It is only few of us that will get an office to occupy and earn enough money. So about

80 percent of us that is what we are doing. That is what our fathers and grandfathers, but amongst our fathers and grandfathers that's the type of work that they engage in and amongst them there are others too who make efforts to educate their children to well recognized district standard" (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

So, there are others, it means who *are* educated. These others could get a better life. But the question is then why *Zongo* still remains *Zongo*, why isn't it possible for the whole suburb to make an afford and "to foster development"? Charles sees this as follows:

"But the reason why, you see? *Zongo* remains *Zongo*. We have been neglected by the rulers from the long time and we ourselves we don't try at all, you see? Imagine? This house is like this. Government will not help you to renovate this house, but if the owner of this house gets money now, he will not do it, you see, he will try to go another site and build there. So up to now, *Zongo* remains, as it is" (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

5. Community of work and life

This part of the paper derives from (more abstract) reflections I made during analysing my data by Grounded Theory. I will present some thoughts, which present, more or less, abstractions from the already mentioned concepts. "Community of work and life" can also be seen as my main thesis in this paper, which describes and explains the dilemma of *Zongo's everyday life* and mobility, or even immobility, in everyday. I call Nima and Mamobi a "community of work and life" because its inhabitants somehow define their community through the certain type of work they do. They share a similar work experience, and because of that common work experience, they share the same life style or even "destiny". According to them, they do "small, small jobs", that is menial job. These jobs don't allow them to experience upward social mobility. They do them because they are not well educated. On the other side, they couldn't get enough education because they were traders, as one of my informants, Muhammed Haji, explained it to me:

"So we couldn't have much education because they are purely this thing traders and couldn't have much education. So that is how it started from generation to generation. So they couldn't get good education for them to earn good income. So everyday life is full of struggling. You have to hustle. Anyone who does hustling will not get enough money to put out a standard building, so that we are also coming (progressing - BM) you see? So that we are also having small small education" (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of august 2009, №4).

They are not well educated because of Islam, and also because of the disparities of the development of the Northern and Southern parts of Ghana, as I described in the previous part. Additionally, according to Muhammed Haji, Denjuma and Charles, they are uneducated because of the policy of the colonial

masters. Another pattern of interpretation, which comes closer to my own interpretation and the argument I am putting forward here, is that because of the certain *Zongo* ascriptions discussed above they cannot get better jobs, and thereby a better socio-economic position. That is why they mostly prefer to stay within the community, work for this community and, moreover, share certain rules of this community. It is easier for them to get a job within the community than outside of it. So, one of my interview participants, Rashid, explained to me in an interview:

“Most of them find their work here, because they are much interested in selling and buying, buying and selling. Few of them go out, work in the ministries, work in the government, establish companies, private companies outside of the community. Few of them, especially those who attended education to the highest level. They go outside; they work in the governmental institutions, banks. Most of the people here don't go outside. Most of them don't have their work outside of the community, because they are most interested in their business. They buy and sell. People earn their livelihood within the community. You see small shops – kiosks in front of their houses, that is where the most of them work. Nima and Mamobi are not just residential area, where people come from work just to sleep, these areas are also commercial centers. Legon and areas like these are not commercial centers, because if you want to go there and to sell things you will not find anybody, because they are at work. In Nima and Mamobi people work here, they sleep here, and they have friends here. They almost don't go outside of the community. They live their life here. That is why Nima and Mamobi are special” (Interview with Rashid on the 15th of September, №5).

On the other side, working within the community allow the inhabitants of Nima and Mamobi to be able to conduct Islamic rituals and live an Islamic way of life, what could be, maybe, more problematic in such a modern city as Accra, where showing identification with Islam means backwardness, at least in terms of socio-economic mobility. Moreover, perhaps not every employer accepts such Islamic practices as prayers which take around 10 min. of time five times a day.

The community rules, which mean solidarity, support and togetherness, are seen very positively, at first sight, but exactly these rules make people's life immobile in socio-economic terms. These rules are partly Islamic ones, and it may be no incident that the presence of many beggars in localities in Ghana marks such a community an Islamic, but also a *Zongo* one. *Solidarity, support and togetherness* means that if someone earns more money than others he will have to share his profits not only with his family, relatives, but also with other members of the community (also prescribed in Islam by the law of zakat). So that is why my informants told me, that if one achieves a better life, he will leave the community, because he doesn't want to accept the *community rules* anymore and to share his success with other community members. Such people, i.e. the rare cases of socio-economic upward mobility, go away and *Zongo* remains *Zongo*.

In the following, I will try to explain the dilemma of *Zongo* with a look at Simmel's deliberations about the "stranger" and with an approach introduced that Hans-Dieter-Evers called the traders' dilemma.

5.1 Dilemma of the "Zongo foreigners"

A lot of people in Nima and Mamobi share the same experience of migration, being a migrant, foreigner or stranger in the city of Accra. They have similar work experience or, mostly, it is an experience of being a trader or being self-employed in other informal services in the community¹³. Historically, most of them came as traders. They organized a market and a place, where they could live in safety and security during their work (see Cohen 1969, Eads 1993, Pellow 2002, Schildkrout 1978, Schmidt 2002). For instance, in the interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles, Muhammed Haji said:

"Actually Zongo means a group of people from different backgrounds. Some came from Nigeria. Some came from Benin, Burkina Faso. They are people from different countries. Actually those who started this migration are the Hausas and the Yorubians. They are the very people who migrated. So actually basically we are traders. You see? We are traders of kola nuts. Others also came to work for cocoa. They are labourers at cocoa farms. So actually they made their mind that they are come to work and go back to where they come from. So what they get from their resources they put up and made shift buildings. That is a building which is not well developed, you can see them. So they just built something temporally so that when our time is over we pack our goods and baggage and go back home. So, this how Zongo is not integrated. As time goes by, some of them realized, No! They can't go back again" (Interview with Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, and Charles on the 20th of August 2009, №4).

Referring to Georg Simmel, one could say that they became "strangers". Simmel defines the "stranger" as follows:

"Wenn das Wandern als die Gelöstheit von jedem gegebenen Raumpunkt der begriffliche Gegensatz zu der Fixiertheit an einem solchen ist, so stellt die soziologische Form des "Fremden" doch gewissermaßen die Einheit beider Bestimmungen dar – freilich auch hier offenbarend, dass das Verhältnis zum Raum nur einerseits die Bedingung, andererseits das Symbol der Verhältnisse zu Menschen ist. Es ist hier also der Fremde nicht in dem bisher vielfach berührten Sinn gemeint, als Wanderer, der heute kommt und morgen geht, sondern als der, der heute kommt und morgen bleibt – sozusagen der potenziell Wandernde, der, obgleich er nicht weiter gezogen ist, die Gelöstheit des Kommens und Gehens nicht ganz überwunden hat" (Simmel 1992, 764).

¹³ Almost all my informants were self-employed and mostly traders. They were "buying" and "selling" different things or services (e.g. hairdresser).

So the „Zongo traders“ came as foreigners and they stayed. This has led to a problem which Simmel describes as follows:

“Diese Position des Fremden verschärft sich für das Bewusstsein, wenn er, statt den Ort seiner Tätigkeit wieder zu verlassen, sich an ihm fixiert. Denn in unzähligen Fällen wird ihm auch dies nur möglich sein, wenn er vom Zwischenhandel leben kann. Ein irgendwie geschlossener Wirtschaftskreis, mit aufgeteiltem Grund und Boden und Handwerken, die der Nachfrage genügen, wird nun auch dem Händler eine Existenz gewähren; denn allein der Handel ermöglicht unbegrenzte Kombinationen, in ihm findet die Intelligenz noch immer Erweiterungen und Neuerschließungen, die dem Urproduzenten mit seiner geringeren Beweglichkeit, seinem Angewiesensein auf einen nur langsam vermehrbaren Kundenkreis, schwer gelingen“ (Simmel 1992, 766).

Simmel's approach explains the other side of, why the inhabitants of Nima and Mamobi have to face so many struggles in their daily life. The problem of the closed economic circle in the community of work and life has led to the exhaustion of resources.

5.2 Dilemma of the “Zongo traders”

Hans-Dieter Evers and Heiko Schrader see another important aspect of trader communities:

“Unter den gegebenen Bedingungen stehen Händler in einer Bauerngesellschaft einer Anzahl von grundlegenden Problemen gegenüber. Eines dieser Probleme sind die Sphären der Solidarität, die zwei unterschiedliche Wertesysteme voneinander abgrenzen. Solidaritätssphären markieren Sphären der Moral. In konkreten Situationen bedeutet dies, dass ein Handlungssubjekt sich innerhalb verschiedener Sphären der Moral unterschiedlich verhalten kann und dass dies gesellschaftlich legitim ist. Zum Beispiel wird von ihm innerhalb seiner Gemeinschaft erwartet, anderen zu helfen, mit anderen zu teilen und sie zu unterstützen. Fremden gegenüber kann es sich dagegen zumindest neutral, wenn nicht sogar exploitativ verhalten” (Evers, Schrader 1999, 3).

That is why Evers and Schrader see this problem as a dilemma, the so called trader's dilemma:

“Ein Dilemma ist eine Situation, in der ein Akteur zwischen zwei Handlungsweisen wählen muss, die er oder sie beide gleichermaßen als ungünstig, nicht wünschenswert oder, im besten Fall, als neutral erachtet. Deshalb schafft ein Dilemma die Situation einer Wahl mit nicht nur ungewissem, sondern auch vergleichsweise schlechtem Ausgang“ (Evers, Schrader 1999, 4).

I think that this can be seen as one of the most suitable explanations for the socio-economic immobility of Nima and Mamobi. For instance, one of my informants, Faruh, is widely known as a very successful businessman in that area. He widely traveled to buy import goods, e.g. to China, Singapore and Hong Kong. He could afford this trip, because his friends, relatives and neighbors supported him financially. He earned much more money than he expected. A certain amount of his

profits he gave back to the people who gave him money for his trip. With another part he was able to establish a business, where he could earn enough money for him to be able to live quite comfortable and without problems, which people in Nima and Mamobi would usually have. But he and his brother Bilal are the only ones who take care of their whole family, where “family” in Ghanaian terms can mean a quite expanded network of people. In some cases it even includes friends and neighbors. Faruh bought presents, e.g. chickens, for almost all his relatives at the end of the month of Ramadan. Under these conditions, it is quite difficult for him to achieve enduring socio-economic stability. Now he is successful, but he doesn't know what is waiting for him tomorrow¹⁴.

6. Conclusions

In this paper I tried to illustrate what the phenomenon of *Zongo* is from the point of view of its subjects and I tried to demonstrate that there are different points of view on *Zongo*. With the chosen segments of the interviews I demonstrated how the locality of *Zongo* is constructed in daily life. I tried to show how this certain locality with its special characteristics is produced and reproduced by the discourse and practice of certain social actors, such as the Ghanaian nation state, the *Zongo* community itself, colonial powers in the past, and so on. On the other side I showed how *Zongo* itself produces its subjects (cf. Appadurai 2005, 179).

With the *everyday life theory of Zongo* I showed an inside view of the inhabitants of Nima and Mamobi. I tried to give the *Zongo inhabitants* – at least some of them - a voice to express themselves and how they see the locality they are living in. I found it very interesting that they perceive Islam as some kind of obstacle that from generation to generation prevented them from obtaining secular education and achieving socio-economic upward mobility. They see illiteracy as a reason for low socio-economic status. Illiteracy, according to them, hindered *development of Zongo*.

After that I tried to develop some kind of a theoretical concept, which is immediately grounded in data. *Community of work and life* explains the central pattern of daily mobility, i. e. *being within the community and not going outside*. *Community of work and life* shows not only spatial daily mobility, which is, according to my data, mostly within the community. It also demonstrates the socio-economic side of everyday mobility. *Being within the community* means also belonging to a situated community of kin, neighbours, friends, and enemies and sharing the *community rules* (Appadurai 2005, 179). The shared working experience under the conditions of “trader's dilemma” complicates *Zongo life*. The circle of production and reproduction of *Zongo subjects Zongo locality* continues and *Zongo* remains *Zongo*.

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¹⁴ Field notes of the Interview with Denjuma on the 10th of September.

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Appendix

List of used interviews

| No | with whom (name) | What kind of interview / topic of the interview | when | age / occupation | Place of residence |
|----|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------|
| 1 | Justin | Informal talk / what is "Zongo" | On the 14 th of August 2009 | 30/Student of MA Sociology at the university of Legon | Legon |
| 2 | Stella and Judi | Interview / what is "Zongo" | On the 18 th of august 2009 around 5-6 pm | Middle age around 40-50 / Designer, clothes and material trader | Nima |
| 3 | Ann | Biographical Interview / Ann biography / what is „Zongo" | On the 20 th of September | 22, Trader | Mamobi |
| 4 | Muhammed Haji, Denjuma, Charles | Group discussion / what is "Zongo" | On the 20 th of august 2009 around 16, 16-15, 16-30 | Constructor / around 30 years old, Unemployed / around 50 years old, works in the Call Centre is also a teacher / may be 40 or at the end of 30s | Nima |
| 5 | Rashid | Biographical Interview / Rashid's biography, what is „Zongo" | On the 15th of September | 27, Student of MA Political Science at the University of Legon | Nima |
| 6 | Faruh | Biographical Interview / Faruh's biography, what is „Zongo" | On the 10th of September | 27, "global" Trader | Mamobi |

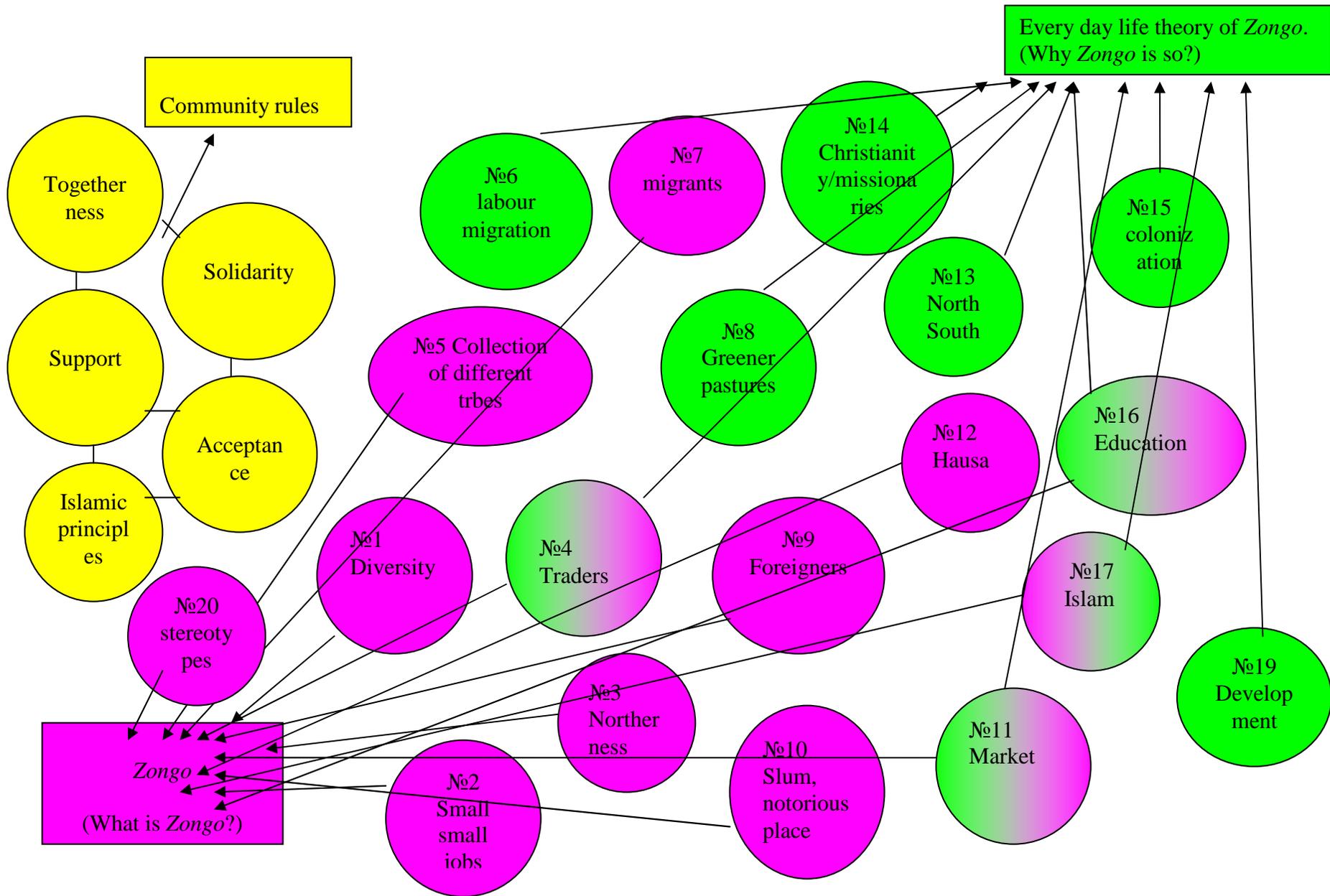


Fig. 1: An outline of how I developed codes and categories of my research