

We have to EAT, RIGHT?

Food safety concerns and shopping for
daily vegetables in modernizing Vietnam



SIGRID C.O. WERTHEIM-HECK

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'I am very concerned about
the safety of the vegetables
I consume everyday, but
what can I do?
We have to eat, right?'



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List with abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFN	Alternative Food Networks
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSO	General Statistics Office
LoFS	Law on Food Safety
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
Sop	System of Provision
TNC	Transnational Corporation
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization



'Of course I worry
about food safety.
I have to protect
my children from
harmful pesticides.
But how do I
know whether the
vegetables I buy
are safe or not?'



INTRODUCTION



'TO THE NEW HORIZON'

1. Introduction – ‘To the new horizon’

1.1 Context: Vietnam, a rising dragon¹ struggling with food security

In the period 1975 – 2015 (the 40 years following the reunification of North Vietnam and South Vietnam), Vietnam has experienced spectacular development from a war-torn country ranking among the world’s most impoverished nations into an economic powerhouse with the world’s highest global growth generator index (Buiter and Rahbari, 2011). Throughout this transition nearly everything has changed for the Vietnamese. One of the few consistencies is that food, as a prominent feature of Vietnamese culture, has remained consistently at the center of daily life. It is in food that Vietnamese people pay their respect to ancestors; it is with food that they mourn and celebrate; it is with food that they show gratitude or share travel experiences; it is the food at the center of the table that is shared with family and friends and it is with food that they always welcome ‘unexpected’ guests.

“Food is our life; we are forever eating, cooking and talking about food.” (Nguyen, 2009)

Figure 1.1 ‘To the new horizon’



Propaganda poster 1975; with the reunification of North Vietnam and South Vietnam, after the Vietnam-American war, the Vietnamese government imposed a strong agricultural collectivization program to improve the food security in the country.

¹ The Vietnamese dragon is the symbol of yang, representing the universe, life, existence, and growth, prosperity and power of the nation. Hanoi (Vietnamese: Hà Nội), the capital of Vietnam, was known in ancient times as Thăng Long (from Thăng, meaning ‘to grow, to develop, to rise, to fly, or to ascend’ and Long, meaning ‘dragon’).

Access to safe and healthy foods is a fundamental element of food security. However, over the past 40 years, food consumption has been far from worry-free. Initially a country struggling with food scarcity and famine, the rapid development of Vietnam into a socialist oriented market economy with food abundance, has resulted in a prominent shift from concerns about 'having enough to eat' to concerns about whether the food is 'safe to eat'. Especially since the turn of the century, as a consequence of advancing modernization, industrialization, agricultural intensification and urbanization, food safety has become a major social and political issue.

To improve food safety and to restore trust among consumers, authorities in Vietnam, as in other parts of Asia, promulgate policies that focus on the modernization of the food retail system. Retail modernization is regarded an important instrument in improving the food safety in everyday vegetable provisioning, as supermarkets are known to implement private food safety management systems and maintain food hygiene standards. In Vietnam, public policy increasingly considers replacing traditional markets with supermarkets as a way to guarantee the safety of food, especially in urban settings with growing populations. Western models of consumption and retailing inspire these retail modernization policies, placing supermarket development at the core of strategies. This does not necessarily mean that western conflated ideal type supermarketization models are best suited for developing economies in Asia, facing their specific development challenges.

This thesis discusses the challenges that Vietnam faces in expanding access to safe and healthy foods, with a particular focus on policy enforced food retail transformations and the daily vegetable shopping practices of Vietnamese consumers. Concerns about food safety influence the way in which Vietnamese consumers confront the questions of where, how and from whom to buy their fresh vegetables. How ordinary people in urban Vietnam confront food safety risks and why and how they do, or do not adopt 'new' or alternative purchasing practices to respond to their increasing concerns about the fresh-food made available to them, is the central topic of this thesis. Providing empirical examples of how consumers deal with their food safety concerns in their daily food shopping routines within the transformative and increasingly globalizing retail context of urban Hanoi, this thesis addresses the effectiveness of induced retail modernization in the case of fresh vegetables.

While recognizing the pressures that Vietnamese policymakers face to increase growth, modernize society and improve food safety, this thesis underscores the importance of reflexivity in policy development, recognizing the resilience of established infrastructures and the complexities of daily life. This thesis unravels how Vietnamese consumers creatively make use of provided infrastructures. Therein, new more hybrid versions of traditional local and more modern global structures are shaping up, showing alternative pathways to modernization and improved food safety.

The empirical research was conducted in northern Vietnam, mainly in Vietnam’s capital Hanoi. Although generic trends are observed throughout Vietnam, one needs to be careful with extrapolating to the whole of Vietnam. Northern and southern Vietnam have different social and economic dynamics that can be traced back to the historical divide of Vietnam.

1.2 Problem statement: economic development, food safety and retail modernization

1.2.1 Economic development: food sector implications

The 21st century is portrayed as the Asian century, therein referring to the success of emerging Asian economies in terms of economic expansion² and increasing consumption. Growth is expected to continue, with incomes to reach current European levels by 2050³, and Asia doubling its share of global GDP to 52 percent by 2050 (ADB, 2011). In the process of progressive international economic integration, the global diffusion of innovations, and mass communication, it is assumed that Asia’s institutional structures and consumer cultures become more global, comparable to advanced western societies. Modernization theory (Bernstein, 1971; Armer and Katsillis, 2001) proclaims a gradual transition from traditional to modern social structures characteristic of western societies, in which tradition is regarded opposite to, and incompatible with, modernity. Western conflated modernization is believed the inescapable outcome of developing countries. Although modernization theory is subject to critique, it is still influential among government officials and international agencies concerned with developing nations (Wrigley and Lowe, 2010).

2 Between 1990-2010: average GDP Asia 7.6 percent compared to average global rate of 3.4 percent (ADB, 2013).

3 Asia’s per capita income will increase six fold in purchasing power parity (PPP) (ADB. 2011).

Policymakers in Asia appear to stick to western models as templates for socio-economic modernization.

Vietnam's rapid economic development offers a case in point for researching how modernization impacts daily life and vice versa. Vietnam's economic development took off relatively late compared to other developing economies in Asia⁴, but was followed by a remarkable growth spurt. Although the economic reforms restructuring the agricultural based economy (Đổi Mới) officially started in 1986, its major impacts only became apparent in the early 1990s. Thus, in just two decades Vietnam has moved from the periphery of the global economy, listed among the world's most impoverished nations, to the world's largest growth economy (with a projected annual GDP of 7.4 percent to 2050; PWC, 2015). Vietnam has realized this spectacular growth through an economic transformation from a highly centralized plan economy into a more liberal socialist oriented market economy based on capitalist logics (see chapter 5 for more historical detail).

Vietnam's economic growth challenges traditional structures. One of the main sectors in which the modernization of Vietnam disturbs the traditional balance is the food sector, particularly in the urban areas. This thesis studies the consequences of Vietnam's rapid development from the perspective of everyday vegetable consumption, more specifically the practice of everyday shopping for vegetables. This is a relevant subject to study for the following three reasons. Firstly, in studying the consequences of modernization in every day life, food consumption is a suitable domain as food is a basic need and food consumption is a daily practice. We focus on vegetable consumption, as in contrast to more modern processed foods, vegetables have at all times been important in a domestic production-consumption system. Secondly, vegetable consumption is particularly prominent in the Vietnamese diet. Fresh vegetables are a daily necessity and are preferably consumed with every meal. Since Vietnam moved beyond food scarcity in the 1990s, the per capita vegetable consumption has doubled (Figuié and Bricas, 2002). Vietnam is currently amongst the countries with the highest per capita vegetable consumption in the world with 290gr per day consumed in its capital Hanoi compared to 220gr in western economies (see chapter 3).⁵

4 First wave as of the early '70's: South-Korea, Taiwan, Singapore; second wave China, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia since the '80s; third wave since end of '90s includes Vietnam).

5 Data 2012 Hanoi: own research see table 3.2; EU average calculation based on 386gr/day mean fruit and vegetable intake of which 166 gr mean fruit intake (EFSA, 2012).

Thirdly, one of the most prominent consequences of industrialization and modernization in the everyday life of Vietnamese consumers is the mounting concern with the safety of daily consumed vegetables; the central topic in this thesis, which is described in more detail below.

1.2.2 Food safety: a real and perceived concern

The transformation from a predominantly agricultural economy to industry and services, in which the contribution of agriculture in the national GDP declined from over 40 percent to around 20 percent (World Bank Development Indicators 1985 – 2012), created production and consumption time-space transformations (Giddens, 1991). Vietnam’s economic growth has resulted in a rapid process of urbanization. Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam and the focus of this thesis, expanded both in area and in population from 1.4 million people living in an area of 920 km² in 1975 to a population of 7.4 million in an area of 3344 km² (Doan and Marmoru, 2009; GSO, 2009; Labbé, 2010). Despite the administrative boundary expansion of Hanoi in 2008, currently about 35 percent of the population is living on seven percent of the total area, the urban districts (GSO, 2014). Consequently, traditional structures, especially in the urban areas, are increasingly challenged.

This process of urbanization in combination with rising income levels and concomitant increases in purchasing power⁶, led to a situation where households, instead of growing vegetables themselves, rely on third parties in purchasing their daily vegetables (Cadilhon et al., 2003). This increasing distancing of production-consumption relationships combined with the intensification of cultivation methods – as a response to growing urban demand for vegetables with a declining farmland acreage – altered the characteristics of Vietnam’s food insecurity from historic food shortage to contemporary food safety, in which the latter is both a real and a perceived concern.

Food safety is a *real* problem in Vietnam with costs of food borne diseases to the economy estimated to amount in 2003 to US\$450 million (World Bank, 2006, p 19). It was approximated that there were 128 million cases of food-related diseases of which 27 million required medical attention, including 3.5 million hospitalizations.

6 The GDP per capita (current US\$) increased from 97 USD in 1989 to 1910 USD in 2013; World Bank data available online: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

The Vietnam's Ministry of Health (MoH) states that the main causes are due to contamination with biological pathogens (contamination occurring during food processing and retailing of prepared foods), chemical agents (mostly excessive use of pesticides, antibiotics and preservatives), and natural toxins (mainly fisheries related). According to MoH, chemical contamination of food is a growing problem that is difficult to control.⁷ Chemical contaminants are mostly related to intensification of agriculture and in particular the increase of pesticides for vegetable cultivation.⁸ Since Vietnam opened up to the outside world in 1986 and restructured agriculture with the de-collectivization of 1989, vegetable production has intensified. Relaxed regulations on the trade of agricultural inputs, for instance the abolishment of the fertilizer import quota in 2001, resulted in an increase in the often inappropriate application of agrochemical inputs, predominantly in the production of vegetables (Hoi et al., 2009). According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development (MARD) the import of agrochemicals increased from 20,000 to 50,000 tons over the period 2005 – 2014.⁹

Vietnamese consumers also *perceive* food safety as a problem, which is fuelled by the fact that food safety incidents are covered widely by the public media (see figure 1.2). Within the Asian continent, Vietnamese consumers have the least trust in the safety of the foods they consume.¹⁰ Vietnamese consumers are particularly perturbed by the safety of vegetables with respect to residues of agro-chemicals (Figuié et al. 2004; Mergenthaler et al., 2006; 2009). Although bacterial contamination is an important cause of food borne diseases, this thesis research revealed a general perceived self-efficacy of consumers in mitigating these risks through cleaning, regardless of effectiveness (chapter 2). In contrast, consumers reported to lack the means to control the residues of agro-chemicals. Thus, food safety incidents are fuelling consumers' insecurity about crop production methods, which drives the desire for safe vegetables.

7 <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2012/08/vietnam-should-enlist-public-in-food-safety-campaign/#.VSEB75OUfYk> (last accessed 20150405).

8 11 percent of all poisonings in 1999 are traced to pesticides and in 2001 8.7 percent of samples in Hanoi markets showed exceeding MRLs and 5 percent of samples containing banned pesticide residues (World Bank, 2006, p18).

9 <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/environment/132563/increased-pesticide--fertiliser-use-contaminating-farmland.html> (last accessed 20150616).

10 Online research across eight Asian countries: China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, India, the Philippines, Singapore, and Japan; available online: http://ssl.aip-global.com/EN/asia_express/archives/1344 (last accessed 20141223).

“Of course I worry about food safety. I have to protect my children from harmful pesticides. But how do I know whether the vegetables I buy are safe or not?”

(Interview women early thirties in Hanoi, 2009)

Figure 1.2 Selection of newspaper headings 2009 – 2015*



* In Vietnamese language newspapers food safety incidents are more frequently covered.

1.2.3 Retail modernization: policy disarticulation in everyday life

To improve food safety and to restore trust among consumers, authorities in Vietnam promulgate policies that – besides production regulation, reactive control systems and awareness campaigns – focus on the modernization of the food retail system (Moustier, 2006; Maruyama and Trung, 2007). The approach of MoH is that modern problems require modern solutions. Modern retail formats are regarded powerful for realizing improved food safety through the effectuation of private standards that can assure the quality and safety of fresh food (Fuchs et al., 2011; Reardon, 2006; Wrigley and Lowe, 2010):

“Private standards of quality and safety imposed on local suppliers by the retail TNCs [Transnational Corporations] to compensate for the inadequacies of existing public standards infrastructures, are seen as differentiating the retail-TNC offer from what informal/traditional channels can provide.” (Wrigley and Lowe, 2010, p 16)

In Vietnam western ideal-type supermarketization models are imposed by government policies (see table 1.1), in which the modernization and regulation of food retail systems are instigated by the wish to improve the food safety situation by increasing reliance on public private co-regulation in food safety management standards and systems (Henson, 2011; Martinez et al., 2007) (see chapter 3).

In coping with development challenges, the government plays a powerful interventionist role by creating the enabling conditions for supermarket development (regulations, permits and land allocation), as well as being actively engaged in retailing itself through state-owned corporations. Since the first supermarket appeared in Vietnam in 1994, state-owned retail corporations have dominated the modern retail-scape. Vietnam has only recently (2009) begun to permit fully foreign ownership and the effects of this in international retail expansion in Vietnam have been increasingly visible since 2012 (see also table 4.2 supermarket development in chapter 4). Through replacing traditional with modern retail formats, Vietnam policymakers lean on western conflated models of retail modernization (see chapter 4 for more details). Policies appear to be designed along the ‘supermarketisation’ theory (Reardon et al. 2003), in which waves of retail transformations in emerging markets – presuming a more or less linear development – are expected to result in supermarkets prevailing

Table 1.1 Overview of retail modernization policy with the overall objective to improve food safety*

Realist questions	
Whose choice making do policymakers aim to change?	Vietnam policymakers aim to reach all citizen consumers in Hanoi in their strive for the amelioration in the food safety and hygiene of daily consumed vegetables.
What choices/decisions do they want to make them differently?	Vietnam policymakers aim to bring about a shift in the practice from shopping at unhygienic traditional markets towards shopping at more controlled modern retail chain stores (supermarkets and convenience stores).
How do policymakers expect to bring about those different choices?	Vietnam policy makers employ policy measures that actively restrict and reduce traditional markets, while at the same time stimulating the development and expansion of modern (western style) retail formats.
Why do policymakers expect their policy to effectively work out in practice?	Vietnam policy makers expect that the ubiquitous and urgent food safety concerns of the population in combination with the aspiration for modern lifestyles will drive the adoption new and modern retail formats in the daily lives of its citizen consumers.

* *This framework was constructed by the author of this thesis on the basis of Hanoi Trade Development Plan for the period 2010 – 2020 with a vision up to 2030 (MoIT, 2009) and a sector report by the Global Agricultural Information Network (Dries et al. 2013), in which the framing was inspired by realist evaluation literature that questions ‘what works, for whom, and under which conditions’ as applied in chapter 4 of this thesis.*

in the food shopping practices similar to patterns in western societies (Reardon and Swinnen, 2004). Clearly, Vietnamese policymakers have made an effort to achieve safer and more healthy food consumption. The retail modernization policies are designed to influence choices and persuade consumers to change their behaviour based on the idea that consumers make rational choices, assuming that provision drives consumption; supermarket availability drives adoption:

“... food safety is a major concern that drives customers away from traditional markets and towards modern grocery retailers such as supermarkets and convenience stores.” (Dries et al., 2013, p 15)

However, despite consumer food safety concerns, in the performance of everyday life, consumers don't 'en masse' adopt policy enabled risk-reducing alternatives. Retail modernization policies aiming for improved food safety, among others requiring modern retail outlets to only trade vegetables that are certified safe (for more detail see chapter 3), did not yet produce the targeted behaviour of purchasing vegetables in supermarkets. It is widely acknowledged that supermarkets in emerging markets face particular difficulties in fresh food retailing (Humphrey, 2007; Mergenthaler et al., 2009). Traditional channels continue to dominate in the daily vegetable purchasing practices (Cadilhon et al., 2003; 2006; Jensen and Peppard, 2007; Maruyama and Trung, 2007; 2012; Shepherd and Tam, 2008). Everyday reality shows a value-action gap between the consumers' stated preference for safe vegetables and supermarkets struggling to sell certified safe vegetables. As it turns out, transitions in the food buying practices of Vietnamese consumers are not so easily established. Policy reforms that aim to offer a controlled and predictable provision of fresh vegetables through supermarkets seem to contrast with the unruly and obstinate daily reality in a dynamic city such as Hanoi. Thus, Vietnam is a prime example of a context that begs the question of how to articulate retail modernization policy in the performance of everyday life.

1.3 Scientific context: retail development and behavioral change

The apparent disarticulation of policy in the performance of everyday life and the consecutive question on how to articulate policy in daily life, touches upon two inter-linked debates: a debate with extreme positions on retail development and a debate on how to bring about behavioral change. This thesis, which addresses consumption as a social practice, explores the middle ground in both debates. Before further elaborating on the practices theory based approach taken in this research (see 1.4), I first describe the scientific positioning of this thesis research.

1.3.1 Retail development: a debate with extreme positions

Emerging economies like Vietnam importantly rely on big retail system interventions when aiming for bringing about changes in consumer practices. From this perspective the limited progression of supermarkets in emerging economies (Nguyen et al., 2013; Traill, 2006), is mainly discussed in terms of entrance and penetration strategies (Lowe et al., 2012) or depth of territorial embeddedness, (Dawson, 2007; Coe and

Lee, 2013), with an increased advocacy for retail Transnational Corporations (TNCs) to adapt their models to local consumption cultures (Hino, 2010; *Journal of Economic Geography* special edition, 2007; Wood et al., 2014; Wrigley et al., 2005). Debating the ‘supermarket revolution in developing countries’ thesis (Reardon et al., 2007; Wrigley and Lowe, 2007), from an institutional governance perspective, leaves supermarketization in itself largely unquestioned. With the urgency to improve food safety, it is important to assess to what extent top-down enforced supermarketization is an effective strategy to improve access to safe food.

Proponents of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs), like farmers’ markets, challenge these institutional governance perspectives on retail development. AFNs are characterized by proximate consumer-producer relations based on organizing principles of embeddedness and place (DeLind, 2011; Goodman, 2003; Goodman et al., 2011; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Hinrichs, 2003; Vittersø et al., 2005). In contrast with top-down retail TNC systems interventions, the agency of consumers is said to drive the formation of local production-consumption networks (Brunori et al., 2012; Dupuis and Goodman, 2005; Little et al., 2009; Lockie and Kitto, 2000), in which the (re-)localization mechanism is considered to have potential for re-establishing trust in food safety (Beckie et al., 2012). Positioned as opposite alternative to the on-going globalization of retail TNCs, studies on AFNs have a strong focus on western developed economies (Dürschmidt, 1999; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000; Kirwan, 2004; Spilková et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2005). However, in the light of the persistent dominance of traditional vending structures observed across Asia (Goldman et al., 2002; Humphrey, 2007), recently AFNs are also studied in the context of developing economies in Asia (Si et al., 2015).

The contradictory tendencies of globalizing food retail development on the one hand and the formation of alternative (re-)localized food production-consumption networks on the other, is helpful in articulating positions and triggering vivid theoretical debates, but appear insufficient in providing detailed and holistic understandings on the efficacy of government policies in changing daily practices to inform practical solutions for modernization and food safety problems in an emerging economy like Vietnam. Moreover, it is debatable whether the dominant and strongly locally embedded vending structures in Vietnam should be considered an AFN. Taking the perspective in which not modern supermarkets, but traditional markets are considered the

conventional system and the current niche of supermarkets the AFN, might deliver new and more culturally sensitive perspectives on food system transformations in emerging economies.

1.3.2 Bringing about behavioral change beyond models of reasoned action

The struggle of policymakers in Vietnam with policy articulation in the performance of everyday life is illustrative for a theoretical discussion on bringing about behavioral change, particularly in relation to sustainable consumption. Traditionally, policymakers try to enforce consumption changes through interventions in the system of provision (SoP; Fine, 2002) based on theories of voluntary action in which the individual, sovereign consumer is the basic unit of analysis (Shove, 2010; Warde, 2014). In the context of Vietnam, policymakers – assuming the provision of modern retail outlets to drive the adoption of supermarkets based on food safety concerns and lifestyle aspirations – are trying to bring about behavioral change interventions leaning on theories of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). While there exists widespread agreement about the importance of consumption and human agency, the tendency to regard consumers as active and reflexive agents is criticized to overestimate deliberate choice making, while disregarding inconspicuous consumption (Shove and Warde, 2002; Wilk, 2002).

Shove provocatively points out that rational choice based theories are the dominant paradigm in policy design, because approaching consumption as conscious and intentional decision making delivers straightforward answers, like consumer segmentation on lifestyle preferences, that provide easy guidance for decision makers (Shove, 2010; 2011). Approaching food provision-consumption systems in terms of causal relations and purposeful behavior, dominant in both more traditional motivational consumer studies on supermarket adoption (Gorton et al., 2011) and in value-laden studies on the development of AFNs (Seyfang, 2006) is, however, criticized for failing to capture the repetitive and automated aspects of consumption (Warde and Southerton, 2012). By viewing consumption as an outcome of supermarketization, Vietnamese policymakers detach external interventions from the distinct logic of daily life. Policy interventions work, however, never in isolation and the reality, as the case of Vietnam demonstrates, appears less straightforward, which motivates a shift of focus beyond individual choice to the wider arena of daily life.

1.4 Theoretical approach: a practices theory based approach to consumption

Especially over the past decade, attention is increasingly turning towards more non-individualist perspectives in which research is increasingly addressing consumption as a social practice, rather than the final outcome of individual behavior (Evans et al., 2012; Hargreaves, 2011; Schatzki et al., 2001; 2009; Spaargaren, 2003; Warde, 2005). Cognitive science has learned that most of our behavior is ‘automatic’ – intuitive, unconscious and skilled – and therewith involves little deliberation or rational thought. With much in the everyday behavior of people based on habits and routines, practices theory considers the spring behind actions to be located in the logic of particular practices:

“...from the point of view of a theory of practice, consumption occurs within and for the sake of practices.” (Warde, 2005, p 145)

Interventions, whether instigated by public policy or by commercial enterprises, that aim to bring about safer modes of consumption gain significance in the everyday purchasing practices of consumers. In the end, daily consumption practices will learn whether consumers recognize and ultimately adopt new and safer choices made available to them, or whether they persist in practices that might be more harmful to them, or trigger the development of hybrid alternatives. Where more individualist centered research delivers insights framed in terms of discursive causal relations and target group profiling, practice based research delivers insights into the actual performance of daily life in which behavior is situational defined. Especially in relation to the character of human behavior as being highly habitual, a practice theory based approach is claimed to have potential to inform more effective initiatives for behavioral change (Evans et al., 2012; Shove, 2011; Wilhite, 2012).

Although practice theory based research is expected to deliver valuable insights for policy makers, its practical contribution to policy formulation is the subject of much debate (Warde, 2014). The biggest issue concerning the development of practice theory based learning is its complexity by nature. Where individualist centered research offers insights that provide clear direction for policy makers, practice research is more diffusive in its outcomes. Opponents of practice based research claim that

the inherent complexity makes practice based research impractical (Jackson, 2005), where as proponents in return argue that social psychological based research delivers simplistic and un-nuanced insights and as such might deliver a false sense of security for policy makers, and that everyday practices should not be ignored simply because they are complex by nature and thus more difficult to grasp within current policy frameworks (Shove, 2010).

“To the contrary, practice-based approaches present an opportunity to re-think and re-frame entry points, scope and orientations of policy initiatives. However the issue – as we see it – is that there is not yet an empirical base for exploring policies initiated in the light of theories of practice.” (Evans et al., 2012, p 115)

Notwithstanding that practice theory based approaches are receiving increasing attention as an alternative to the dominant, more individualistic and lifestyle oriented social psychological paradigms, to date practice-based research is still largely unexplored when it comes to thinking about policies and interventions. Based on the specific case of shopping for (safe) vegetables in Vietnam, this research assesses how, and to what extent a practices theory approach might deliver a level of understanding on human conduct that contributes to the development of effective policies to improved safety in daily vegetable consumption, precisely by addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of activities in daily life. The complication in this respect is that there is no single one-dimensional defined theory of practice (Halkier et al., 2011; Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2011; Warde, 2014). Political conservatism on the one hand and theoretical imprecision on the other hamper its application to policy. In the absence of a definitive theoretical resolution, but in line with its theoretical foundation, empirical research is importantly informing theory formation:

“Practice based research starts from local problems and brings these to bear on broader theoretical discussions like how to bring about more healthy and safe consumption patterns.” (Arts et al., 2013, p 12)

This disposition implies empirical research at the foundation of practices theory based studies. The application to the analysis of consumption started around the turn of the century (Gronow and Warde, 2001), reconceptualizing consumption as a moment in almost every practice (Warde, 2005), and has since gained importance in

thinking about food system changes in the context of sustainable development with a strong focus on western developed societies (Crivits and Paredis, 2013; Evans et al., 2012; Evert and Jackson, 2009; Hinrichs, 2014; Kjaernes and Holm, 2007; Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Røpke, 2009; Spaargaren et al., 2012). However, with the sustainable development quest spreading to non-OECD contexts, there is a need to overcome the original Eurocentric bias (Oosterveer et al., 2007; Spaargaren, 2011). Consumption cultures in SEA emerging economies are crucially different from western counterparts, both in institutional preconditions of consumption and in consumer concerns (Gorton et al., 2011; Kantamaturopoj, 2012; Lam et al., 2013; Othman, 2007; Zhou and Jin 2009). In identifying the opportunities for bringing about more sustainable fresh produce consumption in Vietnam it is essential to include the local consumer perspective, since consumer concerns in Vietnam are fundamentally different from those in western societies. Where in western societies food is generally perceived to be safe and trust in abstract expert systems like certificates, labels and brands is importantly guiding consumption practices, the case in Vietnam seems to be the opposite. Vietnamese consumers do worry a lot about the safety of their foods, but don't have great trust in external expert systems in guaranteeing food safety. Consequently, in western societies sustainable consumption concerns have a more altruistic character than in Vietnam, where consumer concerns are characterized by personal urgency.

With consumers' consumption habits importantly embedded in culture (Goldman et al., 2002; Goldman and Hino, 2005; Wilk, 2010), this thesis questions whether we can expect Vietnamese consumers to adopt global institutions and practices. Global and local dynamics in food retailing work out differently in different regions (Spaargaren, 2011). From the lack of adoption of modern supermarkets in vegetable purchasing in Vietnam, it might be considered that western models are simply not applicable in the same way and to a similar extent as in western countries, which could be framed in terms of social resilience and persistence of habits (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014), that demand for new visions on modernization and development. Practices theory based approaches are considered important in obtaining a deep understanding of how to find alternative pathways to modernity beyond the dominant western conflated models. Acknowledging the importance of the local context in the performance of daily life, the approach makes room for recognizing potential Asian alternatives of more 'glocalized' pathways for societal advancement, which in turn might be informative to western societies as well.

1.4.1 Research objective

The objective of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how ordinary people in their everyday lives and within a transformative context confront real food safety risks that are difficult to influence or come to grips with by utilizing a practices theory based research approach.

Rationale

By applying the research on the specific case of shopping for vegetables in Vietnam this thesis exemplifies how a social practices approach is relevant beyond OECD countries, precisely because its empirical focus allows for the inclusion of local consumption cultures. In studying the relation and dynamics between local cultural tradition and advanced globalization at the consumption junction (see 1.5.1), this thesis is novel in its programmatic methodological approach that combines distinct, though coherent research perspectives and seeks for in-depth precision through reflection on emergent insights and method triangulation (see in 1.6). In this way, uncovering how practices of shopping for vegetables and their inherent food safety dynamics emerge, evolve or die out within the rapidly transforming urban context of Hanoi, Vietnam, is argued to be informative for policymakers. Practice theory approaches can instigate the development of more versatile and amenable intervention strategies, which do not necessarily entail a radical transformation of the retail landscape and which do not necessitate radical breaks with well-established local practices. This thesis thus substantiates the practicability of practices theory based research approaches in designing retail modernization policies that aim for improving the food safety situation in an Asian setting.

1.5 Conceptual framework and research questions

This thesis is concerned with the central research question of how ordinary people confront food safety risks and why and how they do, or do not, adopt alternative (i.e. modern retail shopping) practices to respond to their increasing concerns about the fresh-food made available to them.

1.5.1 Conceptual framework

In approaching this question, this thesis expands on the conceptual framework developed by Spaargaren (2003; 2006; 2011) in which daily social practices regarding a specific consumption domain are at the center of the research (Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 2001).

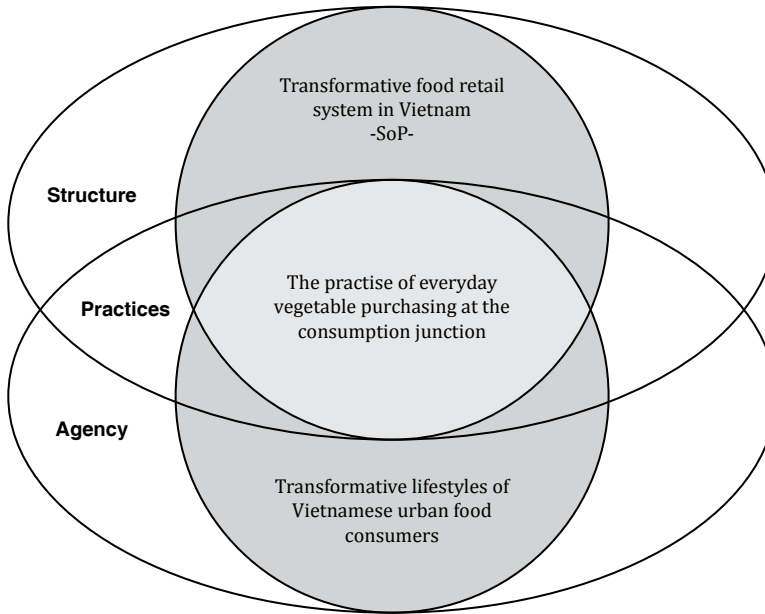
“Practices as key methodological units for research and governance are suggested as a way to avoid the pitfalls of the individualist and systemic paradigms.”

(Spaargaren, 2011, p813)

With his framework Spaargaren offers a valuable methodological solution for the dominant structure-agency paradigms in governance of sustainable change. Relations between providers and systems on the one hand and consumers on the other are mediated and co-produced through practices at the consumption junction, in which ‘consumption junction’ refers to all sites or locales where the logics of the system of provision (Fine, 2002) run into the logics of everyday life consumption routines. This thesis concentrates on the consumption domain of shopping for daily foods and focuses its research activities on the everyday vegetable purchasing practices at the various consumption junctions for vegetable vending and purchasing in Vietnam, with a specific focus on Hanoi as illustrated in figure 1.3.

Mediating the dualism in structure-agency opposition the framework acknowledges both the role of top down enforced retail modernization policies as well as the life-world of individual citizen consumers.

Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework*



* Framework is inspired by the work of Spaargaren, 2003; 2006; 2011.

Practices at the consumption junction

Daily practices are on the one hand embedded in and enabled by systems of provision, while on the other hand are strongly rooted within daily life worlds. Structure and agency are simultaneously at work at the consumption junction. Situated practices, like shopping for vegetables, form the middle ground in food 'production-retail-consumption' chains and networks. It is within situated practices that dynamics in systems of provision interact with the dynamics in life-world rationalities of individual consumers. By exploring this middle ground two questions come to the forefront. Firstly, given that structures are reproduced via practices and vice versa, the question arises how new practices emerge, develop and recruit practitioners? Secondly, understanding that practices are not performed in isolation – shopping for daily vegetables is just one practice among a whole range of other practices in daily life, that can be either complementary or competing (Shove et al., 2009) – the question arises as to how individuals handle the combination of various practices that together constitute daily life? Taking into account this duality of structure (Giddens,

1984) in which human activity presupposes structure, while structure is at the same time also being reproduced and transformed through human action, this thesis incorporates both agency (analysis of strategic human action) and structure (institutional analysis) perspectives.

The human agency perspective

Studying daily practices at the consumption junction acknowledges the agency of individual citizen consumers, in this thesis vegetable shoppers, in the reproduction and transformation of situated practices. Knowledgeable practitioners make creative use of the rules and resources available to them and therein co-produce the systems and structures upon which they draw. In this thesis, agency was approached through the study of situated human activity. From a practices based research perspective, agency is not restricted to purposeful and voluntary action conform the individualist paradigm, but includes agents’ practical consciousness that does not require conscious reflection and deliberation (Giddens, 1984). When focusing on agency in the practice, human agents are looked at as the carriers of practices (Reckwitz, 2002). In practice theory perspective, people are rather seen as practitioners engaged in the activities of everyday life, drawing attention to ‘doings’ (Røpke, 2009; Shove and Walker, 2010; Warde, 2014):

“Against the model of the sovereign consumer practice theories emphasize routine over action, flow and sequence over discrete acts, dispositions over decisions and practical consciousness over deliberation. In reaction to the cultural turn, emphasis is placed upon doing over thinking, the material over the symbolic and embodied practical competence over expressive virtuosity in the fashioned presentation of self.”
(Warde, 2014, p 286)

Since not all human daily activity is explicitly reasoned, but instead situation driven, intuitive and improvised, this research does not take individual people and their motives as objects of study, but focuses on the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables as units of inquiry.

The institutional perspective

Studying daily practices at the consumption junction acknowledges also that consumer behavior is enabled, constrained and contextualized by systems of provision. Institutional systems and structures are principle elements of practices (Shove et al., 2012) in which public and private policymakers are assumed responsible for the establishment of the rules, standards and institutions which are the structural elements of society (Giddens, 1984). Vietnamese policymakers, in coping with modernization challenges, try to shape society in desired directions and enforce consumption changes through big system interventions. Therein they define the institutional playing field of citizen consumers as practitioners of vegetable shopping and consider individual consumers responsible for the uptake of modern alternatives (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014). However, as described above in relation to retail modernization and daily vegetable shopping, structure is also the consequence of action. Practices performed by knowledgeable agents are pivotal in the reproduction and transformation of structure. Practices are not performed in isolation, but are embedded in wider networks of interlinked or even interdependent practices. Structure is thus not a static concept but instead refers to the dynamic process of the constant reproduction and renewal of (clusters of) practices. In this thesis the institutional perspective is applied to study the changing infrastructures in vegetable provision in Hanoi. I discuss the fact that the specific ways in which people deal with food safety insecurities can neither be addressed in isolation of the social context, nor be understood without taking into account the historical pathways of development of practices of shopping for vegetables.

1.5.2 Research questions

With the aim to gain an understanding of how ordinary people in their everyday lives and within a transformative context confront real food safety risks that are difficult to influence or come to grips with by utilizing a practices theory based research approach giving primacy to neither agency nor structure (see also table 1.2), this thesis addresses the following questions:

Central research question:

- How do ordinary people confront food safety risks and why and how do they, or do they not, adopt alternative (i.e. modern retail shopping) practices to respond to their increasing concerns about the fresh-food made available to them?

This central research question is investigated along four coherent sub-research questions that are answered in the respective empirical research chapters.

Sub-questions:

- What are the characteristics of the dominant and persistent practice of shopping at wet markets that account for its continued reproduction and how are food safety concerns confronted within this well-established practice? (chapter 2)
- What context specific processes and circumstances account for the continued reproduction of street market shopping (chapter 3) and the limited uptake of modern(ized) outlets (chapter 4); how do consumers handle food safety concerns in combination with other choices in the performance of daily life?
- What practices of purchasing or appropriating fresh vegetables do exist in contemporary Vietnam, how do they relate to food safety concerns and dynamics, why did they emerge and evolve during the past 40 years, and what factors are important in explaining the dynamics of change in the overall set of shopping practices? (chapter 5)
- What lessons can be learned from social practices research in assessing the present and future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies which imply the de- and re-routinization of well-established contemporary practices of shopping for fresh-food? (chapter 6)

1.6 Methodological approach

The lack of a unified approach to the study of social practices and explicit methodological protocol is discussed as a weakness of practices theory based research approaches (Halkier et al., 2011; Schatzki, 2001). In this thesis I argue, that in studying real life the ‘eclecticism’ (Warde, 2014) in approaches, methods and techniques of analysis is a strength rather than a weakness, when applied as an intelligible program. Below I describe the programmatic approach implemented in this thesis that consists of two major steps in the process. Firstly, I define the shifting perspectives on the study of the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables in Vietnam, making use of ‘zooming in and out’ as proposed by Nicolini (2012). Secondly, I describe the mix of methods used. Selections throughout this process were based on notions of added value and coherence.

When taking practices as central unit of analysis it is vital to distinguish between practices as entities and practices as performances (Schatzki, 1996) in conducting research. There is little guidance in how to define practices, beyond the fact that practices are collective in their prescription and evaluation (Warde, 2014), they need to be commonly recognized (Spaargaren, 2011) and need to make sense to people (Røpke, 2009). Practices can only be empirically studied in the form of practice-as-performance (Welch and Warde, 2015) in which the performances have to be ‘fairly’ alike. Following the distinction of practice as performance and practice as entity, I studied practices through the performative action of human agents at consumption junctions. In this way the performance enacted in specific moments and places functions as a reading glass to obtain insights on practices as entity. Since performative action is not static and differs between agents (Røpke, 2009), in this thesis I explore the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables from four different angles, each presented in a separate chapter.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 zoom in on a specific practice. Chapter 2, zooms in on the practice of shopping for vegetables at wet markets, paying particular attention to the practical competence of consumer practitioners (Gronow and Warde, 2001) within their socially embedded routinized ways of shopping, with the aim to unravel the extend to which practical know-how supports continual reproduction of the practice. Chapter 3 zooms in on the practice of shopping at street markets and addresses the temporal and spatial dimensions of the everyday practices, exploring patterns in shopping for daily vegetables within the wider performance of daily life. This chapter unpacks how shopping for vegetables is practically constrained (Southerton et al., 2004) by the spatial-temporal demands of many social practices that together constitute daily life (Schatzki, 2009). Chapter 4, zooming in on the practice of shopping for vegetables at modern(ized) retail outlets, portrays how policy works out in daily life, in which the practices as performance are considered to be emergent outcomes of a living and dynamic system of interaction and co-evolving practices (Shove and Walker, 2010) with varying direct effects, and sorting both intended and unintended social impacts. In addressing the issue of normality, this chapter reveals that top down enforced breaches with established practices are not a guarantee for practitioners to re-routinize in the aspired behavioral patterns of policymakers.

With careful regard to chapters 2, 3 and 4, chapter 5 zooms out through an historical mapping of a portfolio of embedded practices. The essence of chapter 5 is to comprehend the trajectories and dynamics of change in and between practices over time, unraveling both permanence in change (Bourdieu, 1990), and the emergence of new practices, based on self-organizing processes (Shove and Pantzar, 2005). In the tradition of historical analysis, narratives were developed, in which both primary sources, created during the time under study, and secondary sources were utilized in unraveling the emergence, persistence and disappearance of practices and the cultural norms and infrastructures that constitute them (Harvey et al., 2013). Practices as entities have a history and path of development in which new links are established between pre-existing and new elements on the basis of creative interactions of established skills, routines and social networks that encounter a changing food retail environment.

In making the four coherent perspectives on everyday life researchable, I draw upon other real-life fields of research and disciplines in selecting the mix in research methods, which needed to include methods that provide information on human agency as well as on institutional contexts at work within the practice. I borrow from social anthropology, realist evaluation and social history. The concluding chapter of the thesis reflects in more detail upon the methodological approach on the basis of the research results (section 6.3).

The method mix applied in each distinct chapter was informed by logics of ‘*Forschung*’ – the systematic research for new insights and deeper understanding – to discern patterns and unravel commonalities or ‘rules governing the practice’ (Warde, 2005). Further, the method mix was designed to allow for triangulation and validation of the data collected for filtering out atypical performance aspects. Table 1.2 provides an overview of the mix of methods used within the context of this thesis. As can be read from this table, participant observation at the consumption junction formed the corner stone of this practices theory based thesis research. I combined methods that provide direct access to the interactions happening at the consumption junctions with methods that generate accounts or expressions of action and interaction. I therein privileged qualitative data collection methods over quantitative. Quantitative methods were merely used for sketching out the contextual setting and control purposes, rather than as primary social practices data sources.

Table 1.2 Overview of type of field research methods used per chapter*

Analytical practices' prism		Zooming in <i>Practice as performance</i>		Zooming out <i>Practise as entity</i>	
		Chapter 2 skills and competences	Chapter 3 time-spatial dimensions	Chapter 4 contextual conditions	Chapter 5 shifts in configurations**
Qualitative	Agency dimension	Shopping trips and house- hold visits	✓		
		Participant observation	✓	✓	✓
		Intercept interview	✓	✓	✓
		In-depth interview con- sumers	✓	✓	✓
		Daily logbooks	✓		
		Focus group		✓	
	Institutional dimension	Observations: site visit / store check (incl. longitu- dinal)	✓		✓
		In-depth interview vendors/ retailers	✓		
		In-depth / expert interviews policymakers and regulators	✓	✓	
Quantitative	Agency dimension	Household survey	✓	✓	
		Shopper survey		✓	✓
	Institutional dimension	Retail census	✓	✓	✓

* More detail of the methods applied is provided for in the respective chapters.

** This was complimented with extensive desk research, both primary data (running records and news articles) and secondary data (academic literature as well as expert reports).

1.6.1 Practicalities in practice theory based research beyond OECD countries

Lastly, some words on more practical considerations, related to language and culture, in the design and execution of the methods applied. The consumption context in Vietnam is essentially different from western societies in which most tools and tech-

niques applied were originally developed. Methods developed in western societies do not necessarily work equally well in the Vietnamese context and more conceptual constructs, like sustainability, are not always understood in a similar way. Also the translations of questionnaires and interview guides were a delicate task. Not all words could be easily translated and sometimes required more elaborate descriptions with the risk of becoming directive or suggestive. By using multiple translators and investigators I tried to mitigate this. In conducting the fieldwork I had to rely on Vietnamese professional researchers due to language constraints. I was also limited in directly engaging with lower income consumers within their home environments because of shame for their living conditions in the face of a western foreigner. In these cases, a careful investigator selection on cultural conventions was made. For example social sciences students, belonging to the lower income population under study, were recruited and trained as interviewers. Further, aligning with cultural codes of conduct, in interviews culturally less appropriate direct questioning needed to be minimized and also hypothetical-probing questions, that are not well understood, were better avoided. This challenged the fieldwork, but was handled by using observational insights to ask questions about ‘doings’. Intercepting consumers and retailers at the various consumption junctions appeared particularly insightful. Respondents were selected on the basis of the practices they were performing. Buyers and sellers were approached as practitioners in exploring the rules governing the practice, rather than as individuals and their motivations. In focus groups projective techniques were applied to enhance group dynamics and mitigate potential hierarchy bias. In survey design I experienced early on, that the use of Likert scales produced extreme responses, which informed the combination of Likert scales with forced choice, constant sum and open-ended questions.

1.7 Thesis outline

The following four chapters describe the aforementioned empirical studies exploring processes of transformation and stability within social practices and between them. Chapter 2 discusses what characteristics of the practice of shopping for vegetables at wet markets may account for their continued reproduction among Vietnamese consumers in light of consumer anxieties about food safety. It takes a rural city not yet touched by retail modernisation as the research setting. Chapter 3 explores the persistence of shopping at uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets. Although super-

markets are recognized and valued as safe vegetable retailing sites, they are only marginally successful in attracting daily vegetables consumers. Chapter 4 assesses the extent of the outreach of modernized retail formats in terms of who benefits, who is excluded and what context specific processes and circumstances influence the uptake of modified or modern retail formats by different social groups. Chapter 5 examines how and why the contemporary social practices of purchasing everyday fresh vegetables have emerged and evolved over the past decades and how this relates to the historical dynamics of economic and socio-political changes. This thesis concludes with chapter 6 in which the most important research findings are discussed in terms of both theoretical and policy practical implications.

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'I don't choose
too green or too
fresh vegetables
and neither those
that look too good,
because it's likely
they have chemicals;
that's why they have
such good looks.'

— Interview women mid 30s, Viet Tri, 2009



CHAPTER 2

FOOD SAFETY IN EVERYDAY LIFE: SHOPPING FOR VEGETABLES IN A RURAL CITY IN VIETNAM

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2. Food safety in everyday life: shopping for vegetables in a rural city in Vietnam

2.1 Abstract

Concerns about food safety influence the way in which Vietnamese consumers confront the question of where, how and from whom they buy their fresh vegetables. In this chapter we analyze in what manner and to what extent existing shopping practices inhibit the adoption of modern retail based food safety strategies. Using a social practices theory based approach, we analyze in detail the sales practices of sellers and the purchasing practices of consumers in a Vietnamese provincial city. This study reveals how both sellers and buyers in wet markets, Asian style fresh food markets, apply different sets of skills and knowledge, based on locality, personal contacts and private judgment, to match supply and demand in the context of food safety threats. Within the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables, trust is shown to be continuously reproduced along pre-given lines. Consumers do not easily look outside or move beyond their existing routines even when food safety concerns would urge them to do so. From these findings we conclude that in situations where wet markets serve as the dominant channel for distributing and purchasing fresh food, the efficacy of government and retail induced food safety strategies depends on their articulation within existing food purchasing routines of Vietnamese consumers.

2.2 Introduction

Food safety is a major social and political issue in Vietnam. Over the last decade, there has been an alarming increase in the inappropriate use of chemicals in agriculture (Hoi et al., 2009). This has resulted in a stream of food safety incidents, which are widely covered in the public media (Moustier et al., 2002; Hoang and Nakayasu, 2006).¹ Subsequently, Vietnamese consumers are anxious about the safety of the vegetables they

1 Example: In July 2013, online newspaper Dantri reports on the 9th that increasing amounts of vegetables containing harmful chemicals are detected (<http://dantri.com.vn/suc-khoe/phat-hien-them-nhieu-mau-rau-nhiem-hoa-chat-doc-hai-752303.htm> - last accessed January 6, 2014), followed by another article the same month, on the 21st, that nearly 80 percent of the vegetable samples contain harmful agro-chemicals (<http://dantri.com.vn/suc-khoe/80-mau-rau-ngot-tam-thuoc-doc-757198.htm> - last accessed January 6, 2014).

consume on a daily basis, in particular with respect to the residues of agro-chemicals (Figuié et al., 2004; Mergenthaler et al., 2006; Mergenthaler et al., 2009). To improve food safety and to restore trust among consumers, authorities in Vietnam promulgate policies that focus on the modernization of the food retail system (Moustier, 2006; Maruyama and Trung, 2007). Government authorities actively discourage wet market retailing (wet markets are fresh food markets commonly found in Asian countries, in which wet refers to the wet floors due to the abundant use of water), while stimulating the development of modern supermarkets (Geertman, 2011), thus facilitating the establishment of consumer guidance systems like certification and labeling (Reardon et al., 2003; Gulati et al., 2005). However, despite ubiquitous food safety concerns among the general public and sustained policy interventions favoring super- and hypermarket development, the less regulated and less hygienic wet markets remain the main shopping channel for fresh produce in Vietnam (Shepherd and Tam, 2005; Cadilhon et al., 2006; Maruyama and Trung, 2007).

The persistent dominance of wet markets provides the context of our present study, which aims to investigate how Vietnamese citizens in their everyday lives are confronting the health risks and other side effects related to the consumption of fresh vegetables. By applying a social practices approach, we are able to document the basis of the continued reproduction of trust in fresh food. This basis is to be found – so we argue – in the wet markets as locale and setting for the daily routines of selling and buying fresh food. By providing a situated, in depth (micro) analysis of the everyday practices of ‘buying and selling fresh vegetables at the wet market’ we add to the existing body of predominantly (macro) institutional studies of food safety governance and retail modernization. Findings from our study contribute to the design of more effective vegetable retail modernization strategies in Vietnam and the broader Asian context.

Outline of the argument

We shortly introduce the social practice approach in section 2. After a discussion of the research design and the applied methodologies (section 3) we present the empirical results in section 4. This empirical section pays attention to both the different types of sellers of vegetables and their strategies with regard to vegetable safety risks as well as to consumers and their ways of confronting food safety risks in everyday life.

In section 5 we provide a discussion of our main findings while exploring their relevance for food safety policies in Vietnam.

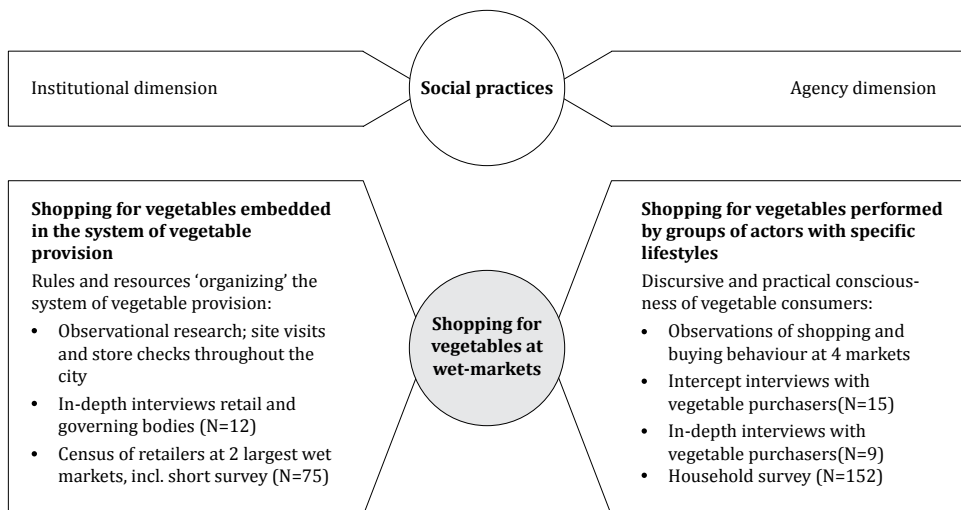
2.3 The social practices approach to consumption

The persistent dominance of wet market retailing in providing vegetables indicates that the practice of buying and selling fresh vegetables is not simply shaped or dictated by institutional transformations within the overall system of food provision. For this reason we argue that the institutional governance approach, which implicitly privileges the agency of producers and value chains over the agency and power of consumers (Goodman and DuPuis, 2002), needs to be complemented with a consumption perspective that puts agency center stage. The consumption perspective used in most studies on agro-food networks tends to emphasize deliberate and conscious choice-making from the side of consumers (Goldman et al., 2002). This is not just the case in traditional marketing studies (Frewer and van Trijp eds., 2007), but also in studies on the development of alternative food networks. In the latter kind of value-laden approaches to consumption behavior, citizen-consumers are assigned an active and positive role in the (re)shaping of agro-food networks (Lockie and Kitto, 2000; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Sage, 2003; Dupuis and Goodman, 2005; Little et al., 2009). Also in the tradition of political consumerism (Micheletti, 2003) the active and transformative role of consumers is taken as a starting point for the analysis of social change in (food) systems.

In this chapter we build on sociological studies on consumption, which emphasize the need to analyze consumption behavior not in terms of individual, rational decision-making, but rather as the shared, routinized, and taken for granted practices of groups of food consumers (Schatzki, 2002; Warde, 2005; Shove, 2010; Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren et al., 2012). Using an approach based on sociological theories of consumption, we thus explore a middle ground in between models that mainly regard consumption as the outcome of provision – like super-marketization and third-party auditing – on the one hand and models that emphasize or even prioritize the agency of individual consumers based on purposeful behavior – as in marketing studies and some studies on alternative food networks – on the other. Analyzing consumption in terms of social practices means treating concepts such as consumer perceptions, skills, and knowledge not just as categories that belong to individuals but also as con-

cepts that can be meaningfully related to and explained with the help of the practices that are being performed (Spaargaren, 2003, 2011; Fonte, 2008; Journal of Consumer Culture, 2011). Our sociological model emphasizes the situated and routinized character of the (shopping) behavior of (food) consumers (Warde and Southerton, 2012). Continuity and change of daily routines cannot be predicted from individual perceptions, opinions and behaviors of the participants to the practices. Well-established and cherished routines affect the nature of the performances displayed by actors in everyday life, often making the existing routines robust to change (Spaargaren et al., 2013) and their participants seemingly conservative (Heiskanen et al., 2007). Figure 2.1 displays our conceptual model, with the practice of ‘shopping at wet markets’ being put in the center of the analytical attention. The practice can be approached from two analytical angles. When analyzing the ways in which the practice is performed by different groups of actors with specific lifestyles, the emphasis is on the ‘agency implied in the practice’. When analyzing the ways in which the practice is embedded in wider food chains and relevant (policy) networks – the so-called systems of provision that are connected to the practice -, the emphasis is on the institutional dimension of the practice.

Figure 2.1 Overview of conceptual approach and methods applied*



* Methods are described in more detail in section 3.2.

When discussing the embedding of the practice in systems of provision, we emphasize the nature of the practice as being a 'consumption junction': a place and time where system rationalities meet life-world rationalities (Schwartz-Cowan, 1987; Fine, 2002). In short: performances of actors at vegetable consumption junctions are regarded of key importance when understanding the ways in which food-risk issues are confronted and dealt with both at the personal and the systemic level.

Applying a social practices approach to the management of food-risks and anxieties in the context of wet markets is innovative for different reasons. First, research on food practices beyond OECD countries (Oosterveer et al., 2007; Kantamaturapoj et al., 2013) to date focuses mainly on supermarkets (Huong Nguyen et al., 2013), while wet markets thus far dominate vegetable selling and buying not only in Vietnam, but also in wider South-East Asia (Humphrey, 2007). Second, when shifting analytical attention from supermarkets to wet markets, also the available repertoires for the management of food risks turn out to be crucially different. Instead of the objectified information on food safety as exemplified by labels and certification systems in supermarkets, wet markets are characterized by personal, face-to-face mechanisms and relationships, which form the basis for sustaining trust in food.

Our in-depth investigation of the social practices of buying and selling fresh vegetables at wet markets in Vietnam aims to explore the taken for granted strategies that actors apply when confronting food safety risks. In normal situations, so we argue, trust in food results from the co-production of both salesmen and consumers during everyday interaction. When practices are de-routinized however, as in the case of food scandals or other 'fatal moments' in food provision (Beck, 2006), the basis of trust becomes subject to discussion and conscious (re)considerations. De-routinization can result from sudden changes but as well from orchestrated changes in the practice, for example when wet markets are (temporarily) displaced in order to enforce the shift to shopping in 'safe' supermarkets (Vittersø et al., 2005). In both cases, the existing routine interactions between sellers and buyers at pre-determined spaces and times fall into crisis, become at least temporarily obsolete, and start going through processes of change and reconsolidation (Brunori et al., 2012).

Since food crises and scandals in the Asian contexts are such regular events and since national food-safety policies aim to facilitate the shift to shopping in supermarkets, the continued popularity of wet markets, at first sight, seems a puzzling phenomenon. Why stick to established routines when safer alternatives seem readily available? What characteristics of the practice of shopping at wet markets may account for their continued reproduction among Asian consumers in the light of consumer anxieties about food safety? These are the central questions that motivated our empirical research.

2.4 Research location and methods

2.4.1 Research location

The research was conducted in the period 2008–2010 in the city of Viet Tri, the capital, and only city of, Phu Tho Province in North Vietnam. Around 180,000 people, 40–45 percent of the total urban population of Phu Tho Province, live in Viet Tri (General Statistics Office, 2008). The city is situated about 85 km northwest of Vietnam's capital Hanoi. One main road links Viet Tri to its food supplying areas. Food is brought into the city from the west, Phu Tho Province, and most importantly from the east, Red River Delta, and places further away, like Dalat and China (routed through Hanoi). Our research concentrates on four central urban districts.

Viet Tri was considered to be a suitable study environment as its citizens increasingly depend on third parties for their daily food supplies. Agriculture accounts for less than four percent of the city economy compared to industry and construction accounting for around 60 percent and services contributing around 36 percent. Towards the periphery of the city, in the rural communes, people still work on agricultural plots. According to local authorities (interview with PhuThoDARD, 2009), the vegetable production within the city boundaries meets less than fifty percent of the total city demand. Further, being exposed to nationwide mass media reports on food safety incidences, Viet Tri consumers have to deal with their food safety concerns in a setting where wet markets are the dominant sites for vegetable retailing. At the time of our research, policy interventions like the enforced modernization of wet markets and the development of supermarkets did not yet show significant effects.

2.4.2 Methods

By focusing on interactions at the Viet Tri consumption junctions for vegetable food selling and buying, our methodological orientation fits into the social practices approach to consumption (Halkier, 2011; Spaargaren, 2011). We used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather data on the processes happening at the vegetable consumption junctions. We used methods that provide direct access to the interactions happening at the consumption junctions (observational research) as well as methods that generate accounts or expressions of action and interaction (survey, intercept- and in-depth interviews).

To map the vegetable system of provision, institutional dimension figure 2.1, the research started with store checks and site visits combined with short intercept interviews throughout the city to obtain a basic impression of the geographical sales locations, the type of retailing present and the vegetable assortments offered. To assess vegetable sourcing and sales practices, in-depth interviews (using a semi-structured guideline) were conducted with eight wet market retailers, three street vendors and a manager of a shop selling vegetables with food safety certification. To understand the main retail structure in the city, the policy in safe vegetable provisioning and the operational food safety controls, expert interviews (using a semi-structured questionnaire) were conducted with the management board of the four largest wet markets within Viet Tri city, as well as with representatives of three local government institutions (Provincial Agricultural Department, the city Economic Department and the Provincial Plant Protection Department). To assess the assortment, volume and origin of the vegetables offered, a vegetable retail 'census' (using a short structured questionnaire) was conducted at two out-of the four largest wet markets in Viet Tri, collecting data from 75 vegetable retailers.

To map the consumer related inputs into consumption junction processes, agency dimension figure 2.1, the research started with observations of shopping and buying behavior across the four largest wet markets in Viet Tri. This was followed up with intercept interviews on the spot and at the moment of purchase to assess consumer considerations with respect to vendor and product selection. For in-depth information about vegetable purchasing and the underlying rationales with regard to food safety, nine in-depth interviews were conducted with daily vegetable purchasers. To characterize the population being researched as well as to 'validate' the qualitative

information collected we conducted a survey of 152 randomly selected households across four central urban districts of Viet Tri city. The survey assessed purchasing behavior, urgency and nature of food safety concerns, safe vegetable shopping preferences and trust in safe vegetable guarantee systems. Respondents were the people mainly responsible for daily food shopping within the household and households were included that did not receive income from agricultural production (only one household needed to be excluded).

In accordance with the theoretical approach described above, most of our empirical research focused on the everyday practice of buying and selling fresh vegetables at wet markets. Interactions and social relations at the wet markets are taken as a starting point for describing and further exploring trust in the safety of vegetable food and in the risk reducing strategies employed by both sellers and buyers of vegetables.

2.5 Fresh vegetables and trust in food safety: empirical results

This chapter reports on the empirical results of our research at wet markets in Viet Tri. We report separately for the two main categories of actors operating at the vegetable markets: vendors and salespersons on the one hand (2.5.3) and citizen-consumers (2.5.4) on the other. Before we portray the wet market practice and their key-actors, we first present a review of the risk-awareness and food-safety concerns among the general populace (2.5.1) and shortly describe the overall situation of vegetable provision in Viet Tri (2.5.2).

2.5.1 Food safety concerns among Vietnamese consumers

Both intercept interviews conducted with consumers at wet markets and the household survey revealed that food safety is the primary concern for consumers when buying vegetables. Their main fears relate to the health risks stemming from the use of agro-chemicals (table 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), which pertain to the use of fertilizers, pesticides and preservatives.

Table 2.1 'I see you just purchased vegetables: can you explain to me why you bought these vegetables?'

Rationale	Count	Quotes
Clean / pesticide free*	11 out of 15	I just bought spinach. I know that this is pesticide-free This morning glory looked clean and fresh
Taste	6 out of 15	I love this vegetables I want to have different kind of vegetables for different meals I am fed up with other kinds of vegetables

Source: Intercept interviews with consumers at the wet markets in Viet tri

** Consumers in Vietnam tend to interchange the concepts clean and safe. And although theoretically these concepts have a different meaning, previous research has indicated that consumers refer with both 'clean' and 'safe' to 'without or with permitted level of residues of agro-chemicals. (Moustier, 2002; Figuié, 2004).*

Table 2.2 'How do you define vegetable quality?'

Rationale	Count	Quotes
Agro-chemicals	15 out of 15	I think the vegetables, which have good quality, must be safe, no pesticides, no bad chemicals. I think good vegetables are those that are grown in clean condition and on which no nitrogen fertilizer is applied. I think good quality vegetables are not contaminated with pesticides or preservatives. These days a lot of people use growth-stimulants on vegetables. That's so scary.

Source: Intercept interviews with consumers at the wet markets in Viet Tri.

Table 2.3 'What do you think is the biggest potential danger in vegetable food safety?'

	Frequency	%
Chemical pesticides, growth enhancers and fertilizers	148	97.4
Soil and water conditions	1	.7
Contamination by bacteria	2	1.3
Hygiene practices in food preparation	1	.7
Total	152	100.0

Source: Household survey Viet tri. In the survey this questions was also asked in the inverse style: "what is the smallest potential danger". This delivered the same picture as presented in the present table.

Although bacterial contamination is reported to be important causes of foodborne diseases (Shephard and Tam, 2008), interviews with consumers in Viet Tri revealed that they believe they are generally able to avoid these risks, but lack the appropriate means of control with regard to the residues of agro-chemicals:

"I usually improve the situation by soaking the vegetables in salted water, and clean very carefully before cooking." (Interview #3)

"The best solution is to wash and soak the vegetables carefully. But I know they still have a little of the pesticides." (Interview #13)

In our household survey, 92.8 percent of the respondents reported they considered themselves to be at least partly able to clean vegetables enough to make them safe for consumption. When consumers in Viet Tri mention safe vegetables, they define safety in terms of personal benefits, like 'not falling ill', which has a variety of meanings. The household survey indicated that 81 percent is most concerned about longer-term health effects. However, when asked about their experiences with foodborne diseases, most consumers referred to short-term food incidents like stomachache, vomiting and diarrhea. Consumers who reported to have experienced foodborne illnesses within their household were less confident in their personal ability to select safe vegetables using their own skills and knowledge.

Instead of selecting vegetables on the basis of their external appearance, these consumers tend to put more trust in the expert systems behind certification (table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Relation between experienced illness due to consumption of vegetables and perceived trust in food safety indicators (based on anecdotal information)

What makes you trust the safety of the vegetables the most?								
			External appearance	Certificate given by authority	Advertisement on TV/ Newspapers	Advice from regular retailer	Advice from relatives/ friends/ neighbours	Information on producer and production area
Have you or your family ever been ill due to consumption of vegetables?	Yes	Count	10	25	0	1	2	6
		%	22.7%	56.8%	.0%	2.3%	4.5%	13.6%
	No	Count	53	34	3	0	8	8
		%	49.1%	31.5%	2.8%	.0%	7.4%	7.4%

Source: Household survey, N=150.

Overall, our household survey showed that 85 percent of the respondents do trust vegetables more when their quality is guaranteed by an official food safety certification by the Vietnam authorities. This certification means that the vegetables have been produced in accordance with national regulations, which address food safety primarily from a pest management perspective (MARD, 1998, 2007 and 2008). In this chapter, the concept of 'safe vegetables' has a restricted meaning, referring to 'compliance with rules and regulations regarding the application of agro-chemicals'.

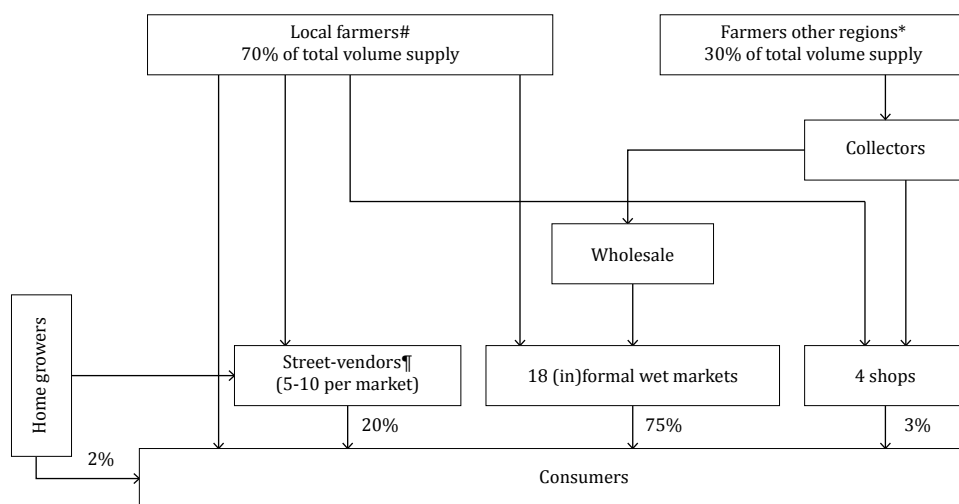
During our research we identified one shop, centrally located at the main road of Viet Tri, selling vegetables with formal food safety certification (see also 4.3). But despite food safety concerns and expressed preference for vegetables with food safety certification the sales figures in this shop were reported to be low. Although respondents in our household survey indicated being interested in buying safe vegetables when available (63 percent: 'yes sure'; and 37 percent: 'yes maybe') and preferring to shop at a dedicated safe vegetable outlet (78 percent), none of them could give a positive answer to the question: 'Do you know a retail outlet that sells vegetables with food safety certification within Viet Tri?' Consumers appear not to be engaged in an active search for alternatives that could guarantee food safety through certification measures. Given this apparent 'value-action gap' (Blake, 1999; Shove, 2010), we

conducted in-depth empirical research into the practices of selling and buying fresh vegetables at wet markets, the results of which are presented and discussed in the following sections.

2.5.2 Vegetable provision in Viet Tri

In assessing the main consumption junctions in Viet Tri and the food safety concerns at play, we combined observational research across four urban districts with interviews among vegetable sellers, vegetable buyers and provincial and city authorities figuring in the regulatory environment surrounding the wet markets and the production of vegetables. Figure 2.2 presents an overview of the system of vegetable provisioning to end-consumers in Viet Tri.

Figure 2.2 Overview of Viet Tri vegetables provisioning to end-consumers with indicative volume share percentages



Source: Interviews 2009; Percentages of volume market share are rough estimated calculations based on sales volume from interviews in 2009 and per capita vegetable consumption statistics of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam.

Local farmers - origin: Viet Tri city, broader Phu Tho Province and neighboring Vinh Phuc Province.

* Farmers other regions - origin: China, Dalat and Hanoi.

¶ Street vendors in Viet Tri mostly operate within wet market premises.

Vegetables are sold through different types of sales channels. Our research identified the following vegetable sales channels along the outlet specification as defined by Moustier (2009): shops, formal and informal markets and mobile street vendors. Four indoor shops (defined as shopping area of less than 500m², with walls; Moustier, 2009) were identified: three shops (less than 60m²) selling a limited amount of unlabeled fresh vegetables and one aforementioned shop (around 200m²) selling certified safe vegetables. Modern supermarkets – defined as diversified stores with more than 500m² characterized by self-service – were not present in Viet Tri city.

Table 2.5 Importance of purchasing channels in frequency and average volume purchased per channel

	Frequency (multiple answers possible)	Respondents % (multiple answers possible)	Average % of vegetables purchased per channel by respondents
Wet market	140	92	60
Street vendor	70	46	16
Friends	45	30	12
Back yard garden	27	18	8
Minimarket	19	12	4

Source: Household survey. Response to multiple answer question: 'Where do you buy what volume of your daily vegetables?' N=152.

Wet markets form the core of vegetable retailing in Viet Tri (table 2.5) and include both formal and informal wet markets. Formal wet markets (covered or semi-covered) are planned by the state and governed by a management board. To be allowed to vend in these markets, vendors have to pay a rental fee. Informal markets, in contrast, are not planned by the state and are held in the open air throughout the city. Informal markets include both semi-permanent markets and spontaneous markets. No formal rental fees apply in these markets and no official data are available on them. In their daily practices, consumers do not appear to make a clear distinction between the formal and the more permanent informal markets and, as such, the consumer survey sufficed with the notion of 'wet market' only.

At the time of research, nine formal wet markets were operational in Viet Tri, and our study of daily purchasing practices was conducted at four of these². Within the wet markets, we did not identify any ‘safe vegetable stall’, nor did we recognize any vegetables sold under food safety certification.

The vegetables offered within the wet markets originate from different areas and types of farmers, ranging from far away and anonymous sources to backyard farming by residents within the city boundaries. Most vegetables originate from ‘local’ growers: small city farmers producing on small plots of land, and nearby farmers. Depending on the season, the quantities of vegetables originating from other regions might vary. These vegetables arrive at night at the local wholesale market, a square in the city center from where local wholesalers distribute the vegetables to the local retail.

Representatives of governmental institutions at provincial and city level indicated that they possessed only limited means to ensure the safety of the vegetables traded. Although the province has selected several areas for safe vegetable cultivation, the officials reported that as yet there exists no master plan for allocating specific areas to industries and to vegetable production. Besides, there is also no clear vision and plan for the establishment of a provincial wholesale market, an initiative that, according to the authorities interviewed, would greatly improve the control on food safety. At the time of the research, the Viet Tri Economic Department, operating at the city level, actively supported the development of so called collective communal home-grower initiatives. Local households received training in Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The economic department, however, has neither the means to certify the vegetables (certification is too complex and costly for small scale farming), nor the ability to assist the communes in vegetable retailing. As a result, the individual households end up selling their ‘safe’ vegetables without certification, labels and packaging as street vendors.

2.5.3 Risk handling by key-providers at wet markets: retailers and vendors

In this section, we focus on how retailers at wet markets deal with food safety concerns. We also depict the role of the more informal street vendors in vegetable provisioning, and, building on guided observations and in-depth interviews, we present

2 We did not include informal wet markets in the observations. Informal vendors, indicated as street vendors, operating within formal wet market premises, however, were included (see 4.3.2).

the strategies, which retailers and street vendors deploy in order to deal with the safety risks of vegetables.

Retailers at wet markets: risk assessment on the spot

At wet markets, most retailers sell their produce without a registered stall. Although they mostly occupy the same spot at the wet market, they have no permanent business registration and pay a daily fee based on the value of the vegetables on sale. They offer a limited variety of vegetables and sell on average around 90 kg/day. The bigger retailers have a registered stall, permanent business registration with fixed monthly service fee, and trade broader assortments and larger volumes of on average 1500 kg/day (table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Traded volume and vegetable assortment in one formal wet market

Number of retailers interviewed	Description of retailers interviewed	Average traded volume (kg/day/retail)	Vegetable assortment on sale (count of different types)
6	All regular vendors with registered stall	1570	≥ 6
69	Mainly irregular vendors based on entrance fee	92	≤ 2

Source: Wet market 'census' research in formal wet market Central Tien Cat; N=75.

The retailers at wet markets are the main link between the producers and the buyers of vegetables. They source their vegetables from various suppliers and production locations. All retailers indicated deciding what to buy from whom on a daily basis. Most retailers claimed to have at least one or two preferred sources. Supplier selection is based on the freshness of the produce offered, the consistency in volume supplies, and the oral confirmation from the supplier that the vegetables are safe. In general, retailers do not seem very much pre-occupied with price. All retailers stated that they are able to sell their vegetables well as long as the vegetables look fresh and not withered. No fixed contracts between farmers and retailers were reported, and retailers stated to often switch between suppliers. The main problem in the current vegetable supply, stated by all interviewees, is the lack of consistency in the volumes and quality of the vegetables offered.

During the interviews, retailers themselves did not spontaneously mention food safety as a consideration for what vegetables to source from whom and from where. However, after being at first reluctant to provide information, retailers became very talkative when the discussion moved from general business to food safety issues. At that point even neighboring retailers joined in. The safety of vegetables appeared of high concern, but retailers interviewed expressed a general feeling of powerlessness in terms of regulating food safety: *"I'm very concerned about the safety of my vegetables, but what can I do? I don't have the means to check food safety."* (Interview #16). None of the retailers interviewed reported being pro-active in realizing food safety. An illustrative response of a wet market retailer:

"I cannot guarantee that the vegetables I sell are safe, but I still tell my customers that they are clean and safe because my suppliers say so and I haven't had any trouble thus far." (Interview #18)

Retailers primarily define food safety risks in terms of the excessive application of agrochemicals, while consumer demand appeared to be their prime motivation for engaging with food safety issues:

"I am very concerned about the safety of the vegetables I sell, because it is important for my customers." (Interview #18)

"I don't know any supplier in Viet Tri who provides safe vegetables but if there is any supplier who can supply safe vegetables I'm willing to source from them. I think consumers will prefer safe vegetables over normal vegetables." (Interview #17)

In trying to regulate food safety, retailers rely on personal experience and expertise in supplier selection: *"I can't be sure whether suppliers (mostly farmers) are honest or not, but I can only rely on their honesty."* (Interview #18) Retailers tend to prefer suppliers with whom they maintain a longer-term relation and with whom they haven't experienced any complaints from consumers on food poisoning, stomachache, diarrhea and vomiting, thus far. Given aforementioned consumer' tendency to relate experienced foodborne illnesses to excessive agrochemical residues on the vegetables they consumed, they will blame the retailer for selling unsafe vegetables, even when consumers' own unhygienic food handling practices might have induced the health

problem. Two interviewed retailers reported to be confronted with consumer complaints. As a consequence, both stated to have become reluctant in sourcing vegetables from unknown suppliers even when insufficient supplies of regular suppliers would urge them to do so.

The interviews and observations in the selected wet markets show that retailers rely on the interactions with (shifting groups of) suppliers and on their personal skills in order to assess the potential threat of specific vegetable products to food safety. They rely on their senses (Beck, 1986) and do not use objectified checks and procedures for handling food risks. Past performance is important for (not) buying from suppliers. There is little interaction with colleagues or regulatory authorities on food risk and safety issues. Mainly these retailers, with their specific strategies and (lack of) knowledge on food risks, enter into interactions with Vietnamese consumers purchasing their daily vegetables.

Street vendors capturing the vacuum: first-hand risk assessment

Besides buying from retailers in formal and informal wet markets, consumers also buy their vegetables from street vendors, who continue to play an important role in the provision of many products, including fresh produce. Street vendors tend to have a different attitude towards food safety. Vegetable street vendors in Viet Tri are mainly backyard 'farmers', having their roots in either Viet Tri's rural communes or in neighboring villages. They sell approximately ten to fifteen kilogram of home-grown green leafy vegetables per day, usually handling only one or two types of vegetables carried on shoulder poles or on the back of a bicycle, serving about twenty to thirty end-consumers a day. The street vendors interviewed are completely confident of the safety of their produce on sale:

"I grow the produce myself; I don't use any chemicals, so I know it is safe."

(Interview #19)

Where street vendors in the major cities mostly sell along public roads, throughout Viet Tri city most street vendors were observed in groups of five to ten women operating within the wet market areas. According to the wet market management, street vendors increasingly sell within their formal wet market premises. They are allowed to sell their produce at the wet market after paying a daily-fee depending on the es-

timated value of their produce. This suggests that the street vendors, mostly originating from poor rural communes, expect to sell better within wet markets. The wet market management reported that street vendors gather at dedicated spots in the central market. Street vendors thus establish 'new' collective sales points within the wet market.

Unlike the regular retailers at wet markets, the more informal street vendors express absolute confidence in the safety of the vegetables they have on sale, although their verbal food safety confirmations are also not objectified or regulated by authorities. With their 'first hand risk knowledge', the street vendors assembled in wet markets provide an alternative for consumers when purchasing vegetables. They represent a direct link to the farming plot and feel capable of ensuring the food safety of a limited assortment of vegetables.

2.5.4 Risk handling strategies of consumers buying at wet markets

Having described the choice configurations offered at formal wet markets and the food-safety strategies of the providers at these markets, this section focuses on the risk handling strategies of consumers purchasing vegetables at the wet markets. Even though the practice of buying vegetables is routinized to a considerable extent, it is clear that enacting the practice involves a number of implicit and explicit decisions being made in a specific sequence and (priority) order. First, it is habitually decided at which site or location the shopping will take place, followed by the selection of the actual seller/provider of the vegetables, to be concluded, third, with the actual choice of the specific vegetable product to buy. We consider the purchasing practice from the perspective that, while consumers cannot influence the range of alternatives made available to them, they nevertheless have to make choices within the specific context of the wet markets in Viet Tri (Pawson, 2000). Choice processes at wet markets are largely pre-configured and this fact is taken for granted by most consumers most of the times. Furthermore, when stating that practices are routinized, we assume that many (food) choices are performed at the level of the 'practical consciousness' of consumers (Giddens, 1984).³ Consumers make most of their choices on the automatic pilot, acting 'like they always do'. Finally, it must be recognized that this 'acting as I always do' is not just an individual affair. Enacting the practice of purchasing the daily

3 Practical consciousness refers to a particular way of knowing the rules without being able to provide discursive accounts of the rules being applied in the practice.

vegetables is done in a similar manner as all the other participants to the practice do: 'I act as the others do.'

It is against this background that we seek to offer a detailed description of the purchasing practices, while tracing and characterizing the kind of skills and knowledge mobilized by consumers when handling the multi-faceted threat of food safety. How exactly do Vietnamese consumers perform this daily practice? How do risks considerations (co)determine the kind of vegetables bought, the interactions being opened up with particular kind of providers and the places or consumption junctions being selected for shopping?

Where to buy?

Food safety concerns are not the principal factor determining the buying behaviors of Vietnamese wet market visitors: the primary choice is about the selection of the preferred retail location. 75 percent of the respondents in the household survey indicated that choices for sites are convenience driven. During intercept interviews at the wet market, twelve out of fifteen consumers stated to be shopping at that particular location because it is close to home and because they are accustomed to going there:

"I shop in this market, because I live near here and I am used to shopping here."
(Interview #13)

The convenience of shopping at the nearby wet market goes together with the habit of purchasing fresh vegetables on a daily basis. The habit of daily shopping was confirmed by 80 percent of surveyed respondents.

With all major wet markets positioned along the main road, each urban neighborhood in Viet Tri has at least one wet market nearby. All shoppers observed and interviewed during this research came to the market on foot to buy their daily essentials and then walked home with a basket or a couple of plastic bags of groceries. This routine practice of daily visiting the most proximate wet market is an important contextual factor when analyzing how consumers deal with food safety. One consumer stated during an intercept interview:

"If they sold officially certified safe vegetables near here, then I would buy them frequently." (Interview #4)

The habitual practice of buying vegetables within the wet market closest to home hampers the active search for alternative sales locations. For the analysis of the food safety strategies developed by consumers it is important to notice that the range of products and risks to be acted upon is limited to those made available at the wet market closest to home. Given this limitation, however, consumers can still make relevant choices about the retailer or vendor to buy vegetables from and about what kind of vegetables to purchase.

From whom to buy?

Given the fact that selecting the place or site for purchasing vegetables is routine-driven for most of the consumers, the next step of the sequence – the selection of the seller – becomes the next important aspect of the risk-handling strategies of the consumers. When the seller can be trusted, consumers tend to believe that vegetables are safe: *"I bought these vegetables from a trusted seller, so they are safe for consumption."* (Interview #9) Consumers display different ways of selecting a trust-worthy seller. First, they select a seller who they know personally and with whom they have been interacting previously. This personal relation is regarded a guarantee for food safety since Viet Tri consumers believe that if they know the seller well, the seller will not lie to them. During intercept interviews, consumers stated:

"I know these people, they don't lie to me about the vegetables they sell."
(Interview #12)

"Basically, we only buy vegetables from people we know well here. We do not buy from people we don't know well because we are not sure if they are reliable or not."
(Interview #11)

"The vegetables I just bought are grown by friends. They bought the seeds and grew it by themselves. So I really trust them." (Interview #9)

Second, consumers tend to buy their vegetables from *local* growers in particular. These local growers, also called 'villagers', operate mainly in the rural outskirts of

Viet Tri city. Consumers consider these sellers trustworthy because local growers are believed to use less agro-chemicals as they also consume the vegetables themselves. One consumer stated:

"I am concerned. If I buy unsafe vegetables, it will affect my health, so I have to buy it from small-scale producers. Nowadays, mass producers use a lot of chemicals to enhance their productivity, but then the vegetables become unsafe. I only buy from back yard gardeners. These people do not mass-produce, so they are trustworthy."

(Interview #4)

Finally, consumers tend to put active trust in sellers who offer only a restricted assortment and limited volumes of vegetables. This is regarded an indication of local backyard farming:

"I bought these vegetables from people in the neighborhood. I trust the sellers because they also eat these vegetables themselves. They only sell eight to nine bunches surplus. I myself also grow vegetables and sell the part we cannot finish. So these vegetables are basically safe and clean." (Interview #6)

"If people only offer a little amount of chayote or squash, the vegetables are normally clean. They grow vegetables for themselves and sell their surplus to us."

(Interview #4)

For some consumers, establishing a relationship with a trust-worthy seller is regarded a guarantee for not having to bother any longer about the kind of vegetables to be selected and the food safety risks involved. As one of the intercept consumer stated:

"I am not concerned with the quality of the vegetables I buy because I am buying from home growers so nothing to worry about. If the seller has already washed the vegetables, I even don't have to do that myself." (Interview #7)

However, the majority of the consumers interviewed during intercept interviews (13 out of 15) still had considerable doubts about the safety of the products, as illustrated by the following quote:

“I usually buy vegetables from the salespeople who I know. But I still know nothing about the quality of the vegetables. It’s just my thought – I think they will tell me the truth, they don’t tell lies about the methods used in growing these vegetables, but I still don’t feel safe.” (Interview #2)

The ambiguous form of trust in the actual food safety of the stated-to-be-safe vegetables at wet markets was also reflected in the household survey among Viet Tri consumers. To the question ‘To what extent do you believe that the safe vegetables you buy are truly safe?’ less than seven percent of the respondents indicated to ‘totally believe’ the stated food safety (table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Consumer confidence in safety of vegetables purchased at wet markets

	Frequency	%
I totally believe	10	6.6
I moderately believe	89	58.6
I don’t really believe	50	32.9
I don’t believe at all	3	2.0
Total	152	100.0

Source: Household survey. Response to single answer question: ‘To what extent do you believe that safe vegetables are safe.’ N=152.

In short, the first preference of Viet Tri consumers at wet markets is to buy from sellers who exemplify personalized trust in terms of direct link with production. Second best is the wet market retailer they know and whom they believe not to sell vegetables that carry health risks. When shopping in modern retail outlets is not taken into account, consumers have to use concrete skills and knowledge to make informed food safety decisions in the context of the taken-for-granted setting of the wet market. Knowing whom to buy your vegetables from turns out to be one of the central rules or heuristics governing the performance of the practice. We now turn to the rules governing

product selection against the background of food-safety concerns.

What to buy?

Like the habitual choices for nearby wet markets and the selection of trustworthy sellers, the decisions about what kinds of vegetables to buy also seem to be routinized and deeply embedded in consumers' daily life-worlds and their rationalities. During intercept interviews, consumers explained that they generally buy different kinds of vegetables every day. They buy the kind of vegetables they like themselves or they know to be liked by other family members.

"Each day we want to eat different vegetables." (Interview #1) "I am fed up with other kinds of vegetables, so I bought these for a change." (Interview #2) "I just bought morning glory because I love these vegetables. Its soup cools you off from this heat." (Interview #13)

In dealing with perceived food safety threats consumers appeared to combine the preference for a specific seller with the daily choice about what to put on the table. An illustrative reply from a consumer at the central wet market to the question 'Why did you buy these vegetables and why here?' was:

"I shop here, because it's close to where I live. I just bought 'kang kong' (a specific kind of spinach, ed.), because it is delicious and I bought it from a trusted seller, so it's safe." (Interview #11)

The product choice enacted within the context of the available choice infrastructure is about selecting specific vegetables that fit within the frames of taste and diet, which are routinely applied by consumers. Given these frames, product choice is informed by looking at: (1) external appearances, (2) seasonality, and (3) the combination of type and origin of the vegetables. These indicators, applied in a routine, practical way, are contributory variables for consumers in confronting – e.g. making informed guesses about – the food safety threats that come along with the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables.

First, the external appearances of the vegetables on offer are important in selecting safe vegetables. Criteria such as 'not too green, beautiful and big' and 'a bit eaten by worms' are particularly considered as relevant indicators of food safety:

"I don't choose too green or too fresh vegetables and neither those that look too good, because it's likely they have chemicals; that's why they have such good looks."

(Interview #12)

"When the vegetables I buy are a bit eaten by worms I am less concerned about harmful pesticides being used." (Interview #1)

The following observation at a wet market shows how consumers skillfully apply certain knowledge when carefully selecting the vegetables to buy:

A woman selects pak choi at a small vegetable stall at the central wet market. She studies the vegetables and briefly sniffs them before deciding to buy them. When asked why she smelled them, she answered: *"to check for a chemical smell because the vegetables looked so good."* On the one hand, she stated that good appearance of the vegetables is a sign of freshness, but on the other hand it can also indicate chemical usage. Because the vegetables did not smell of chemicals, she decided to buy the vegetables.

Second, seasonality is used as an important food safety indicator. Consumers believe that far more agrochemicals are used in off-season cultivation:

"I only buy these vegetables in the winter season, because in the summer (the off-season) the use of crop protection products doubles, especially fertilizers."

(Interview #10)

In the household survey no less than 80 percent of the respondents stated to only select vegetables that are in season.

Third, when judging food safety, the type of product is being assessed, also in relation with product origin. As in the main cities of Vietnam (Figué et al., 2004), consumers in Viet Tri consider leafy vegetables to be less safe than roots and tubers. In the end,

however, the actual product selection is guided not by vegetable type but by the combination of type and geographical origin of the produce. In the survey, this is reflected in the answers of the respondents about the perceived safety of water spinach. Leafy vegetables and in particular spinaches are perceived to be un-safe, but when asking about the specific spinach 'kang kong', consumers are less concerned about the safety of this particular leafy vegetable (see table 2.8). This can be explained by the fact that kang kong is produced by local backyard growers, who are perceived to apply safe cultivation methods. Also other local backyard grown leafy vegetables, like amaranth and sweet potato leaves, are perceived as being safe. Further, consumers mention vegetables with skin to be relatively safe because the skin reduces the chance that chemicals are absorbed and because it is peeled off before consumption. In a similar manner, root vegetables are considered safe because, even when fed with growth stimulants, consumers expect the stimulants to be absorbed only to a limited extent.

Table 2.8 Consumer perceptions on safety of different types of vegetables*

	Perceived as unsafe by % of respondents)
Roots	20.4
Tubers	17.1
Green leaf vegetables	51.3
• Spinaches	59.3
» Kang Kong	22.4

Source: Household survey. Response to question: 'Independently from the source can you rate how you generally consider the following vegetables in terms of safety?' N=150.

* Vegetables in the Vietnamese diet are commonly cooked, except for herbs and lettuce. Our survey included the 14 most consumed vegetables, which are generally stir-fried, boiled or blanched.

In purchasing practices, product choice is closely linked to information about the origin of the vegetables on sale. Consumers want to know whether the vegetables on sale are from the vicinity or not. When products originate from the local area, consumers tend to trust them, especially if the seller is also the grower. However, consumers indicate that the strategy of buying local is only part of their food safety strategy. Since the local assortment is limited, they still 'have to' purchase vegetables that are produced outside the local area. When vegetables are purchased from more

distant, anonymous sources, for example through the more professional retailers at the formal wet markets, background information on producers and production areas becomes crucially important. Most consumers expect vegetables originating from well-known vegetable cultivation areas in Vietnam, like Dalat, to be more reliable in terms of food safety quality. Still, even when vegetables are produced in production areas with a good reputation nationwide, origin is not regarded a guarantee for food safety, as exemplified in the intercept interviews:

“Even if I know where the vegetables are produced and it is a prestigious area, like Dalat, I still don’t know for sure if the vegetables are safe as origin doesn’t tell me anything about the actual production method.” (Interview #8)

With respect to the local level, interviews with consumers revealed that many consumers are quite opinionated about some specific production areas, and able to concretely pinpoint areas that they consider more or less trustworthy in terms of food safety. For example some consumers specifically refer to an area close to Viet Tri, in the vicinity of a fertilizer factory. They are convinced that chemical fertilizers are more easily available close to the factory and therewith more likely to be used in excessive ways.

Both consumers and retailers at wet markets generally trust vegetables that are grown within the city boundaries to be safe. This assessment results from a combination of factors and variables: small-scale production, first-hand knowledge about the area and growers selling their own produce. Areas that are less trusted in terms of food safety appeared to be either large scale production zones for ‘anonymous’ urban markets or areas close to industrial zones.

Consumer: *“These vegetables were grown by people living here. Only here it is safe, if you travel down Thanh Mieu (an industrial area within Viet Tri ed.), vegetables are not safe any more.”* (Interview #7)

Retailer: *“My customers don’t like vegetables from Vinh Tuong district as it is known to be an intensive cultivation area for a non-local market (e.g. Hanoi), which makes it suspect to the overuse of agrochemicals.”* (Interview #18)

To summarize the key findings of this section on Viet Tri consumer strategies for handling food-safety risks at wet markets, we argue that three steps turn out to be relevant for consumers who are performing this practice. First, the site or location for the daily purchase of fresh vegetables is chosen in a highly routinized, taken for granted manner. Second, within the self-chosen limits set by the locale of nearby wet markets, consumers deal with food safety threats by selecting a retailer or a vendor they think to be trustworthy. Third, they use specific heuristics for the final selection of the product, combining product characteristics with other factors like seasonality and geographical origin (table 2.9).

Table 2.9 Customary indicators of safe versus unsafe vegetable purchasing

	Safe purchasing indicators	Unsafe purchasing indicators
Seller	Vendors with small volumes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly back yard cultivation Sellers also eat it themselves 	Retailers with large volumes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial anonymous production
	Personal relations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends/neighbours don't lie Elderly people don't lie 	Un-known source: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The more anonymous the more uncertain
Product	Seasonality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal produce 	Seasonality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-season produce
	External appearance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bit eaten by worms Not too big Fresh Natural smell 	External appearance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too shiny Too big Too beautiful Chemical smell
	Vegetable type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roots, tubers and sprouts Locally grown green leaf vegetables: water spinach, amaranth, and sweet potato leafs 	Vegetable type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green leaf vegetables
	Origin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local production area Production area with good image: Dong Anh, Dalat Purchasing at the production location Home-grown 	Origin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Far away production area Intensive cultivation area Areas close to industry Areas close to agro-chemical factories

Source: Combined data from intercept interviews, in-depth interviews and household survey conducted in this research.

2.6 Conclusion and discussion

In our research, we aimed to answer two main research questions. First, why do consumers in Viet Tri not embrace the supermarket modernization of the fresh-food system as an appropriate solution for their apparent and serious food-safety concerns? Second, if they choose to stick to their established routines of doing the daily vegetable shopping at the nearby wet market, how do they confront their food-safety concerns in the context of this particular practice? We will answer the second question first, since this will provide some important clues for answering the first research question. We conclude with some recommendations on Asian food safety policies in the near future.

To understand modernization processes, it is important to study traditions. Some traditions are well established, routinized and deeply embedded in the life-world. Shopping for vegetables at nearby wet markets can be regarded as an example of such a taken for granted, traditional routine. When purchasing their vegetables at wet markets, consumers do not possess first-hand knowledge on the food safety risks at play, so they have to rely on other mechanisms, which can help them to establish trust in their daily food. The conceptual framework of social practices was offered to discuss how situated actors reproduce trust in food in a routine manner, which is influenced by the particular context of the wet market practice. It is against this theoretical background that we answer our research question on the reproduction of trust among Viet Tri consumers and providers.

Our research shows that food safety is a well-recognized dilemma by both providers and consumers of vegetables. Both in the survey and during the intercept interviews people express clear opinions about food safety. Both providers and consumers talk about the issue without hesitation and are not surprised that food-safety is brought up as a central concern. Further our research points out how within the wet market setting both providers – retailers and street vendors – and consumers apply different repertoires for generating trust in vegetables. In matching supply and demand in matters of food safety they both use variations of skills and knowledge predominantly in an implicit, almost ‘silent’ manner, without being visible or being discussed in an open reflexive manner. Getting to know these repertoires is important since they provide essential clues for understanding why traditional trust relations survive

under the increasing treats and anxieties generated by food-safety scandals.

During the interaction between providers and consumers, a number of mostly implicit questions and dilemmas are being confronted and handled before a successful transaction occurs. Is the vendor or retailer a trustworthy person, and can I resort on the food-safety strategies that he or she follows? Is the product safe? What do I know about the past performance of the provider? By using a number of different methods in the context of a practices based approach, we were able to reconstruct the specific repertoires used by the key social actors during their interactions. As reported in section 4, personalized trust-relations (reciprocity), locality (known territories), seasonality and personal skills for identifying the relevant product characteristics turned out to be the most important ingredients of the repertoires used.

Because our research was conducted in Vietnam, it is important to point out that social relations between actors have particular characteristics that originate from the broader cultural context of Southeast Asia and its tradition of collectivism and reciprocity in social relations. This cultural context includes concepts of social capital, gratitude and mutual indebtedness (Long and Huong, 2002). For our particular practice, this implies that trust is reproduced in the context of exchanges between 'sellers' and 'buyers' who know each other and who are crucially aware of their mutual dependencies. Sellers and buyers often have intertwined social networks and vegetable purchasing for that reason must be regarded as more than a simple economic transfer. Buyers depend on providers for getting access to safe vegetables, while sellers simply cannot afford to lose consumer trust. The continuity we observed in the personal relationships between buyers and sellers is at the basis of the persistence and continued dominance of wet markets in the overall food system of Viet Tri.

Consumers adhere to their established food shopping routine as long as for them the existing, 'practical' repertoire of food safety measures applied at the wet market suffices to counterbalance their anxieties about the potential risks that come along with fresh vegetables. The best way to describe the present situation is in terms of a precarious balance of risk and trust since our research shows that the continued dominance of wet market practices in Viet Tri does not at all imply that food safety concerns are absent or neglected by its key actors.

The food safety dilemmas experienced by consumers in particular do not (yet) urge them to break with the well-established routine of shopping for vegetables at wet markets. By performing the practice on a daily basis, consumers reproduce long established and culturally embedded relations of trust. Building upon their existing skills and knowledge, they demonstrate to themselves and others to be able to confront food-risks in acceptable ways. Applying the risk-handling repertoires does not mean that food safety threats are dealt with in solid proof manners. Consumers are aware of the fact that their powers to confront food safety risks are only partial and restricted. However, our (survey) research has shown that despite this awareness and despite their stated preference for certified, safe vegetables, Viet Tri consumer do not seek alternative sales points outside the social and geographical scopes of their everyday life routines. The absence of a modern retail shift thus far is demonstrated by the low volumes of vegetables sold at the only modern retail-shop selling certified safe vegetables in Viet Tri, which, given the fact that none of the consumers in our research could name this shop, does not appear to be related to price levels.

This brings us to a discussion on the first main research question: why don't consumers shift to modern retail outlets to secure themselves of safe vegetables? As discussed in the opening section, Viet Tri-like food safety issues can be observed throughout Southeast Asia as they arise from common characteristics like rapid urbanization and changes in the food provision systems (Xuemei Bai, 2000; Othman, 2007). Across the region, the official, institutional response to food safety concerns has been to stimulate modern (imported) retail formats like supermarkets, which provide certified food. This strategy builds upon the idea that societies developing from predominantly agricultural into modern (industrial) societies gradually do away with tradition. Traditional, personalized trust relations are being replaced by modern commitments like objectified certification schemes. As our analysis demonstrates, the limitations of the supermarketization model (Reardon et al., 2005) are also witnessed within the contemporary context of Vietnam. Consumers stick to their wet market practices, despite Vietnamese government policies that stimulate retail modernization and restrict the practice of shopping at wet markets.

Our research evinces the need to consider the relationship between global trends in retail modernization on the one hand and the continued dominance of wet market shopping practices on the other. Instead of putting all strategic resources on either the one or the other strategy, efforts of integration and mutual adaptation of both

strategies could be considered. Understanding the dynamics of the practice of buying and selling fresh vegetables at wet markets might be instrumental when designing hybrid structures of modern retail and traditional wet markets in such a way that (government) policies stimulating safe vegetable distribution are supported. First examples of efforts in this direction exist in Singapore, where the concept of wet markets is modernized and provides for communal space for social interaction through the development of food courts. Pursuing this trend of hybridization prevents that consumers have to break with long established routines in an isolated, radical way. The efficacy of food safety strategies depends on the articulation within long established practices and personalized trust-relations, which sustain them. This seems to us to be the way forward in achieving safer modes of vegetable provision and consumption in Vietnam and wider Southeast Asia.

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'When I buy from vendors
who I know personally,
I don't have to worry about
food safety. They advise me
what to buy.'

— Interview women mid 30s, Hanoi, 2012





CHAPTER 3

CONSTRAINED CONSUMER PRACTICES AND FOOD SAFETY CONCERNS IN HANOI

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3. Constrained consumer practices and food safety concerns in Hanoi

3.1 Abstract

Food safety is a widely recognized concern in Vietnam. Public officials, companies and consumers find different ways to address risks of pesticide residues and bacterial contamination related to the use of fresh vegetables in daily diets. The response from government to these food safety risks includes the modernization and regulation of the food retail system. However, reforms that aim to offer a controlled and predictable provision of fresh vegetables through supermarkets seem to contrast with the daily consumer practices in a dynamic city as Hanoi; over 95 percent of vegetables is still being purchased at long established open-air markets, importantly the informal and unhygienic street markets. Using a practices theory approach this chapter aims to explain this persistence of street market shopping for vegetables. Detailed accounts of consumer practices, case studies at different retailing sites and daily logbooks of consumers, demonstrate that the way consumers cope with food safety risks is largely shaped by the temporal and spatial constraints of their daily shopping practices. We identified how vegetable shopping is either enjoyed as social interaction within the local community, or is regarded a time consuming activity that conflicts with other activities in everyday life. Our findings indicate how these constraints constitute a reinforcing mechanism for the persistence of uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets. To make policy responses to food safety risks both more realistic and effective it is essential to connect to and accommodate the daily realities of consumers managing time and space in a modernizing city, rather than to impose an ideal-typical market exclusively driven by the wish to control food safety risks.

3.2 Introduction

In a period of two decades, Vietnam transformed from one of the poorest countries in the world to one of the most dynamic emerging economies with an average GDP growth of 6.2 percent in the period 2000 – 2012 (Tradingeconomics, 2013). The modernization is omnipresent and most noticeable in the rapid rise of skyscrapers, the knock down of complete residential areas for road construction and the transformation of rural zones into modernized urban residential areas. Urbanization and ru-

ral-to-urban migration not only put pressure on urban infrastructure, but also on the provision of daily fresh food. The distancing of production-consumption relationships (Giddens, 1990) and the intensification of cultivation methods as a response to a growing urban demand for vegetables with a declining farmland acreage resulted in a situation wherein food safety is both a real (Hoi et al., 2009) and perceived threat (Figuíé et al., 2004) to the Vietnamese citizen-consumer.

The government regards safe and healthy food provisioning important for social stability and strives to establish food safety control systems from production to consumption with policies addressing both the application of agro-chemicals as well as hygiene practices (Vietnam Food Safety Law, 2011; Vietnam News 2012, Interview with Deputy Prime Minister).¹ Retail modernization is regarded an important instrument in both respects as supermarket chains are known to implement private food safety management systems and maintain food hygiene standards (Reardon, 2006).² Further, by national regulation, all vegetables entering modern retail outlets are required to carry the certificates by the Vietnam authorities attesting that the vegetables have been produced in accordance with national regulations on safe vegetable production (MARD, 1998, 2007 and 2008).

This retail modernization policy combines well with the government's ambition to transform the capital in a prosperous and civilized modern city (Geertman, 2011). The Vietnamese government and specifically the Hanoi Peoples Committee (HPC) strives to reduce the provision of fresh vegetables via wet markets and informal street-vending while it stimulates the development of supermarkets and convenience stores (Maruyama and Trung, 2007; Moustier, 2006). Government plans, though not yet formally approved by the HPC, propose to reduce long established wet markets in urban Hanoi from a total of 97 in 2010 to around 15 markets in 2020, with the majority to be replaced by modern style super and hypermarkets (HealthBridge, 2011). The

1 The Food Safety Law (FSL) is the umbrella guidance on food safety, dividing responsibility for testing and enforcement of food safety among the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Health (MOH), and Industry and Trade (MOIT).

2 Example: MERTO Cash and Carry Vietnam implemented its private GAP based METRO Requirement system to ensure safe vegetable production and operates a mobile kitchen to train customers and suppliers in hygienic food handling; <http://www.freshstudio.vn/index.php/what-we-do/projects/quality-assurance-project/item/122-private-gap-implementation-for-large-wholesaler>; http://www.vir.com.vn/news/en/corporate/metro-cash_-carry-contributing-to-quality-of-life-in-vietnam.html (accessed on Feb 6, 2014).

expectation of the policy makers is that reducing long established modes of provision results in higher sales penetration of the more controlled, 'modern' and thus safer alternative of super- and hypermarkets.

Despite the interventions realized so far, top down enforced retail modernization has not yet managed to attract the Vietnamese consumer for daily fresh vegetables. Notwithstanding HPC's efforts to encourage the break with existing routines in vegetable purchasing, consumers appear not to adopt the new retail alternatives. On the contrary, the persistent preference of vegetable shoppers for established sales structures drives the mushrooming of unhygienic street markets that lack formal food safety guarantees like certification, as well as basic hygiene facilities like adequate water supply, drainage and waste treatment systems (World Health Organization, 2006).

This chapter seeks to explain the persistence of street market shopping for vegetables in Hanoi by investigating the practices wherein consumers handle food safety concerns in combination with other choices about where and when to buy. In this chapter we first situate the consistency in the everyday practice of purchasing vegetables at open-air markets during early mornings within the context of induced organizational changes in vegetable retailing in Hanoi. Next, we present the varied practices of purchasing vegetables at six informal street markets and portray daily consumption practices on the basis of daily vegetable consumption logbooks. These practices form the entry point for deepening our insight in how consumers manage spatial and temporal constraints in the daily practices of buying vegetables.

Our practice-based approach, which is further motivated in the following section, clarifies the limits to the influence of policy on the daily practices of food consumers. Induced organizational changes are less likely to succeed if they necessitate a modification in the routinized ways through which consumers manage the different material dimension of buying vegetables, specifically food safety risks, place and time. The tendency in policy to address food safety risks via communication and regulation that target the isolated and assumedly conscious choice making of individual consumers, detaches external interventions from the distinct logic of daily consumption practices embedded in the temporal and spatial features of city life. In our concluding section we discuss the potential of social practices research for informing policy interventions in the non-OECD country Vietnam.

3.3 A social practices approach to consumption

Our research context is the transformative retail environment of Vietnam's capital Hanoi. The importance of taking Hanoi as research setting is the prominent dichotomy between on the one hand the political organization, which allows for strong state intervention policies directing towards retail modernization, and on the other hand the cultural embedded daily practices of shopping at open-air markets. Research conducted in Vietnam demonstrates the importance of traditional vending systems and focuses mainly on specific parts of the retail system – for example on street-vending (Jensen and Peppard, 2007), on supermarket development (Maruyama and Trung, 2012), on wet markets (Geertman, 2011), on implications of supermarket development for poor consumers (Figué and Moustier, 2009), or describe the food system transformation through a demand analysis (Mergenthaler et al., 2009).

In this chapter we apply a social practices approach to understand how private practitioners respond to policy interventions (Evans et al., 2012; Shove and Walker, 2010). This choice is motivated by three arguments. First, social practices research emphasizes contextual complexity in food consumption (Warde, 2005; Kjaernes and Holm, 2007; Spaargaren et al., 2012). We study vegetable purchasing within the wider and continuously developing context of the range of food shopping options open to consumers. When it comes to vegetable shopping, supermarkets in Asia are competing with other – mostly well-established – forms of vegetable provision (Humphrey, 2007). Understanding why some vegetable retailing sites are more successful in attracting consumers than others might help to improve future policy interventions in food provision.

Second, the dominant approach to date has been to address consumption as conscious and deliberate choice making (Frewer and Van Trijp, 2007; Gorton et al., 2011). However, whether sites of consumption are more or less able to attract daily vegetable purchasers is not mainly a matter of individual choice, but is importantly driven by the routinized and partly non-conscious behaviors of citizen-consumers in the structure of daily life (Oosterveer et al., 2007; Shove, 2010; Shove et al., 2012; Spaargaren, 2003; Spaargaren et al., 2012; Warde, 2005). Shopping for vegetables is such a highly routinized and habitual activity. Previous research in Vietnam indicated that when shopping for their daily vegetables consumers do not easily go beyond their

existing behavioral routines, even when food safety concerns would urge them to do so (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014). Addressing consumption as a social practice rather than the final outcome of individual behavior allows the inclusion of non-deliberate, highly routinized and habitual activity.

Our third argument is that understanding why consumers do not switch to supermarkets includes more dimensions than become visible when looking at shopping for vegetables as a practice isolated from other facets of daily life. The limited impact of policy interventions in changing behavioral patterns is argued to be attributable to the interrelatedness of practices (Shove et al., 2012; Warde and Southerton, 2012). Shopping for vegetables is an integrated part of a whole set of activities that together shape daily life (Røpke, 2009). The linkages of vegetable purchasing with other practices either facilitate or prevent the shift into modern retail, whether conscious or not. It is at the core of a social practices approach to addresses consumption from within the interconnectedness of activities in daily life.

In studying the situated action of daily vegetable purchasing at street markets we analyze the activities based on time-spatial dimensions. As put by Schatzki (2009, p 35) *“time-spaces form a kind of infrastructure through which human activities coordinate and aggregate”*. This allows us to better understand in what sense the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables is an integrated part in the total set of activities that constitute daily life. A practices approach makes it possible to understand the manner in which practices compete and collaborate with each other (Shove et al., 2009). Through an analysis of the safe vegetable retailing context and everyday vegetable purchasing practices of consumers therein, we have explored why to date supermarkets in Vietnam, remain only marginally successful in attracting daily vegetable shoppers, even when food safety concerns would urge them to buy at supermarkets. The central question in this research is, what explains the persistence of vegetable shopping at street markets that do not offer formal food safety guarantees in Hanoi, Vietnam?

3.4 Methods and material – Staged at the retailing sites

This research was conducted in 2012 and focused on Hanoi's 10 urban districts.³ We applied a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods following a concurrent triangulation design (Figure 3.1). The mix of methods included both direct (observations) and indirect (survey, intercept- and in-depth interviews) access to action and interaction, without privileging observation methods above intercept interviews (Atkinson and Coffey, 2003). In our analysis, the mix of methods served the purpose of maximizing validity in analytical generalizations (Halkier and Jensen, 2011). With the aim to discern distinct patterns of situated events (Kjaernes and Holm, 2007) all qualitative material was coded, categorized and entered in Excel (Microsoft Excel for Mac version 2011) for both numerical and textual analysis. The consumer survey was processed in SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20) and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Figure 3.1 Mixed method: concurrent triangulation design

	Qualitative data collection and analysis	Quantitative data collection and analysis
Institutional analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31 retail interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shopper survey (N= 1404; across 49 retail sites)
Actor analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies of 6 street-markets (repeated site visits, shopper observations and intercept interviews) 21 consumption logbooks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census of safe vegetable outlets covering 10 urban districts of Hanoi 183 Structured vegetable retail sites observations (checklist)

³ Hanoi comprises of 10 urban districts (Ba Dinh, Cau Giay, Dong Da, Ha Dong, Hai Ba Trung, Hoan Kiem, Hoang Mai, Long Bien, Tay Ho, Thanh Xuan), one town and 18 suburban districts. The 10 urban districts account for 7 percent of the total Hanoi land surface and 37.4 percent of the total Hanoi population. Source: Hanoi.gov.vn

In order to situate the studied practice of shopping for vegetables at street markets within the organizational set-up of vegetable retailing in Hanoi, in the period April – May 2012 a safe vegetable retail census was conducted within the formal system of vegetable retailing. Most vegetables in Hanoi are sold without explicit food safety claims. Our census focused on outlets registered with the Hanoi Department of Industry and Trade for safe vegetable distribution and offering vegetables with explicit food safety claims through billboards and produce packaging. Our census included every supermarket and convenience store in urban Hanoi. Further, every street and every formal wet market in the 10 urban districts of Hanoi was searched for vegetable shops, kiosks and stalls explicitly claiming to sell safe vegetables.⁴

To verify consumer insights a survey research was conducted at 49 different vegetable retailing sites including 1404 consumers. The survey across different types of retail (from modern supermarket to shop within wet market) mainly functioned as validating study and included questions on frequency of vegetable shopping (per week and per outlet), food safety concerns, trust in food safety claims and socio demographics (91 percent female, average age 33, average household size of four people).

We studied the vegetable selling and purchasing practices within six street markets to gain more insights in the details of purchasing practices. The street markets were selected to provide for a representation of contextual variations in street markets: ranging from street markets that are actively being repressed by regular policy raids, to tolerated street markets in new urban areas, including the oldest informal market of Hanoi. Within these street markets a combination of observational research and intercept interviews was applied.

To deepen the understanding of the daily life worlds of consumers in relation to vegetable consumption the research was complemented with 21 daily logbooks in which consumers were asked to write down their daily vegetable consumption activities from shopping (incl. transportation) to preservation, preparation and up until consumption for the duration of one week. These logbooks provided details like type of vegetables and volumes consumed, shopping frequency, location of purchase and

4 These claims included 'rau an toàn', which translates to 'safe vegetables', 'rau sạch', which translates to 'clean vegetables', and 'rau hữu cơ' which translates to 'organic vegetables'. Our census learned that many retail sites communicated a combination of 'rau an toàn', 'rau sạch' and 'rau hữu cơ'.

distance to home. All 21 logbooks were preceded by an intake interview at the house of the participant to understand the household composition and generic household practices related to vegetable consumption from purchasing to preparation).

3.5 Findings

In this section, we first discuss the structure and organization of the system of vegetable retailing in Hanoi. Next we present descriptions of purchasing practices observed at different vegetable retailing sites and investigate in more detail how consumers organize their daily purchase of fresh vegetables. We distinguish two distinct time-spatial constrained purchasing practices and show that how consumers manage the spatial or the temporal dimension of buying vegetables may offer an explanation for the way food safety risks are handled.

3.5.1 The organizational set-up of vegetable buying in Hanoi

The system of vegetable retailing in Hanoi consists of a formal provisioning structure planned and managed through business registration by the central government and the HPC and a more informal structure characterized by unlicensed, unregistered business operations. Table 1 presents a schematic overview of the Hanoi vegetable retail provisioning, which indicates the various types of sales outlets identified.

Table 3.1 Overview of the various types of vegetable retailing outlets in Hanoi across the formal and the informal retail structure

	Formal Registered permanent business (business license)	Informal Non-registered flexible business (no business license)
Recently introduced retail concepts	Supermarkets Convenience stores	
Hybrid retail concept	Vegetable shops	
Long established retail concepts	Stalls (outside wet market) Kiosk (within wet market) Stall (within wet market)	Flexible stalls (within wet market) Street-markets Ambulant vendors

Source: *Safe Vegetable outlet census research in 10 urban districts of Hanoi April-May 2012.*

Our census learned that supermarkets and convenience stores account for around 2.3 percent (see table 3.2) of the total vegetable consumption in urban Hanoi. These outlets are also largely (71 percent) responsible for safe vegetable provisioning in Hanoi. Further our research indicates that at least 95 percent of total vegetables consumed are sold and thus purchased at less regulated and hygienic outlets (whether at formal wet markets or through informal street-vending), without an explicit food safety proposition.

Table 3.2 Overview of sales as percentage of total vegetable consumption for different types of sales channels; 10 urban districts of Hanoi

	Vegetable sales in T/day	Market share as % of total safe vegetable sales	Market share as % of total vegetable consumption ^β
Total vegetable consumption *	700.4		100%
Vegetable sales of total outlets with a safe vegetable proposition (census)	22.2	100%	3.2%
Supermarket sales	14 [^]	63%	2.0%
Convenience stores sales	1.8 [#]	8%	0.3%
Safe vegetable shops sales	3.5 [#]	16%	0.5%
Sales of safe vegetable kiosks and stalls within wet markets	2.9 [#]	13%	0.4%

* Calculation based on (1) urban population of 2,415,073 in 2012 (April 2009 GSO census data and annual growth rate of 3.5% for urban Hanoi) and (2) per capita vegetable consumption in Hanoi of 290 gr/day: source: International Food Policy Research Institute *Fruits and Vegetables in Vietnam: Adding Value from Farmer to Consumer (2002)* and cross checked with consumption data from household dairy in this research that indicated vegetable consumption of over 300 gr/day.

[^] Aggregated data from Fresh Studio retail sales database (detailed information remains confidential) and in-depth interviews; this volume includes the sales of wholesaler METRO Cash & Carry despite the facts that (1) one store is officially located outside the urban districts and (2) Metro also sells to wholesalers that distribute their vegetables in neighboring provinces.

[#] Sales information on convenience stores, safe vegetable shops, kiosks and stalls obtained through census research and in-depth retailer interviews as well as information from the Plant Protection department (PPD); average sales volume 50 kg/day.

^β Vegetable demand is calculated based on the population of the 10 urban districts multiplied by the per capita vegetable consumption of 290 gr/day IFPRI *Fruits and Vegetables in Vietnam Report 2002*.

Although supermarkets represent 63 percent of total safe vegetable sales in urban Hanoi, the two percent supermarket share in total vegetable consumption is remarkably low. Especially given the retail turnover growth (16 percent from 2011 to 2012; GSO) and policy focusing on supermarket development. Further the percentage of 3.2 percent of safe vegetable sales, as percentage of total vegetable consumption, is remarkable low given the high consumer concerns about food safety. Our shopper survey indicates that 93 percent of consumers is concerned with the safety of vegetables they consume on a daily basis and that 71 percent trusts the safety of vegetables most when offered with government food safety certification. The measured volume of safe vegetable sales (in T/day) is only 3.5 percent of the vegetable consumption by food safety concerned consumers, and only 4.6 percent of the consumption by people who state to trust food safety certification (see table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Indicative share of safe vegetable sales in vegetable consumption

	All consumers	Consumers that are concerned about food safety	Consumers that trust food safety certification
% of Hanoi urban population	100%	93%*	71%*
Total vegetable consumption in T/day [^]	700.4 T/day	629.2 T/day	480.3 T/day
Safe vegetable sales (22.2 T/day [#]) as percentage of consumption	3.2 %	3.5%	4.6%

* Based on consumer survey (N=1404): 93% respondents stated to be concerned about vegetable safety and 71% stated to trust food safety certification

[^] Calculation based on (1) urban population of 2,415,073 in 2012 (April 2009 GSO census data and annual growth rate of 3.5% for urban Hanoi) and (2) per capita vegetable consumption in Hanoi of 290 gr/day; source: International Food Policy Research Institute *Fruits and Vegetables in Vietnam: Adding Value from Farmer to Consumer (2002)* and cross checked with consumption data from household dairy in this research that indicated vegetable consumption of over 300 gr/day.

[#] See table 3.2.

The shopper survey confirms that the main reason for people to shop at outlets claiming to sell safe vegetables is food safety. Without significant differences across outlets 72 percent of the respondents answered food safety to be the main reason to purchase vegetables at the retail site where they were interviewed, followed by freshness with

19 percent, assortment on offer with six percent, convenience with 3.6 percent and price with 0.4 percent. Second, our survey data show that respondents interviewed within supermarkets purchase vegetables less frequent (only 36 percent everyday / 54 percent more than 4 – 5 times per week), compared to respondents interviewed in all other channels (72 percent every day and 90 percent more than 4 – 5 times per week. Third, our survey indicates that for all shoppers interviewed in supermarkets, the supermarket is not the primary vegetable purchasing location (see table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Overview of vegetable purchasing frequency across retail sites

Location of interview (only sites that claimed to sell safe vegetables included)	% respondents purchasing vegetables more than 4 – 5 times per week, answering to purchase at location of interview
Supermarket	36
Convenience store	75
Vegetable shop	62
Safe vegetable stall / kiosk in wet market	96

Source: Shopper survey, N=1404.

Although recognized and valued as safe vegetable retail outlet, in everyday life supermarkets are not adopted as main site for vegetable purchasing, whereas safe vegetable stalls and kiosks within the traditional wet markets are. The main reason for purchasing vegetables at supermarkets appears to be instigated by the food safety proposition, however the everyday practice of purchasing vegetables seems to be primarily shaped by space and time constraints, which are described in the following sections.

With supermarkets and convenience stores to date only marginal successful in attracting daily vegetable consumers and with the formal traditional retail (the wet markets) being forced back by the government, informal street vending, whether fixed or mobile, is capturing the vacuum. Amidst all the changes enforced upon the formal system of provision, especially since 2010, informal street markets seem to flourish as never before. Where the government is tightening its grip on the formal system of provision to improve the safety of daily-consumed foods, the informal system remains difficult to control. This brings us back to our central research question why consum-

ers purchase their daily vegetables mainly at the less controlled and unhygienic street markets.

3.5.2 Buying practices in street markets

Could the persistence of street markets that do not offer formal food safety guarantees partly be explained through a study of the everyday purchasing practices of consumers? In seeking to understand this persistence within the context of urban development and retail modernization policies we studied the performed vegetable buying practices of consumers at six informal street markets. Table 3.5 provides an overview of descriptions of the street markets and the observed practices therein.

Table 3.5 Description of street markets and observed practices therein

Short description of the street market and its contextual setting	Observed purchasing practices and consumer profiles
<p>1 Oldest street market in Hanoi</p> <p>This street market extended considerably after the construction of the two new main inner-city roads it connects. It is the longest street market in Hanoi.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoppers by foot purchasing at a low pace allowing for chats and negotiations with vendors and other shoppers. Mostly older women and young mums with kids. • Shoppers driving their motorbike through the narrow street, remaining on their bike for a quick purchase (keeping the engine running). Mostly of a younger age (< 35 year) and a rather equal divide between men and women.
<p>2 Local neighborhood street market withstanding social and architectural change</p> <p>A previous local village adjacent to Hanoi has over the past 15 years transformed into a popular residential area for Western expatriates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoppers are mostly from the local neighborhood and vary between older women and young mums with kids. Everybody seems to know everybody. Product evaluation and price negotiation seem more the habitual social 'play' than a serious act of purchasing decision-making. • Some people shop while sitting on their motorbike but also those people seem to know the vendors and enjoy a brief daily chat.
<p>3 Street market in street with newly build modern apartment complexes</p> <p>Cheap housing for university students is modernized into a residential area for urbanites. Although the new urban development included a supermarket, vendors selling fresh produce populate the streets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood shoppers doing their daily purchases while walking and talking. Mostly women. • Shoppers driving through on the motorbike (coming from the main road) and quickly halting for a purchase mostly of a younger age (approximately <35 year) and both men and women.

4 Informal wholesale/retail market at the edge of the urbanization

Previous rural area (agricultural land) on the outskirts of urban Hanoi is turned into a new urban residential area. The new urban development did not provide for wet markets, but only for supermarkets. Supermarkets are located along the main roads. The studied informal market is not particularly conveniently located, as it is at the absolute outer skirt of the urban construction zone; people have to do effort to go there.

- During observations some people were shopping by foot, though most shoppers were driving through either on bicycle or on motorbike. The motivation to shop there and not at the nearby supermarket appeared to be a combination of 'drive-through convenience', freshness, price and habit to shop for fresh produce at the market.

5 Construction site temporarily turned into street market

Previous residential area in down town Hanoi demolished for road construction. In becoming a large dual carriageway one side of the road was completed. The other side was still a dusty sand pit. The central reservation functioned as storage for construction materials like sewer pipes but was also used as a garbage dump including for slaughter waste. Amidst this construction zone and under the most unhygienic conditions a large-scale street market operated.

The market consisted of two sides:

- One side (sand pit) had the setup of a 'walk through' market: shoppers walking through the market while doing their purchases and taking their time to chat and negotiate with the local vendors. The large majority of these shoppers were women.
- The other side of the market was located along the newly constructed road and offered a drive along shopping option: shoppers remaining seated on their motorbike while shopping or stopping at the side of the road and quickly walking up and down to vendors purchasing some vegetables. The short business transactions by men and women of younger age (<35 year).

6 Illegal vending along one of the main entrance roads into the city coming from the North

With irregular raids, fines and even imprisonment authorities are actively striving to eradicate street vending along this road. However, street vendors keep on re-appearing within a couple of days after every raid. Apparently the business of street vendors is good enough to accept the risk of fines and imprisonment.

- Shoppers driving by quickly stop and shop along the road. When purchasing products they do not move from their motorbike (often the engine remains running). The vendors select the products, weigh the products and hand the products over to the customers with one hand, while collecting the payment with the other. After the transaction customers quickly drive on. Shoppers observed are mostly of younger age (<35 year) and both men and women. Several shoppers were talking on their mobile phone while doing their purchases and didn't seem really engaged in the whole transaction.

Street markets are self-organized. No formal rules and regulations apply, but recurrent patterns are observed in terms of the same clusters of vegetable vendors at the same location every day. The case studies of street markets reveal various differences: located in the center of the city versus in new residential areas on the urban outskirts, in the vicinity of supermarkets or in the absence of new and more controlled retail alternatives, tolerated versus actively suppressed by government officials, or long time existence versus recently appeared.

Although the street markets show considerable differences, a consistency in the practices of buying vegetables becomes visible. We identified two main types of purchasing practices: People are either taking their time when purchasing vegetables ‘walking and talking’ or quickly walk through or drive along and do their ‘shopping without stopping’. In the practice of purchasing daily vegetables consumers appear to make constrained choices that are either of a more spatial or of a more temporal nature. To deepen our understanding of these apparent constrained choices we explored the daily consumption practices of consumers through daily logbooks.

3.5.3 Daily consumption practices

The daily logbooks of 21 consumers provide a clear picture of the everyday early morning shopping practices (see table 3.6). People who work outside their home purchase vegetables in the early morning around 6:30 – 7:00am and people who don’t work outside their home between 7:00 – 8:00am. Vegetables are purchased mostly within walking distance from the home, or on the way from home to school of kids or work. Respondents referred to their main sites for purchasing as ‘local market’ whether being a formal wet market or a more informal street market. The reasons mentioned for the selected sites for vegetable purchasing are convenience, personal relation with the vendors, and believe that vendors can be trusted when they provide information about their produce on sale: *“When I buy from vendors who I know personally, I don’t have to worry about food safety. They advise me what to buy.”* Vegetables are purchased 6 – 7 times per week and per shopping trip 2 – 3 kg of vegetables is purchased, which translates to a per capita consumption of around 300 grams per day (taken vegetable waste into consideration). The practice of daily shopping for vegetables in one-household portions is instigated by the cultural conventions that vegetables are an absolute ‘must have’ in the daily diet, preferably in every meal, and need to be everyday fresh, preferably harvested the day of purchase. Besides, Vietnamese

consumers at large do not plan their consumption ahead. As a consumer illustrative remarked during an interview: “We eat when we are hungry and we consume what is available.”

Table 3.6 Exemplary excerpts from consumer journals

Excerpt from journal 4: Ms Binh

7:30, I walked to Tu Lien market which is 300 m away my home. The reason why I buy vegetables here is because it's the nearest market. I bought vegetables at vegetable stalls of traders and Tu Lien inhabitants. Vegetables were displayed on a wooden stand and flat baskets. I bought a bundle of pak choi (around 500 gr), 700 gr cabbages, 1 bundle of rau can (round 300 gram), 600gr potato.

I selected not too young pak choi . I smelled pak choi, there was no smell of chemical. My familiar seller said to me that it was clean/safe vegetable. I smelled cabbage too. I selected not too glossy looking “rau can”.

Excerpt from journal 8: Ms Ha

At 7:30 I went to the market by motorbike to buy vegetables because it was near home. I search for vendors with the best looking vegetables.

I bought: 1 bunch of morning glory (choose small tops to fry softer), 2 bulbs of kohlrabi (choose small stalks with many pollens so it was fresh and good).

I asked the seller why she brought not many kohlrabies. She said that early morning there was a buyer who saw the fresh kohlrabi and bought a lot so she had only half left.

I also bought 0.5 kg tomatoes and 0.1 kg garlic.

At around 8am I went straight home from the market.

Excerpt from journal 12: Ms Oanh

At 6:30 I walked to Cau Dien market on Ho Tung Mau street. I bought vegetables there because it is near my home and I believe the sellers. Vegetables were tied into bunches and placed on the ground on plastic sheets. Some kinds were put in baskets or packed in plastic bags.

I bought: 2 bulbs of kohlrabi; 1 kg long bean; 1 bunch of morning glory; 0.1 kg spring onion; 2 tomatoes; 1 bulb of garlic.

I looked, observed and touched to choose good vegetables I intended to buy. Vegetables must look fresh, green; kohlrabi was fresh and not too old. I asked the seller if kohlrabi was planted at home or resold. I also asked if she used pesticides for long bean and morning glory.

End: 7:00.

Excerpt from journal 14: Ms Lan

At 6:30 I went to the market by motorbike and bought vegetables in a safe vegetable stall because I am so familiar with it for such a long time. Vegetables here were clean, fresh and tasty. I feel comfortable and assured to buy vegetables there because vegetables are packed in plastic bags with clear address, origin, product date and expiry. After buying things, I went to work.

All logbooks reflect an early morning shopping practice before 8am. With supermarkets opening at 8 or 9am in the morning, they don't provide for an alternative in the early morning. Secondly most shoppers appreciate the personal interaction with and the advice of the vendors when selecting what vegetables to purchase, a service not available in supermarkets. Third, all shoppers purchase their vegetables within an action radius of max 800m from the home; for walking shoppers this was reported max 300m. The main reason for vicinity of shopping location is that all shoppers went straight back home after shopping, even when purchasing before going to work. Further the logbooks show a remarkable consistency in how vegetable safety is dealt with within existing behavioral routines and how they become prominent in deciding what vegetables to buy.

Consumers' practices managing space constraints

Both the study of purchasing practices at wet markets and daily logbooks indicate that everyday consumption practices are not merely driven by rational food safety considerations, but are also importantly shaped by other constraints that interfere with the trade-offs people make around food safety. Given the food culture and routinized practice of everyday fresh vegetable purchasing, we distinguish two time-spatial distinct purchasing practices, based on how consumers manage the spatial or the temporal dimension of buying vegetables. On the one hand we identified vegetable purchasing as a space constrained practice. In this practice vegetable purchasing is not only regarded as a household necessity, but is also importantly enjoyed as social interaction within the local neighborhood community. The life world of consumers observed is mainly organized around their house within their local community. Time is not (yet) scarce. In the everyday practice of buying vegetables social time is much valued. Two aspects importantly define this practice of vegetable purchasing. The first aspect regards the action radius of the practitioners. Most shoppers interviewed rarely 'travel' outside their local community and their lives are commonly organized around the house. Everything outside their action radius is considered inconvenient, which is explained by limited transportation means (whether unavailable, unable to drive, or constrained by small children).

As such the local neighborhood market is the preferred place to purchase their daily vegetables. An illustrative example of the meaning of spatial constraints is the use to advertise real estate based on the distance to a local market.

The second aspect regards the concept of kinship. Within local communities the social cohesion is strong and builds on inter-dependence. Livelihoods are still largely relying on the traditional 'insurance' system of mutual indebtedness: *"I always help the people around here, you never know when I will be in the position that I need help."* This is reflected in daily activities like vegetable purchasing: *"I buy at my 'neighbor', because she is always there for me. We have to help each-other, right?"* Personal contact during daily shopping is vital to prevent isolation. Encounters with friends and neighbors are valued beyond the act of purchasing. Stories are shared and daily practicalities resolved. Daily vegetable shopping brings a daily smile and chat: *"I enjoy my morning shopping."* Price negotiations are an important act of interaction; although the idea is to reduce the price it is also enjoyed as an interactive habitual 'game' in which more than the end result the process is appreciated. An illustrative observation: Two older women (>50 years), a buyer and a seller having at length discussions about the produce on sale. It is clear they know each other very well. It is not so much the content of the discussion that appears important to them but the whole 'game' of discussing and negotiating is clearly being enjoyed. Also in areas where formal wet markets are within the daily action radius of shoppers, consumers stated to prefer the informal street markets stating that street vendors are in general more friendly than the professional 'traders' at the formal markets and that it is easier to negotiate and deal with them. Besides consumers stated that street vendors sell their produce directly from the countryside, which makes it fresher and with knowing the origin it is better trusted. Table 3.7 presents an overview of the characteristics of the space-constrained vegetable purchasing practices.

Table 3.7 Characteristics of the space-constrained practice

Vegetable purchasing as space constrained systems practice	
Sites for the vegetable purchasing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local street market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Own neighborhood with known people » Personal and trusted relations » Vendors are friendly and easy to negotiate with • Nearby wet market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Close to home » Regular vendors
Main characteristics of the vegetable purchasing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice is embedded in a whole system of daily activities in which vegetable purchasing is valued as social time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Social interaction view on vegetable shopping: Social interaction is more important than time saving. » Price negotiation is an interactive 'game'. » Vendors and buyers personally know each other; the relation with the vendor goes beyond the economic transaction. » Social interaction with other vegetable shoppers is enjoyed • Action radius of the practice is constrained to 300m 'around the house' • Most shopping is done in the morning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Early morning for the freshest offer between 7 and 8am » After the morning rush hour, for more lengthy chatting
Food safety in the vegetable purchasing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety concerns are not driving the practice; but within the practice food safety is ensured through the use of skills in personal and localized contacts and product selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » My local vendor will advise me what to buy each day: what is fresh and safe. » Before I lived in another neighborhood and I knew exactly from whom to buy, but now I have also established my relations here and these vendors will tell me now if the vegetables are safe. » I bought 2 bulbs of kohlrabi. I chose bulbs with a glossy and strained peel. » I chose fresh vegetables and asked the seller about the origin of the vegetables.
Main characteristics of the practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time passing consumers who value social interaction • More traditional lifestyle (women staying at home) • Income often not high enough to allow oneself the luxury of not minding prices • Often extended family / multiple generation households • Vegetable purchasers are mostly women • Mostly older women, or young mums with small children • Main transportation means is by foot

Consumers' practices managing time

On the other hand we identified vegetable purchasing as a so-called 'time constrained' competing practice. In this practice vegetable purchasing is regarded a time consuming activity that conflicts with other activities in everyday life. Most practitioners observed lead more modern urban lifestyles. In their busy daily schedules time is scarce. Consequently the daily vegetable purchasing practices are much organized around the notion of 'time'. Juggling with the fast pace of modern life these consumers opt for time saving strategies and regard vegetable purchasing more as an economic transaction than as social interaction. In this respect price negotiations are also perceived as time consuming. *"It is a hassle to also negotiate about price. I rather prefer fixed prices like in supermarkets, but supermarkets are not an option for me as it costs a lot of time to go there."* Most important is the reduction of 'shopping time' through preference for drive through purchasing – shopping without stopping – along the road. Other time reduction strategies mentioned are a reduction in shopping frequency and a reduction in food preparation time: *"I prefer daily fresh vegetables, but I do not always have the time to shop, so I have to buy sometimes for a day ahead."* *"I prefer to shop at this market because I can ask the vendor to cut the meat and vegetables for me, which saves time in food preparation."* *"I buy safe vegetables when I don't have much time for cleaning."*

These consumers appear less bound by traditional social structures and tend to arrange their lives more independently. In contrast to the group of more traditional 'time passers' living mostly in extended family households, people with a modern lifestyle more often live in nuclear family households. They are mostly below the age of 35 years, (self)employed, have modern means of communication and transportation and mostly do not belong to the lowest income quintiles. During this research a rather equal divide between male and female shoppers was observed. Table 3.8 presents an overview of the characteristics of the time-constrained vegetable purchasing practices.

Table 3.8 Characteristics of the time-constrained practice

Vegetable purchasing as time constrained competing practice	
Sites of vegetable purchasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local street market importantly in the morning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Close to home is convenient for quick shopping before going to work » Shopping with known vendors is convenient as they advise me what to buy: safe and fresh for a good price • Street-vending along the main roads importantly in the late afternoon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Quick- no stopping for shopping on the way home from work » Drive through – no parking needed • Safe vegetable store in local neighborhood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Safe vegetables require less cleaning time • Supermarket <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Vegetables at offer considered safe or safer than at wet markets » No price negotiation 'hassle' » Enjoyed as weekend outing
Main characteristics of the vegetable purchasing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice is competing in time with other activities in which vegetable purchasing is regarded a time consuming activity • Vegetable purchasing is a time consuming activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Economic transaction view on vegetable shopping: Time saving is more important than social interaction » Price negotiation is a 'hassle' • Action radius of the practice is defined as close to home or along the road from home to work en vice versa • Moment of shopping is defined by other activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Shopping before going to work; before 7am » Shopping on the way home from work; around 5:30 pm
Food safety in the vegetable purchasing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officially certified safe vegetables are considered to safe time in cleaning: 'I buy safe vegetables when I don't have enough time to clean them properly.' • And supermarkets are preferred based on their offer of certified safe vegetables • But for everyday shopping they are reported inconvenient in location and time consuming in parking and shopping • In purchasing daily vegetables food safety is not driving the practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Food safety is either ignored during the purchasing practice, but is dealt with at home when cleaning and preparing foods » Or food safety is ensured through buying from a regular vendor with whom they didn't experience any food safety issues: <i>'Even when I don't have time to clean properly I don't fall ill, so I trust the vegetables are safe here.'</i>
Main characteristics of the practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time constrained consumers who value time saving • More modern busy lives (both man and woman work outside the home) • Income high enough not to need to bargain • Mostly nuclear conjugal family households • Mostly younger than 35 years old • Vegetable purchasers are both men and women • Main transportation means is motorbike

Everyday practices are not as rigid as the dichotomized typology in the tables above and consist of commixtures of the two typologies. Important here is to note that individuals shift between behavioral patterns and in particular people with a more modern lifestyle expressed to practice hybrid purchasing practices. In the weekend going to a supermarket, while during the week, shopping at street markets. Or during the week shopping along the road from work to home and in the weekend at their local neighborhood market. Further, shifts in practices might occur due to change in lifestyle circumstances. For example, when the wife gets pregnant or family members fall ill that before took care of daily vegetable purchasing, the everyday vegetable purchasing has to be taken over by someone else in the household, e.g. the employed husband, who has to fit the daily shopping within his working schedule and often opts for shopping without stopping quickly along the road from work to home.

3.6 Conclusions and food safety policy implications

Shopping for daily vegetables in supermarkets is not (yet) an established practice. Our research reveals that supermarkets in Hanoi account for less than two percent of the total vegetable consumption, which indicates that the retail modernization policy of the HPC is dissociated from the practice of shopping for daily vegetables. Consumers are not averse from shopping in supermarkets; on the contrary, they are rather positive and confident that supermarkets offer better-guaranteed food safety. However, studying the daily vegetable purchasing practices learns that these outlets do not fit within the current performance of everyday life.

The research indicates that the induced reform of food provision in Vietnam, including public efforts to communicate and regulate food safety risks via modernized retail outlets, has limited capacity to break existing consumer practices. The everyday practice of vegetable purchasing is not only motivated by food safety concerns but is importantly shaped by temporal and spatial constraints. On the one hand we identified more traditional established practices that are space constrained and socially driven, in which the practitioners, consumers, combine vegetable purchasing with other social engagements. On the other hand we identified more modern individualistic and time constrained practices. Modernizing lifestyles are creating new regimes on temporal value in which shopping for vegetables is competing in time with other daily activities. In the context of societal development a shift away from shopping

as a spatial constrained practice, towards shopping as a time competing practice is expected. Although everyday practices are not as rigid as presented in this dichotomized typology, as long as the cultural conception of everyday fresh instigates the practice of daily shopping for one-day household portions, the identified temporal and spatial constraints constitute a reinforcing mechanism for the persistence of uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets. In return, the availability of street markets sustains the practice of everyday purchasing. As for food safety, our research indicates that food safety is importantly dealt with within existing behavioral routines.

Due to time-spatial constraints formal and more modern food safety guarantees are only to a limited extend incorporated in the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables. When the HPC policy confronts people with demolishing markets or does not provide for wet markets in new residential areas, private practitioners accommodate themselves (Schatzki, 2009). Street markets are not officially planned and arise upon demand. The informal structure of street vending is a manifestation of arrangements made by people based on known practices and commixtures of time-spatial relations. The flexible set-up of street markets, conveniently located within residential areas and operational in the early morning, occupies the vacuum resulting from the policy of the HPC to reduce traditional wet markets and promote retail modernization.

This research points out that food safety policies and interventions that do not take into consideration the existing everyday consumption practices, will most likely fail to address acute food safety issues. We do not aim to plead for a revival of wet markets, nor do we contest the increase and irreversibility of supermarket development. However, this research clearly points out that everyday practices could be accommodated by food safety policy and regulation when aiming to realize more health and safety in the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables through interventions in the retailing system. Instead of addressing consumption as an isolated practice based on sovereign choice, policy makers should acknowledge that consumers make constrained choices. Rather than changing existing practices, interventions could be designed to build upon existing practices. This study in the non-OECD country Vietnam substantiates the potential of social practices research for informing more effective food safety policies in the context of transformative social change.

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CÔNG TY CỔ PHẦN THƯƠNG MẠI HÀNG DA

CHỢ HÀNG DA



'I used to shop
at the market,
but now even
if I want to,
I can't shop
here anymore
because of the
stairs. I was
lucky to find
a good vendor
here in this
street'



CHAPTER 4

FOOD SAFETY AND URBAN FOOD MARKETS IN VIETNAM: THE NEED FOR FLEXIBLE AND CUSTOMIZED RETAIL MODERNIZATION POLICIES

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4. Food safety and urban food markets in Vietnam: The need for flexible and customized retail modernization policies

4.1 Abstract

Access to safe and healthy food is a crucial element of food security. In Vietnam the safety of daily vegetables is of great concern to both consumers and policymakers. To mitigate food safety risks, the Vietnamese government enforces rules and regulations and relies strongly on a single approach for organizing food provision; being modernizing retail by replacing wet markets with supermarkets. In general, reorganizing food provision in this way is increasingly considered to be a guarantee for food safety, especially in urban settings with growing populations. To assess the effectiveness of this induced retail modernization of the fresh vegetables market in Vietnam's capital Hanoi, this chapter examines for whom and under which conditions does this approach deliver the desired outcomes. The survey data and interviews show that ongoing retail modernization in Hanoi reaches only a minor segment of the population and drives a large group of shoppers into informal vending structures. On the basis of five case studies, this chapter demonstrates how similar supermarket interventions can yield contrasting outcomes when they do not accommodate for differences in shopper population and do not adapt to variations in the urban conditions. To reduce exposure to unsafe food, particularly for poorer segments of the population, we conclude that developing a flexible portfolio of retail modernization pathways and adopting a reflexive policy approach provide better impact and leverage, as opposed to the current trend of promoting supermarkets as a single, ideal-type form of food shopping.

4.2 Supermarkets at the core of food retail policy in Vietnam

Recurring incidents with pesticide residues in food products and regular breaches in food hygiene have placed food safety high on the policy agenda in Southeast Asia (SEA). Ensuring the safety of daily food purchases is particularly important in the case of fresh foods. In urban food markets in Vietnam, the focus of this study, the safety of fresh vegetables is a key concern, frequently reported in the media as well as in policy development and public discussions (Figuié, 2004; Hoi, et al., 2009). Vegetables are a daily staple in the Vietnamese diet and are preferably consumed with every meal.

The per capita vegetable consumption in Hanoi, 290 grams per day (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b), is among the highest in the world. The prominence of vegetables in the Vietnamese diet mandates the investigation of how food safety policy interventions relate to the shopping practices of different consumer groups.

Strategies to mitigate food safety risks often build on approaches to sourcing, retailing and purchasing structures developed in western settings (Henson and Caswell, 1999). As a result, policies aimed at improving food safety increasingly entail the reliance on process control through public–private co-regulation in the context of modern supermarkets (Martinez et al., 2007; Yamaguchi, 2014). In the rapidly developing economies of Southeast Asia, food safety concerns resulting from industrialization, urbanization and increasing distance between producer and consumer are addressed in a similar way (Reardon et al., 2007). Goal-oriented policymakers conflate modernization with westernization, expecting that aspirations for modern lifestyles and concerns about food safety motivate the adoption of supermarket shopping habits by individual consumers.

Public policy in SEA tends to place supermarket development at the core of strategies aiming to ensure access to safe food. Supermarkets are considered instrumental for realizing food safety improvements by implementing private food safety management systems and maintaining food hygiene standards (Reardon, 2006). This preferred model implies the restructuring of existing modes of food provision and the construction of new retailing structures from scratch. Especially in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with a socialist-oriented market economy, the government plays a powerful interventionist role in the modernization of food markets by promoting ‘supermarketization’ as a generic path and replicable model suitable for all consumers. In various policy documents and media statements, the Vietnamese government presents supermarkets as important instruments and drivers for the transformation of the country into a modern society (MoIT, 2004; 2009; table 3). Retail modernization policies aim at stimulating supermarket expansion along with the reorganization and reduction of traditional markets. The dominant policy model not only sets out to reorganize food markets, but also is expected to induce a shift in shopping practices on the consumer side (see section 4.1 for a detailed policy review).

Supermarketization seeks to substitute daily visits to wet markets¹ with weekly shopping at supermarkets (Dries et al., 2013).

However, the typical modern retail formats are still a niche phenomenon, with supermarkets in Hanoi contributing just two percent of total vegetable consumption (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). This is partly explained by patterns in supermarket diffusion (Reardon et al., 2003) and has stirred discussions on the need for global retail corporations to embed their retailing models in local consumption cultures, sourcing systems and urban planning (Coe and Lee, 2013; Reardon et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2014; Wrigley et al., 2005). The importance of embedding novel retail formats in local shopping practices is also reflected in recent entry strategies of transnational corporations (TNCs) in Vietnam.²

In the discussions on the ‘waves’ of supermarket development and the ways in which TNCs enter and penetrate developing food retail markets, supermarketization in itself is not questioned. Indeed, there is a gradual expansion of supermarkets in Vietnam’s urban centers since the country opened up its market to fully foreign-owned corporations in 2009 (Nguyen et al., 2013).³ Yet, supermarkets, especially when compared to the persistent practices of shopping at wet markets (Humphrey, 2007; Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014a), are a relatively small channel for securing fresh vegetables for daily meals. Persistent consumer habits are challenging the policymakers’ exclusive focus on supermarkets in food safety policies. Retail modernization policies lead to the marginalization of existing wet markets, where traders and consumers have already developed often long-standing relationships and shopping routines, which are important for coping with food safety risks (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014a). As an unintended consequence, an increasing number of consumers started shopping at uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b).

1 Wet markets are fresh food markets, commonly found in Asian countries, in which wet refers to the wet floors due to the abundant use of water.

2 In January 2015 Japanese Retail Corporation Aeon Co. has taken a 30 percent stake in Vietnam state-owned FiviMart Co., which operates 20 stores in Hanoi, with the aim to increase its understanding of local business: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/01/28/business/corporate-business/aeon-announces-tie-up-with-major-vietnamese-retailers/#.VMj67mSUfYI> (last accessed 08.12.2015).

3 Compared to other Southeast Asian countries supermarket development in Vietnam started rather late, first in Hanoi around the turn of the century, initially with domestic, state-owned enterprises. Since Vietnam’s entrance into the WTO in 2007 and accompanying acceptance of wholly foreign-owned transnational corporations in 2009, supermarket development has been accelerating.

Moreover, recent studies in Thailand indicate that a decrease in wet markets, which provide affordable healthy foods, puts healthy diets at risk (Banwell et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2014). Therefore, food safety policies that exclusively promote the supermarket retail format may actually be counterproductive.

The aim of this chapter is to assess the effects of supermarketization on consumers in urban areas in Vietnam: who benefits, who is excluded, and what are the consequences. Our approach combines quantitative survey research with qualitative interviews. In addition, we documented case studies of different shopping locations and practices to illustrate the emerging and ongoing process of market transformation. By searching for intermediate outcomes (Ton et al., 2011), which are observable in daily consumer practices in emerging novel food markets or in more gradual modifications of the arrangements between consumers and food sellers, this research provides insights into the processes moving towards the long-term policy goals as set by Vietnamese policymakers. As a form of ‘ex ante policy impact assessment’ our results inform future policy design (Ton, 2012) and contribute to the discussion on alternative retail modernization models in Southeast Asia.

This chapter has four main sections. Section 2 briefly reviews the academic literature on the topic, underpinning the rational choice models dominant in policy development, and combines literature on practices theory approaches with methodological insights from realist evaluations, which enable the assessment of the viability of supermarket development within different contexts. Section 3 details the design and administration of the field research. The empirical findings in section 4 describe the dominant policy model in Hanoi and deliver a taxonomy of consumers, exploring the questions ‘who has adopted supermarket shopping in everyday vegetable shopping practice’ and ‘under which conditions’. Section 4 presents case studies of processes wherein concrete policy interventions transform traditional markets. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the added value of a broader portfolio of policy interventions compared to the ongoing promotion of the ideal-type, western-style supermarketization for delivering social betterment. Therein we highlight the need for policies that are adjustable and responsive to different circumstances.

4.3 A process approach to policy evaluation

In Vietnam, retail modernization in the form of stimulating supermarket and hypermarket development is seen as cost-effective and better capable of delivering food safety guarantees, compared to corrective and restrictive regulations and legislation. Policymakers heavily rely on rational choice models (which are critically examined by Shove, 2010; Whitford, 2002; Warde and Southerton, 2012). These models expect consumers to shift to more 'civilized' and guaranteed safe shopping outlets, once readily available, driven by food safety concerns and aspirations for modern lifestyles. Policies based on this model, however, do not necessarily deliver the intended results (Evans et al., 2012; Shove, 2010). Although traditional food supply systems are not sufficient for ensuring food safety and meeting the demand for modernization (Pingali, 2006), shoppers do not automatically integrate supermarkets into their daily practice, especially for fresh foods (Goldman et al., 2002; Traill, 2006; Humphrey, 2007).

The resilience of local cultural traditions and routines (Cox, 2007; Jackson, 2004), urges the development of more flexible and diverse modernization policies, better attuned to the daily lives of consumers. As put forward by Shove (2010) and Evans (2012), the complexity and dynamics of social life should not be ignored simply because they are too difficult to grasp within current policy frameworks. The role of agency in change processes is visible in the everyday practice of selling and buying vegetables at specific retailing sites. It is therefore important to study the practices of ordinary consumers at various retailing sites (Spaargaren, 2011). Accordingly, research needs to include (1) the context where the practices take place, (2) the practitioners involved in the practices and (3) the temporal and spatial dimensions of the practices, addressing interventions as active and embedded.

This chapter seeks to detect the types of processes that effectively influence consumer choices about where and from whom to purchase daily vegetables. This requires a precise understanding of the processes through which the retail modernization interventions do or do not deliver the intended effects. Evaluating policies by only measuring the end effects (e.g. counts of supermarkets or population reached) does not allow for the detection of context-specific causal pathways. Although measuring outcomes is valuable, patterns are often not differentiated or precise enough to offer an understanding of why and how policy interventions resulted in the observed outcomes.

The process elements in policy evaluation studies are usually treated as a 'black box' (Kazi, 2002).

This study seeks to advance the development of more sensitive and responsive retail modernization strategies. Acknowledging context-specific diversity, we assess the retail modernization policies to date, beyond the dominant approach of assessing policy effects through end-of-pipe measurements (Stame, 2004). Although we do not contest that outcomes are important indicators of policy, measurable outcomes do not explain how the effects came into being, beyond the isolated causal input-output relation. By portraying and analyzing the specific processes and results produced by policy interventions in different settings, this chapter contributes to a more contextual understanding of retail modernization policies in Hanoi. We assume that public policies aimed at the amelioration of food consumption in terms of hygiene and safety are more likely to succeed when they take into account the dynamics of the practices of consumers who are buying vegetables.

The so-called realist policy evaluation body of literature (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) can provide a valuable contribution. It investigates what works, for whom and under which conditions and thereby has the potential to inform under which conditions policy models require adjustment. A realist approach helps to explore the middle ground between macro-institutional and micro-behavioral research, with the aim to unravel meso-level mechanisms (Hedström and Ylikoski, 2010). Meso-level analyses focus on the intermediary processes or pathways through which a certain policy outcome is realized (Gerring, 2008). The key question for realist evaluation is how retail modernization strategies work out in real life – not how they are supposed to work. What types of results do they produce, for whom (providers and distributors, buyers of vegetables, food safety regulators etc.), and under which conditions? With this realist policy evaluation approach in mind, the following research questions guide this study:

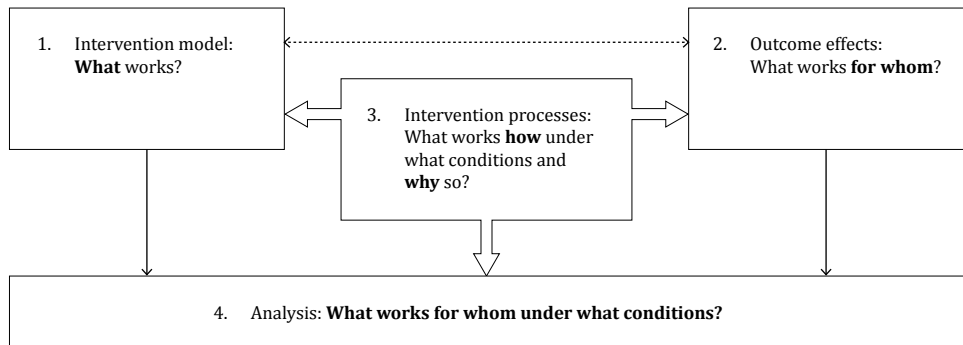
1. What is the extent of the outreach of modernized retail formats in terms of inclusion of different social groups?
2. What context-specific processes and circumstances influence the uptake of modified or modern retail formats by different social groups?

4.4 Methods

The open-ended research questions, which aim to examine not only the effects, but especially the generative mechanisms at work, informed the use of a mixed methods study design. We combined quantitative research to measure policy outcome effects with qualitative research, to unravel why and how specific interventions bring about these effects (Brady et al., 2006; Kazi, 2002; Pawson and Tilley, 1997). We followed a flexible and pragmatic method selection process (Robson, 2002), in which the findings helped formulate new questions and select the most appropriate methods ‘along the way’. This allowed us to dig deeper into emergent topics during the fieldwork, while consolidating research rigor through method triangulation. Furthermore, by working with multiple investigators per method we could minimize researcher bias.

We approached the realist evaluation question – what works, for whom, and under which conditions – in four parts (see figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Research overview



First, desk research, expert interviews and field work was used to describe the phenomenon under study: the retail modernization policy (intervention model) in urban Hanoi, its targeted outcomes in relation to more controlled and safe vegetable retail provisioning, and the assumptions underpinning retail modernization policies.

Second, we measured the outcomes to date, portraying which groups within the population were or were not reached with the modernized retail formats. We started with

research among the population that was reached by the retail modernization interventions through a supermarket and convenience store shopper survey. Thereafter, we conducted a study within groups of the population that appeared to be excluded from the policy interventions as detected in the shopper survey.

Third, we explored the phenomenon of retail modernization in Hanoi through a collective case study design (Stake, 1995). The five selected cases represent the main variations in the policy-induced experiments of retail modernization. We used the case studies to understand how policy interventions work out in practice. Case studies are acknowledged to be valuable for exploring the causal mechanisms behind policy outcomes (Bennet and Elman, 2006; Gerring, 2004; Gillham, 2000; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Vellema et al., 2013). We followed the case study protocol as described by Yin (2009), who advocates for case studies as the preferred strategy (1) when 'how' and 'why' questions are posed; (2) when contemporary events are investigated; and (3) when the setting is non-contrived.

Finally, we concluded our research with an analysis on variations in social inclusion observed within different contexts through pattern matching (Gerring, 2004), resulting in a taxonomy of patterns in supermarket adoption, based on the question for whom and under which conditions does the current policy deliver the targeted outcomes? A detailed overview of all methods used within our study is provided in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Overview of methods applied

1. Intervention model (section 4.1)		
What?	2008-2013	Desk research
	2010-2012	Expert interviews (N=3): urban planning expert, trade/retail policy advisor, retail management
	2008-2013	Count of supermarkets and convenience stores selling vegetables
2. Intervention outcomes (section 4.2)		
For whom?	2012	Shopper survey ^β : N=1005 Including 604 supermarket shoppers at 12 supermarkets and 401 shoppers at 17 convenience stores
For whom not?	Lower income class (4-7.5 mln VND/month) research, including:	
	2012 Jun	• Vegetable shopping observations + intercept interviews (N=9)
	2012 Jul	• Shopping journals (N=19)
	2013 Sep	• Household survey [†] (N=152)
	2013 Oct	• Focus Group [‡] (N=8)
	2013 Oct	• In-depth interviews [§] (N=8)
3. Intervention processes (section 4.3)		
How under what conditions?	2008-2014	Collective-case study of policy in practice at consumption junctions (N=5) Observational research of policy in practice over time (field notes) Vendor interviews (N=12) Shopper intercept interview (N=29)
4. Analysis: Taxonomy of patterns in supermarket adoption (section 5)		
What works for whom under what conditions?	2013-2014	CMO configurations Pattern matching

^β *Shopper survey: Face to face interviews through randomized sampling in stores across 9 (out-of 10) urban districts of Hanoi: Đống Đa, Hoàng Mai, Long Biên, Cầu Giấy, Hai Bà Trưng, Từ Liêm, Hoàn Kiếm, Tây Hồ, Hà Đông. Supermarket formats included: Big C, FiviMart, Unimart, Intimex, Co.opMart; Modern wholesale Metro C&C was not included. Only shoppers who stated to be the primary person responsible for vegetable shopping within their household were included in the survey. A professional team of interviewers conducted the survey; all interviewers received questionnaire training upfront.*

[†] *Household survey: Face to face interviews through door to door sampling across 5 urban districts of Hanoi: Đống Đa, Hoàng Mai, Long Biên, Cầu Giấy, Hai Bà Trưng. Inclusion criteria:*

Legally registered as temporary or permanent residents of Hanoi (Unregistered/informal migrants are excluded)

Household income lower than 10 million VND per month (which was in 2012 approx. <4.1 USD/cap/day).

Respondent main responsible for food shopping and preparation within the household.

Interviewers were recruited among social sciences students from the low-income target population; professional consumer researchers trained all interviewers before conducting the survey.

[§] *Participants for the focus groups and in-depth interviews were approached with the assistance local Women's Union; to be able to establish rapport with the interviewees, students from the low-income target population conducted the interviews; professional consumer researchers trained all interviewers before conducting the interviews.*

All questionnaires used in this research were developed in English, translated in Vietnamese, crosschecked on meaning with 2 professionals and tested in the field before being implemented.

All survey data were analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics 20 - descriptive statistics.

4.5 Results: Retail modernization policy in practice

Below we present the results in three parts along our research overview (see figure 4.1). We first describe the policy-driven model. Second, we use survey and interview data to examine for whom this conversion may or may not work, and, third, we present a selection of the case studies (with interview excerpts), demonstrating the effects of retail modernization at specific locations in Hanoi.

4.5.1 Which policy? Food safety regulation and retail modernization in Hanoi

Government explicitly aims to reduce food safety incidents through a combination of legislation and retail modernization. Legislation in Vietnam (Law on Food Safety (LoFS), No.55/QH12/2010) aims to assure that *'food shall not cause any harm to people's health and lives'*. The LoFS is the umbrella guideline on managing regular occurrence of food safety incidents, defined as *'any circumstances arising due to food poisoning, a food-borne disease or other circumstances arising in relation to food that cause harm to human health and lives'* (LoFS). The law assigns responsibilities among the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Health (MoH), and Industry and Trade (MoIT). An important aspect is the provisioning of foods through sales outlets *'to keep and maintain the hygiene of the business places'* (LoFS). MoH formulates the food safety standards and regulations, while the actual structuration of trade and retail falls under the MoIT. Important in this respect are the Prime Ministerial Decision No. 559/QĐ-TTg on the development of market places 2004 – 2010, Decision 146/2006/QĐ-UB on incentive mechanisms for supermarket construction in Hanoi, and Decision 99/2008/QĐ-BNN, requiring all vegetables entering modern retail outlets to possess a certificate issued by official government authorities verifying that the vegetables have been produced in accordance with national regulations on safe vegetable production.

Over the past decade, Hanoi has been undergoing a profound transformation of urbanization and modernization, which accelerated after the expansion of the administrative boundaries of Hanoi in 2008 and the opening of the retail business sector to foreign-owned entities in January 2009, as a result of Vietnam's WTO commitments. Modernization policies are instigated by the ambition to transform Hanoi into a prosperous and modern 'civilized' capital. An important aspect of the policy measures

concerns the system of food retailing. Traditionally, food retailing is concentrated in open-air markets. These markets neither fit the picture of a modern and civilized food provision system nor do they comply with international food safety and hygiene standards in food provision (WHO, 2006).

The policy related to food retailing builds on two pillars. One pillar is the reduction of traditional markets. In 2010, Hanoi counted 67 permanent markets, 213 semi-permanent markets and 113 temporary sheds markets. By 2020, when the policies have been fully implemented, it is expected that only 14 of the total 67 permanent markets will remain (MoIT, 2009). The policy interventions to reduce the role of traditional markets in the food retailing include: (1) restriction of the construction of new markets; (2) upgrading and renovation of markets; and (3) transformation of markets into supermarkets. The development of new markets will be restricted in the sense that they are not included in the urban planning of new suburban residential areas.

The second pillar regards the expansion of modern retail formats. In 2009 the supermarkets that sell vegetables in Hanoi accounted for 23 stores; by 2013 this number had increased to 67 and is projected to triple from 2013 to 2020 (table 4.2). Policy interventions aimed at stimulating modern retail development include (1) the development of supermarkets in office buildings and residential apartment complexes; (2) suburban supermarket development; (3) chain convenience store development; and (4) locating supermarkets in department stores.

Table 4.2 Supermarket store development in urban Hanoi (only outlets selling vegetables included)

	2000	2007	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2020	2025
Supermarket* count	2	17	24	35	41	55	63	178	1000

- 2000: *GAIN Vietnam Retail Food Sector 2000*.
- 2007-2014: Field work - formats included in count: *BigC, FiviMart, Citimart, Unimart, Intimex, MaxiMart, Hapro, VinMart, SapoMart, LotteMart, Co.opMart, Minh Hoa* and wholesale *Metro C&C*.
- 2020: projection in *MoIT trade Development Plan 2010 – 2020 – 2030*.
- 2025: ambition MoIT; <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/business/112996/hanoi-vows-to-build-more-supermarkets--eliminate-traditional-markets.html> (last accessed 20141001).

Vietnamese policymakers expect that the combination of ubiquitous concerns regarding the safety of daily consumed foods and the growing aspiration for modern (western) lifestyles, in particular among the younger population (45 percent of the population is younger than 25 years old [GSO, 2012]), will drive the adoption of supermarkets for everyday food shopping. The lagging adoption of supermarkets to date is still importantly related to their limited presence, which motivates the government's push for supermarket development.

This top-down enforced supermarketization policy prompted a lively debate, both in the media and in academic circles (Figué and Moustier, 2009; Geertman, 2010; Maruyama and Trung, 2007; Mergenthaler et al., 2009; Moustier, 2006), on the advancement of retail modernization and the preservation of more traditional vending structures. As a consequence, the proposed Hanoi Trade Development Plan for the period 2010 – 2020 with a vision up to 2030 (MoIT, 2009), which reaffirms the direction of retail modernization as laid out in the plan 2004 – 2010, has not yet been approved by the Hanoi Peoples Committee. The plan is argued to promulgate supermarket advancement at the cost of traditional vending structures. While the participants in the debate do not challenge that fundamental changes in the existing system of food retail are needed from a food safety and civilization perspective, they do question whether existing policies are able to meet the demand. On the other hand, officials from the central and Hanoi governments persistently advocate in favor of replacing wet markets with modern supermarkets (see table 4.3 for a selection of statements made in the media).

In the section below we describe the outcomes of the dominant supermarketization policy model to date. The term 'outcome' is used here to mean the adoption of modern retail formats in the daily practice of shopping for vegetables, the desired result of the policy intervention.

Table 4.3 Representative selection of press articles on retail modernization 2011 – 2014

20110616	<p>Building Trade Centre, Supermarket System in Hanoi: In Need of Stronger Drives</p> <p>Shopping at supermarkets has become a demand and routine of Hanoians but they fail to meet the demand because of the shortage and irrational location of supermarkets...According to the wholesaling and retailing network planning for the period from now till 2020, Hanoi will have 178 supermarkets, trebling the current number. http://www.vietnambreakingnews.com/2011/06/building-trade-centre-supermarket-system-in-hanoi-in-need-of-stronger-drives/#.U0zf0l7mZGw (last accessed 20140415)</p>
20120709	<p>Hanoi urged to look for suitable models for traditional markets</p> <p>Upgrading the operational traditional markets into modern ones is a must. However, it is necessary to find out a suitable model for the new markets ... Despite the failures, Hanoi authorities still insist on renovating the traditional market network, trying to turn them into modern markets, suitable to a modern capital city. http://news.chaobuoisang.net/hanoi-urged-to-look-for-suitable-models-for-traditional-markets-201455.htm (last accessed 20140415)</p>
20120624	<p>Shoppers Prefer Traditional Markets</p> <p>The trend to upgrade or replace traditional markets with supermarkets in Vietnam 's urban areas was not necessarily a good one for shoppers or traders ... Traditional markets and vendors meet 95 percent of domestic demand for food and other necessities. Supermarkets and shopping centers cater to other customers, often foreigners. http://businesstimes.com.vn/shoppers-prefer-traditional-markets (last accessed 20140415)</p>
20120528	<p>Protest against wet market reconstruction into modern commercial center</p> <p>http://vietbao.vn/Kinh-te/500-tieu-thuong-quay-UBND-quan-Cau-Giay-phan-doi-xay-cho-moi/2131472960/87/ (last accessed 20140428)</p>
20131203	<p>Hanoi Retail Market Booming at Year-end</p> <p>Ocean Mart has opened a branch of 10,000 square meters. Ocean Retail is also preparing to launch another grand supermarket of more than 11,500 square meters in Vincom Mega Mall Times City, besides two other supermarkets in the urban areas.</p>
20140929	<p>Hanoi vows to build more supermarkets, eliminate traditional markets</p> <p>Despite economists' opposition to the 1,000-supermarket plan proposed by the Hanoi Industry and Trade Department, officials are still determined to go ahead with it ... with an expected population of 9.4 million and an annual income per capita of \$17,000, the development of 1,000 supermarkets by 2030 was "quite within the reach". Traditional markets would no longer be built in the inner city, while existing traditional markets with an area of over 3,000 square meters will be upgraded into hypermarkets or shopping malls. http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/business/112996/hanoi-vows-to-build-more-supermarkets--eliminate-traditional-markets.html (last accessed 20141001)</p>

4.5.2 For whom? Policy outcomes in terms of social inclusion

The retail modernization policy has currently not realized the intended outcome in supermarket uptake, reaching a select group within the urban population only, while resulting in unintended effects on other groups. Below we first show which specific group is reached with the recent retail modernization interventions, followed by an in-depth look on how retail modernization affected other groups. Retail modernization interventions have deprived large groups from daily access to fresh vegetables and thereby potentially worsened instead of ameliorated the food safety situation.

Who buy vegetables in supermarkets and convenience stores?

The survey among vegetable shoppers in supermarkets and convenience stores revealed that consumers, who benefitted the most from the expansion of modern retail outlets for vegetables, have higher income and higher education levels than the average Hanoi urban population and shop less often than shoppers at markets (table 4.4). Food safety is the main reason for buying vegetables at a supermarket (85 percent) or convenience stores (76 percent, figure 4.2), while respondents who shop for vegetables more than four times per week place a relatively higher importance on freshness (figure 4.3). Supermarket shoppers are relatively young (34 percent younger than 30 years old) and shop less often, though still 68 percent purchases vegetables more than four times per week. Shoppers in convenience stores have a higher shopping frequency than supermarket shoppers, similar to wet market shoppers, but the main reason for buying vegetables at convenience stores also appeared to be food safety. The higher shopping frequency of convenience store shoppers corresponds with their relative higher rating of freshness as an important criterion for vegetable purchases.

Table 4.4 Profile supermarket and convenience store shoppers compared to generic Hanoi population

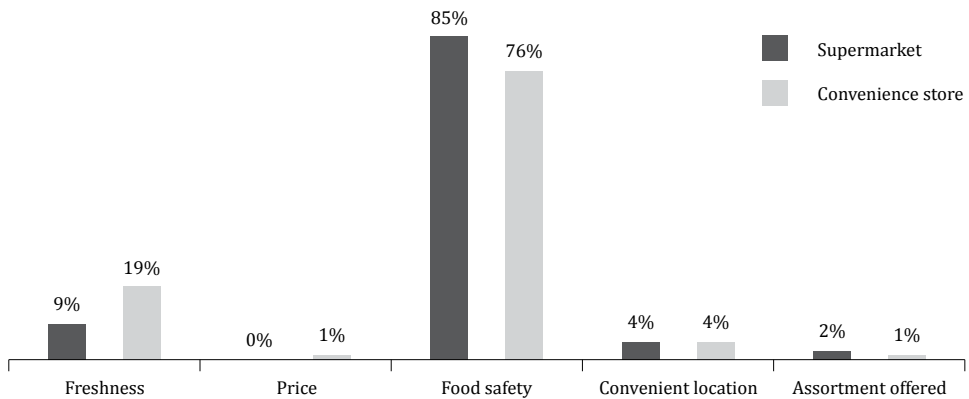
	Supermarket shoppers	Convenience store shoppers	Hanoi population
Income			
% upper and medium income classes*	87	74	39*
Education			
% completed university or higher education	70	55	42 [^]
Shopping frequency			
% shopping for vegetables everyday	40	73	87 [#]

Shopper survey N=1005 (401 convenience store; 604 supermarket shoppers).

* AC Nielsen HIB in VND/month; Database Nielsen 2012

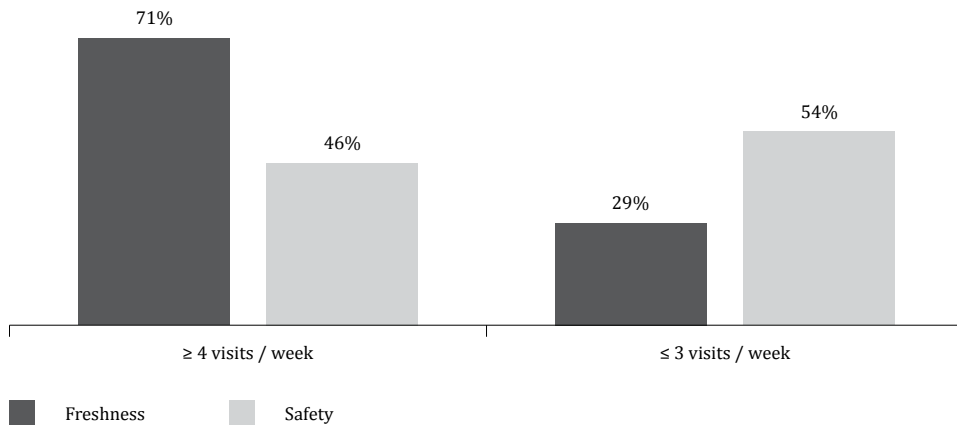
[^] Ministry of Planning and investment (GSO, 2011). Vietnam population and housing census 2009. Education in Vietnam an analysis of key indicators.

[#] Market shopper survey 2009, Fresh Studio (>90% of vegetables are sold through markets; Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b)

Figure 4.2 Importance of different aspects in shopping for vegetables across retail formats

Source: Shopper survey, N=1005 Price is often assumed to play a major role in the preference for markets above supermarkets, however this is neither confirmed in our current research, nor in previous consumer research by Fresh Studio, second affiliation of principal author. Price collection across different channels in Hanoi by Fresh Studio has learned that vegetables in supermarkets are generally rather similarly priced to vegetables markets, even produce with an explicit food safety claim is generally not more than 10% higher priced than conventional produce at markets.

Figure 4.3 Importance of freshness related to shopping frequency (total freshness = 100% and total food safety = 100%)



Source: Shopper survey; N= 1005 (401 convenience store; 604 supermarket shoppers).

In summary, the apparent relation between income, shopping frequency and choice of shopping outlet indicates that supermarket shoppers are a select few and have a specific socio-demographic profile within the Hanoi urban population. This consequently has led us to examine the question: who is not reached with the policy interventions that aim to foster social betterment in terms of improved access to more controlled, safe and hygienic vegetable retail outlets?

Who does not buy vegetables in supermarkets and convenience stores?

Just 13 percent of the supermarket shoppers included in the survey belonged to lower income groups, which account for more than 40 percent of the total urban population (AC Nielsen, 2013). This research indicates that food safety is very important to these select shoppers from the lower income group: *"Food needs to be safe first, to ensure my family's health"* (focus group). They spend on average ~50 percent of their daily budget on food (household survey). They are willing to spend on food safety, in particular vegetables: *"Vegetables are the worst; you never know what a real safe vegetable is."* *"I rather be a bit hungry when I know that the food I eat is safe and nutritious."* *"I invested in an ozone machine to better clean my vegetables."* (focus group). In the household survey among lower income groups only one out of 152 respondents reported to buy vegetables at supermarkets. In the focus group and in-depth interviews, however,

lower income households showed an interest in buying vegetables at supermarkets. Although the offer in supermarkets is not necessarily completely trusted, the better hygienic conditions and official food safety certifications are valued: *"I believe that supermarkets at least try to ensure the safety of the vegetables they offer."* (interview #4)

However, supermarket shopping appears to be outside their reach for two important reasons. First, lower income households plan their food budget on a daily basis. More than 60 percent of the interviewed households depend on unstable jobs for their livelihood. Daily variations in income define the daily variations in food budget and consequently they have no choice but to shop every day. They cannot afford to purchase large amounts of food due to these budget constraints. Supermarkets are considered inconvenient, as they are more suitable for large volume shopping: *"At supermarkets you buy a lot."* (focus group) Second, supermarkets are importantly outside the action radius of lower income groups, making them especially not a practical option for every day, small quantity shopping. Lower income neighborhoods are not prime locations for private retail investors, and consequently supermarket development is located in higher income areas. Lower income households depend on traditional vending structures within their vicinity. The reduction in permanent markets resulted in a situation wherein consumers are deprived from instead of provided with controlled vegetable shopping outlets. As a result they have no choice but to rely on less hygienic informal and uncontrolled street vending (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b).

In summary, based on the survey data we estimate that around 40 percent of Hanoi's urban population is reached with the current retail modernization policies. A large group of the urban population is thus excluded. In striving to provide better guarantees of safe and hygienic retail conditions, current policy interventions appear exclusive and partly counter-effective, unintentionally driving large groups of the population into the contested 'uncivilized' street vending structures. To improve the policy's social inclusion, these outcomes urge the further examination of how interventions work out and under which conditions and why this is the case.

4.5.3 How did retail modernization interventions perform under place-specific conditions?

Focusing on the effectuation of the retail modernization policy over the period 2008 – 2014, we documented different processes that generate changes and continuities in buying practices at different locations in the city. The five case studies below demonstrate how concrete policy interventions can transform traditional markets and how supermarkets can become embedded in different urbanization paths. The purpose of comparing these case studies is to obtain an understanding on how a more generic supermarketization process evolves under varying contextual conditions. The obtained insights can inform policymakers in their quest to improve hygiene and food safety in the everyday shopping practices of consumers. Each case study starts with a description of the concrete intervention followed by an explanation of the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ behind the observed outcomes.

The first two cases describe the conversion of traditional markets into modernized outlets. They show how upgrading an existing everyday shopping location can result in the unintended consequent of moving food shopping towards the poorly controlled and unhygienic street vending. Once it became clear that the previous regular consumers stayed away from the newly constructed premises, the vendors from other markets scheduled for renovation started a massive protest and challenged the plans.⁴

Case 1: Upgrading a traditional market into a modernized market within a shopping mall

An example of the modernization efforts of the HPC is the reconstruction of the traditional market Hang Da, located in the downtown tourist and commercial city center of Hanoi. In 2008 this traditional, covered open-air market was demolished and replaced by a modern shopping center. In 2010 the reconstruction was completed and the traditional market was reinstalled in the air-conditioned basement of the building. Table 4.5 presents an overview of the market before and after the reconstruction.

Authorities and investors proudly depicted Hang Da as ‘*the first traditional market changed to a modern market*’.⁵ Retailers at Hang Da market, however, viewed the mod-

4 On 28 May 2012, 500 small businesses (wet market retailers) protested against the ‘renovation’ of the traditional wet market Ngia.

5 <http://www.vir.com.vn/news/en/corporate/savills-vietnam-agent-for-hang-da-shopping-centre.html> (last accessed 15.07.2014).

ernization in a less positive light. During interviews they stated that their sales in the newly constructed air-conditioned market in the basement of Hang Da Shopping center went down by ~30 percent compared to before the renovation. A shift was also noticed in the clientele; from private consumers to professional hotel and restaurant buyers. Whereas the original unhygienic, hot and humid market used to buzz with activity, the reconstructed air-conditioned premises with appropriate hygiene facilities⁶ miss out on any purchasing activity. According to the vendors, consumers refrained from using the newly renovated market because they preferred the easily accessible street markets in the neighborhood that emerged during the period of construction when the market was non-operational. During construction, street vendors seized the opportunity of selling vegetables in the surrounding area, capitalizing on the unmet demand of the old Hang Da clientele. When the market reopened most consumers didn't return. The vendors complained that they bought their space at the newly renovated market for high prices. They made that decision before the market was constructed and are now unable to sell their shop for the same amount due to a lack of customers. The targeted consumers either are unaware of the presence of the market in the luxury fashion mall or complain about its accessibility: *"I didn't know there is a market downstairs inside; I thought this mall is only about designer brands."* (interview #6) *"I used to just walk in, look at this building, this is not for me."* (interview #9) *"I used to shop at the market, but now even if I want to, I can't shop here anymore because of the stairs. I was lucky to find a good vendor here in this street."* (interview #7).

Case 2: Transforming a traditional market into a supermarket within an office building

Another example is how the traditional open-air market Cua Nam was rebuilt in a high-rise office building with an open-air supermarket in the basement. Despite its vocal advertising of the availability of safe and clean foods⁷, mainly vegetables (see table 4.6), the supermarket failed to attract consumers. The supermarket has remained deserted since its opening in 2010. At the start the supermarket offered a limited assortment of certified safe vegetables. The lack of customers resulted in empty vegetable shelves since 2012 and finally the closedown of the supermarket in 2014.

6 The new facilities provide tap water and adequate waste and waste water systems.

7 Billboards placed both inside and outside declare 'Thực phẩm sạch an toàn' [clean and safe fresh foods] and 'Cho rau xanh an toàn' [market for safe vegetables].

Table 4.5 Illustration of the Hang Da metamorphosis 2008 – 2014

March, 2008
(before
reconstruction)



Market at streetlevel



Wide assortment under dirty and hot conditionsand. Buzzing with shoppers

May, 2012
(1,5 year after re-
opening)



Market in basement



Wide assortment under clean, neat
and airconned conditions
Lacking shoppers

May 2014
(2,5 year after re-
opening)



Shopping in the street in front of the
entrance



Many empty/closed stalls
No shoppers

Source: Pictures taken by Sigrid Wertheim-Heck in 2008, 2012 and 2014.




An important reason for the non-adoption of this channel is that during the construction (2008 – 2010) shoppers shifted to alternative shopping locations, mostly turning to street market shopping. Further, during interviews with residents close to the market, people complained about the lack of freshness, the lack of assortment and most importantly the closed off and unwelcome atmosphere of the market:

"The market is hidden away in the basement and with the guards and everything, not really welcoming." (interview #1) "The market doesn't seem to be built for us, shoppers, but just for realizing office space." (interview #3) "I used to buy at Cua Nam market, but now I buy from a vendor in my street. I visited the new market when it opened, but it is very inconvenient with stairs going down a basement and the offer is not much and not fresh. I was disappointed. I'd rather buy from my regular vendor." (interview #2).

The new 'market' did not succeed at preserving the most prominent characteristic of markets, namely the personal relations with individual vendors. Instead, it offered abstract food safety guarantees through an anonymous supermarket style vending structure:

"I feel the eyes of the guards in my back when I walk around and there is no one to advise me in the produce selection." (interview #1) "The cashiers there know nothing about the products." (interview #3).

Table 4.6 Illustration of Cua Nam anno May 2014

Location and access	Food safety proposition	
Located in the basement of an office building (financial institution)	Cho rau xanh an toàn - market for safe vegetables Thực phẩm sạch an toàn - clean and safe fresh foods	Inside deserted and mostly empty shelves
		

Source: Pictures taken by Sigrid Wertheim-Heck, May 2014.

The next two case studies portray how similar supermarket development can yield dissimilar outcomes within different urbanization contexts.

Case 3: Installing supermarkets in a newly developed suburban area

A clear example of the effectuation of the modernization policy of the HPC is the rapid urbanization of the district Ha Dong, where skyscrapers, wide roads and flyovers increasingly dominate the previously rural landscape. Urban planning in this district does not include fresh markets but instead provides for large-scale supermarkets only. The two large supermarkets that opened up in 2010 were mostly empty during site visits in 2012, particularly during weekdays: at 8:30 am the supermarkets were empty and deserted, while a nearby informal but tolerated market was crowded. Supermarkets (if visited at all) are more of a weekend outing. In the weekends families go out to the larger shopping centers, combining actual shopping with window shopping, eating out and visiting amusement arcades. Although presented in urban planning and modernization policies as an alternative, consumers don't appear to recognize supermarkets in this area as a choice in daily vegetable shopping.

"Sometimes we go to there in the weekends to have lunch. The kids like the food and the playground. Than we also go shopping there. It is nice and interesting. There is a lot on offer [referring to processed foods and non-foods mostly]... but I doubt if the vegetables are fresh." (interview #12).

An important explanation for the limited adoption of supermarkets in this area seems to be the combination of historical connections of the residents with production, the proximity of peri-urban vegetable production areas, and the persistent preference for everyday fresh purchasing.⁸ Most households in the area still have strong connections with the nearby countryside. Supermarkets in this neighborhood are not able to compete with the fresh, convenient, daily offer of farmer vendors who provide first-hand personalized food safety guarantees.

"Some months ago, I moved to this area. Before I had my regular vendor, but also here I searched for a good vendor and was lucky to find my new vendor. She advises me on what is safe and fresh to buy." (interview #11) *"I know the vendor here as she is a farmer from my home village."* (interview #12).

8 Most people living in this newly developed suburban area are the previous inhabitants, villagers deprived of their land in the process of urbanization. An example for this type of development from a similar area can be found in the East Asian Development Network report (Nguyen, 2009).

Case 4: Embedding supermarket in downtown residential apartment complex

For middle income, nuclear families, residential apartment complexes are being constructed. In 2013, a new supermarket chain opened a store on the ground floor of an apartment building, providing convenient access to daily foods and successfully attracting daily shoppers. During multiple visits, we observed that the supermarket was buzzing with activity. Shoppers are mostly young urban families, both men and women with small children, and many are wearing smart-casual dress, which indicates office jobs. The consumers shopping at this supermarket are mainly daily or regular shoppers living in or near the building.

The adoption of this supermarket in the daily shopping routine appears to be facilitated by: (1) new apartment complex residents immediately being provided with a convenient alternative when they move into the building and have to re-establish their shopping routines; (2) the need for convenience in the busy lifestyles of the residents in the building coming from young, nuclear families that need to combine work with household chores, like daily food shopping; (3) the presence of a large group of middle-income customers (non-residents) for whom shopping in supermarkets is both easily accessible (for instance on the way from home to work) and aspirational (fitting modern urban lifestyle). In this supermarket at least 50 percent of the floor space is allocated to fresh foods and around 30 percent of the total floor space is dedicated to fruits and vegetables, with a prominent focus on fresh vegetables with food safety guarantees in the form of labels, certification and brands.

"I come here every day, I worry about food safety, but here it is easy to find safe products." (interview #13) *"I like shopping here when I am all dressed up like this for work. Markets are too dirty, and I don't have the time to get redressed."* (interview #15).

Case 5: Establishing a chain of convenience stores

In 2008, a state-owned company was made responsible for the realization of safe vegetable provisioning across the city of Hanoi with a target of having one to three shops per district by 2015. Despite the dedication and enthusiasm expressed by the management about this undertaking during an interview in 2009, safe vegetables are not a prominent feature today. Our 2012 field study revealed that a network of stores was established across all 10 urban districts of Hanoi, but interviews with store managers revealed that vegetables are not selling well. Some said that they almost stopped selling vegetables, but since they are obliged to keep it in their portfolio they try to

keep their portfolio as small as possible. According to the store managers, consumers are not interested in buying vegetables in their store, so they provide only a minimum assortment of produce (vegetables with longer shelf life like roots and tubers are preferred over easily perishable leafy vegetables). Repeated store checks confirmed this situation; we did not encounter any customer who purchased vegetables.

This outcome might be explained by the fact that several of the shops are located in the vicinity (or even inside) a wet market or in more commercial rather than residential areas. According to the survey and to the interviewed shop managers, consumers who buy vegetables at these shops, do so because of the food safety proposition. However, the stores are mostly frequented by non-vegetable shoppers on their way back from the traditional market, who are looking to purchase processed products like cooking oil, fish sauce, noodles and biscuits:

“At 7:50 I went to the market near my home.” (After doing the shopping for vegetables and meat,) *“At 8:05 I went quickly to a grocery (convenience) store to buy a bottle of fish sauce and went home.”* (Shopping journal #11).

Fieldwork and interviews with shop managers revealed that convenience store shopping is complementary to market shopping. At markets consumers buy entire meals including fish and meat on a daily basis, whereas convenience stores are frequented more irregularly and mainly for processed foods. According to the store managers, convenience stores can replace existing wet market routines for those with strong vegetable food safety concerns, but otherwise they are not regarded as a fresh, daily shopping alternative. The convenience stores are unable to attract daily vegetable shoppers based on their offer of formally certified safe vegetables. Their vegetables sales remain limited to occasional buyers.

On the basis of these five case studies we have revealed that the outcome of the policy and the dominant supermarketization model can result in alienation (case 1, 2 and 3) or (partial) adoption (case 4 and 5) depending on context conditions. Cases 1 and 2 represent a conversion of a traditional market into a modernized alternative, and demonstrate re-routinization into a contested alternative and alienation from the modernized vegetable retail space. First, the reconstruction of the markets entailed a disruption of established practices, forcing shoppers towards the readily available

street markets. Second, when they reopened, the new markets were too different in many essential elements from the previous versions and were not able to provide a practically accessible and recognizable daily shopping option. Case 3 and 4 depict how the outcome of a similar supermarket intervention can yield contrasting outcomes, and may successfully attract daily shoppers (case 3) or may become excluding (case 4), when interventions do (not) accommodate for differences in shopper population and do (not) adapt to variations in the urban conditions. The last case (5) illustrates how formal food safety guarantees, like certification, are not enough to attract daily shoppers, when it requires a break with established practices. The cases explain how natural, policy-induced experiments do or do not fit into the daily routines of different groups of consumers. The evidence from these cases contradicts the core assumption underlying retail modernization policy, namely that consumers will modify their daily practices and opt for supermarkets as a response to food safety concerns and the growing aspiration for modern lifestyles.

4.6 Analysis: What works, for whom, and under which conditions?

Linking the intervention model to specific users and conditions enables us to discuss answers to the question why retail modernization is or is not able to reconfigure the relationship between buyers and suppliers of food in a transforming Asian city. When assessing the viability of supermarketization models based on degree of citizen consumer inclusion, the survey learned that the dominant policy model excludes a large part of Hanoi's urban population. However, exclusion is not a necessary outcome under all circumstances. The cases show interventions that vary in degree of social inclusion and reveal how the effectuation of the model is contingent on differences in shopper population and variations in the urban conditions.

When shoppers have well-established daily shopping practices, radical interventions are less likely to fit within their everyday routines. In contrast, when shoppers do not yet have well-established shopping routines and a convenient modern alternative is made available, the modern format is more likely to be adopted. By categorizing our field data and linking these to shopper lifestyles, we were able to establish the following patterns that help to explain the outcomes of the retail modernization policies to date (table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Taxonomy of patterns in supermarket adoption in the purchase of daily vegetables

For whom does it work under what conditions?	
For young urban nuclear families:	Under the conditions that the supermarket:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With both husband and wife working • Of middle and higher income classes and with higher education level • With limited practical connection with country side • Living in down-town residential apartment complexes • Aspiring modern lifestyles • For whom time is scarce • Who can afford to shop less frequent, larger volumes (in terms of budget, transport and at home storage capacity) • Who do not have a readily established practice of everyday fresh shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers a broad assortment of F&V and other fresh foods • Fosters trust through retail company reputation • Provides easy recognizable food safety guarantees on product level (labels, certificates, brands) • Is located within or very nearby mid- and upper-income class residential apartment complexes • Provides easy access • Offers an immediate alternative when previous practices are disrupted • Provides for clean and neat air conditioned premises for smartly dressed office workers
For whom does it NOT work under what conditions?	
For lower income, lower education households:	Under the condition that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving irregular income that necessitate daily food budgeting and thus daily food shopping • Being extended families in which older household members are responsible for household tasks • Having established shopping practices and vendor relations • Preferring personalized food safety assurance, preferably first hand producer/vendor information • Lacking transportation means, and storage capacity for purchasing further away larger volumes • Living nearby or have close ties with rural production areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a time lapse between enforced de- and aimed for re-routinization • The modern(ized) outlet is far from home • A nearby (street market) alternative is available • Access to the modern(ized) outlet is inconvenient in terms of stairs, closed doors, parking • That only a limited assortment of vegetables is on offer • The modern(ized) outlet is located in the vicinity of a vegetable production area • The modern(ized) outlet misses the personal touch of a friendly encounter, personalized advice and added value services

Modernized versions of traditional markets failed to recapture their old position as the dominant urban retail channel. Although newly constructed markets are air-conditioned and more hygienic, they do not provide the welcoming and convenient open structure valued and needed by a large group of daily shoppers. The disruption of long established practices drives people to establish a new habit similar to their old behavior at the next easily accessible opportunity (i.e. street markets), instead of pushing them into new routines at the modern outlets. Important lifestyle characteristics are the daily food budgeting and extended households in which older people are responsible for household tasks. On the other hand, young, nuclear urban families do eagerly adopt supermarket shopping under the right conditions. They tend to live busy lives and have to combine careers with household tasks. They have not yet established daily food purchasing routines, have an aspirational modern lifestyle and are looking for clean, safe and convenient shopping opportunities. Clearly practices are shifting, but the pace and direction might be different than aspired by policymakers.

4.7 Conclusions and discussion

4.7.1 Lessons learned

This chapter shows that in the non-western developing economy of Vietnam, and especially in the transformative context of urban Hanoi, the current retail modernization model might lead to exclusion of a large portion of the population. This may change in due time, as suggested by theories on patterns of supermarket diffusion in developing economies (Reardon et al., 2003). However, this study of vegetable shopping practices in Hanoi warns against making food safety policy strongly dependent on a single supermarket model; unintentionally it may result in some groups being deprived from access to healthy foods. Social deprivation is a phenomenon not restricted to the transformative retail context of Vietnam or SEA; it is also observed within more developed western societies as a consequence of ongoing retail concentration (Blanchard and Matthews, 2007; Guy et al., 2004; Wrigley, 2002). Furthermore, examples of lagging fresh vegetables sales in supermarkets in more developed Asian retail environments, like Hong Kong, indicate that supermarket adoption is not only driven by the provision of supermarkets, but is contingent on the choices different social groups make about where and how to shop.

In addition, in Vietnam, retailing is largely defined by public policies. Modern retail formats are predominantly state-owned, and government planning determines the siting of supermarkets.

The findings show the importance for Vietnamese policymakers to consider the risk of social deprivation and to explicitly reflect on the unanticipated consequences of the normative direction of their interventions in food provision. Official documents (laws and regulations and Hanoi development plans) give the impression that the route to modernization has not been debated much. The retail modernization strategy seems to be designed with a western landscape in mind, in which supermarket development appears as the natural direction. Retail modernization policy is portrayed rather one-dimensional and unambiguously western conflated. However, recently hands-on Vietnam policymakers have become more reflexive on their modernization strategies, which can be concluded from the delay and hesitance in approving the Hanoi trade development plan (MoIT, 2009) by the Hanoi People's Committee. When striving to improve food safety conditions of everyday fresh food retailing, policymakers cannot only rely on the western ideal of supermarket development.

The different examples of failing, emerging and incremental market transformations help to reflect and modify these policy-induced interventions to allow for a broader societal inclusion. Although ideal-type supermarket development is welcomed and perceived as relatively safe, the in-depth case studies demonstrate how and why modernized outlets are not practically embraced by all citizens under all circumstances within the transformative context of urban Hanoi. Thereby, the impact on improving food safety is also very limited. The case studies outline how authorities already show appreciative inquiry with retail modernization models, like the variations in wet market conversion as described in case 1 and 2, however without the intended impact. No one denies the problems policymakers face in striving for social betterment. On the contrary, their quest is a good reason to proactively work on more effective and inclusive policies.

4.7.2 Implications for policy

Acknowledging the complex tasks and ambitions of policymakers, we do not pretend to know the solutions, yet with this research we aim to contribute to the development of more inclusive retail modernization policies. Our study identifies two main

approaches that can make safe food policies more effective: (1) recognizing the variation in daily consumer practices in order to include more social groups, and (2) building on incremental and emerging market transformations in order to compose a flexible portfolio of intervention strategies, which does not necessarily entail a radical transformation of the retail landscape.

Concerning the first topic, this chapter indicates that reaching a more diverse population within the transformative context of a developing economy requires more flexible policies that allow for malleability in response to local conditions. Whereas policy to date appears aimed at changing consumer behavior, policymakers should rather seek to adapt modernization models to established daily practices, as it is this fit that determines the level of adoption. The research indicates that when the transformation includes too many changes in established practices at once, or does not take into account the specific lifestyle routines of consumers, the process may unintentionally result in social exclusion of some groups. In this scenario, the modernization of food retail alienates rather than attracts everyday consumers. Understanding 'real world' mechanisms of routinization as well as practical and emotional recognition, ranging from physical access and assortment to awareness and attraction, might enable policymakers to create a more varied offer in retail modernization models than the current dominant ideal-type, western-style supermarket. In striving for social betterment, we argue, policymakers could benefit from more reflexive modernization strategies (Beck, 1992).

Regarding the second issue, the research favors the development of a portfolio of flexible – locally sensitive and malleable – policies tailored to the daily lives and practices of different types of consumers. Policymakers would benefit from understanding the policy operationalization challenges under specific conditions. The analysis argues in favor of developing policies that not only focus on organizational fixes as end goals but also allow incremental adjustments to specific circumstances. More flexible policies strive to embed a mixture of public and private interventions in the local food culture of daily food budgeting, freshness focus and desired variation. They balance between abstract and personalized food safety guidance systems and vending structures. This approach accommodates amelioration in food provision not only in the longer term, but also addresses the immediate food safety problems in the everyday lives of urban populations. A potential way to design such policies could be through the generation

of inputs by the wider community, like citizen juries. Deliberately engaging citizens in public policy design could help policymakers to become more receptive to locally embedded food practices and the associated rules and routines for managing risk and uncertainties. This can make them better equipped for using public regulations and resources in developing customized solutions in addressing food safety problems.

4.7.3 Implication for further research

In this chapter, we look for a way to re-conceptualize the retail modernization intervention model, in order to make it amenable to the transformative context of Vietnam's capital Hanoi. We argue that our practice-oriented and realist approach is relevant beyond the Vietnam case. It emphasizes that one needs to start from what works in practice and to ask for whom it works. For future policy-oriented research, it would be beneficial to also study emerging retail alternatives in detail. During our research we observed a steady increase in 'safe vegetable' shops, an advancement in telephone and online 'safe vegetable' ordering services, and the spontaneous organization of 'organic' and safe produce farmers market within local communes (variation of communal street market in which organic farmer vendors get together to sell their produce). Potential examples from surrounding countries include mobile grocery stores, like the vegetable vending trucks that drive through suburban residential areas in the Philippines and Thailand, or farmer's markets on the ground floor of suburban residential apartment buildings in China. These are mostly still niche alternatives. Understanding how such bottom-up initiatives work in practice further informs the policymakers' effort to designing more socially inclusive strategies for improving food safety in retail. For Vietnam innovative variations on established retail formats and shopping routines could include the conversion of informal street markets into more organized and controlled drive-through food markets. This innovation could maintain the convenience and individual vendor structure of outdoor wet markets, while providing affordable access to a controlled offer of safe, fresh and healthy produce.

4.8 References

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'My daughter
told me to buy
the tomatoes
here as she
believes it is
more safe.
I don't know,
I used to
buy from my
market, but it is
her house and
her money now
so I do as she
asks me to.'



CHAPTER 5

SHIFTING CONFIGURATIONS OF SHOPPING PRACTICES AND FOOD SAFETY DYNAMICS IN HANOI, VIETNAM; A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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5. Shifting configurations of shopping practices and food safety dynamics in Hanoi, Vietnam; a historical analysis

5.1 Abstract

This chapter offers a historical analysis of contemporary practices of shopping for vegetables in the highly dynamic context of urban Hanoi during the period 1975 – 2014. Focusing on everyday shopping practices from a food safety perspective, we assess to what extent the policy enforced process of supermarketization proves to be an engine of change in daily vegetable purchasing while improving food safety. In depicting transitions in shopping practices, we combine a social practices approach with a historical analysis. Providing a historical analysis of a broad and complex spectrum of everyday practices of purchasing fresh vegetables, we identify the key drivers of change. We discuss different modalities of shopping and demonstrate that no single retail modernization format can be said to exist. Rather than contrasting an idealized supermarket model with the traditional modalities of food shopping, we offer a varied, more diverse set of shopping practices, which displays different strategies for coping with food safety issues. When discussed in historical perspective, food practices are shown to be highly dynamic, being constantly reinvented and reconfigured by consumers who use their established skills, routines and social networks to sometimes resist top-down enforced supermarketization while developing coping strategies, which best suit their local circumstances.

5.2 Introduction: the failed transition from market to supermarket shopping in Asia?

Public awareness of the hazards associated with the intensification of agricultural production and an on-going stream of media reports on food safety scandals related to agrochemicals on vegetables has resulted in growing levels of concern amongst Vietnamese consumers about agro-chemical contamination.¹ As a result, consumers no longer take food safety for granted and issues of risk and anxiety play a promi-

1 Attitudes towards food safety (online research across eight Asian countries: China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, India, the Philippines, Singapore, and Japan, revealed consumers in Vietnam to have the least trust in the safety of the foods they consume) Source: http://ssl.aip-global.com/EN/asia_express/archives/1344; Last accessed 20141223.

nent role in the food sector in Vietnam and Southeast Asia in general (Figuié, 2004; Kantamaturapoj et al., 2012; Mergenthaler et al., 2009; Othman, 2007; Sy et al., 2005; Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014a). The huge impact of food safety concerns on the Asian food agenda is a relatively recent phenomenon. In particular in the 21st century, fears for agro-chemical contamination of vegetables have intensified, resulting in a call for transparency and control in the context of the geographically expanding food chains of the rapidly developing and industrializing economies in Asia (Humphrey, 2007; Othman, 2007). The standard way for policy makers to confront food safety concerns in the Asian context is to resort to a strategy of retail modernization (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2015). For example present-day Vietnamese retail modernization policies aim to stimulate supermarket expansion, with the goal of realizing a tenfold increase to 1000 supermarkets in Hanoi in the period 2015 – 2025 (Viet, 2014), while reorganizing and reducing the number of traditional food markets (MoIT, 2009).

It is argued that retail companies can build trust among food consumers through the effectuation of public and private standards that can assure the quality and safety of fresh food (Fuchs et al., 2011; Reardon et al., 2005). In assuring the quality and safety of the foods they sell, supermarkets are considered to de-facto ‘manufacture’ trust (Henson and Hooker, 2001) among Asian consumers. The silent assumption behind the retail led modernization model of the food sector is that food-concerned Asian consumers as rational actors will actively cooperate with the suggested shift in the practices and places for assessing, selecting and buying food. Growing food anxieties, as Vietnamese policy makers in particular presume, will be the driving force behind the shift from market to supermarket shopping. However, the adoption and domestication of supermarkets in the daily practice of shopping for vegetables, despite being acknowledged and valued for offering better food safety, has to date remained a niche phenomenon. The traditional but contested, since considered unsafe and ‘uncivilized’, practice of wet- or fresh-market shopping remains the dominant way of purchasing fresh food (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). Thus it would seem that transitions in the food buying practices of Vietnamese consumers are not so easily established, as assumed in the dominant retail modernization framework for food safety policies.

To understand how food safety concerns are (not) taken up and confronted effectively in the context of contemporary practices of shopping for fresh food in Vietnam, one cannot ignore the recent history of the country. Vietnam made a dramatic transfor-

mation from a war torn country with a highly centralized planned economy, ranking among the worlds' most impoverished nations struggling with food scarcity, famine and a lack of financial transactions (government issued coupon system), to socialist-oriented market economic power house, with year-round food abundance and a crowded banking network, projected to be one of the fastest growing developing economies in the world by 2050 (PWC, 2015).

In this chapter we provide a historical analysis of contemporary practices of shopping for vegetables within the highly dynamic context of urban Hanoi in the period 1975 – 2014, wherein supermarket advancement is actively promulgated by official policy, where food safety concerns are paramount, and where consumers seem reluctant to switch from market shopping to supermarket shopping. Focusing on everyday shopping practices from a food safety perspective, we assess to what extent the policy enforced process of supermarketization proves to be an engine of change in daily vegetable purchasing while improving food safety. In depicting transitions in shopping practices, we combine a social practices approach with a historical analysis.

We start with an exposition of the theoretical and methodological approach, followed by historical descriptions of contemporary vegetable shopping practices and their practitioners. We conclude with a discussion on the value of historical analysis in social practices research when ruminating on modernization strategies that aim to bring about more sustainable food consumption practices for all members within a society.

5.3 Historical analysis of social practices: reconstructing food safety strategies

The supermarketization thesis (Reardon et al., 2003) presumes a more or less linear development characterized by historical demarcations of which supermarket shopping appears to be the logical outcome. Developing economies are assumed to make the transition towards modern civil societies, resulting in western-style consumerism and global homogenization in consumption (Stearns, 2001). The advancement of global retail is indeed an undeniable trend. This does however not automatically imply convergence in consumption patterns or the global superseding the local in all respects. Instead, the local and the global are being intertwined in new, complex ways,

as can be nicely illustrated with many case studies from the food sector: increasing levels of time-space distancing² in both food production and consumption go hand in hand with a re-invention and celebration of local practices of consumption and production (Beckie et al., 2012; Kortright and Wakefield, 2011; Taylor and Lovell, 2014; Specht et al., 2014).

Everyday practices of shopping for food are a case in point, since they appear to become of more global scope and more diversified at the very same time. Both across and within western (OECD) countries, more variation in consumption cultures can be observed (Trentmann, 2004), exemplified in the food sector by localized Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in particular (Goodman et al., 2011). Also consumption cultures in non-OECD countries appear to develop in ways that make them crucially different from their western counterparts in some circumscribed respects (Goldman et al., 2002; Humphrey, 2007; Maruyama and Trung, 2007). Diversity in food shopping practices indicates that the linear development predicted by supermarketization models has not (yet) materialized. The models fall short in analytical precision, also when dealing with food risks and anxieties. To account for these shortcomings, some authors suggest the use of the inherently dynamic concept of resilience – comprising persistence, adaptation and transformation (Keck and Sakdapolrak, 2013) – when trying to understand local cultures in food consumption. They challenge the assumption that globalization inevitably leads to homogenizing local food cultures (Jackson, 2004) while acknowledging the fact that consumers develop contextually and historically grounded behavioral practices also when trying to mitigate food-risks and when coping with threats (Lorenz, 2010). In performing ‘locally established’ shopping practices and their built-in mechanisms for confronting food risks, consumers at first sight seem to just reproduce traditional, conservative practices (Heiskanen et al., 2007). In this chapter, we aim to take a closer look at transitions in local food consumption practices as they happen over time. We try to unravel the complex, evolving relationships between the local and the global as they can be read from the ways in which Vietnamese consumers deal with food-safety risks when shopping for fresh food. Our overall approach is to analyze contemporary shopping practices against the

2 The concept of time-space distancing is used by the sociologist Anthony Giddens in particular to grasp the essence of the globalization process since the 1990s. The concept refers to the process of practices being lifted out their local contexts (disembedding) in order to become re-embedded in contexts of much wider scope in time and space.

background of historical changes that have occurred in the food sector in Vietnam.

We use practice theory (Hinrichs, 2014; Schatzki et al., 2001; Shove, 2010; Spaargaren et al., 2012; Warde, 2005) since we argue that the way in which people deal with modern food safety insecurities cannot be addressed in isolation of the social context. Everyday activities, like shopping for vegetables in supermarkets, require examination as an integral part of daily life (Harvey et al., 2001). Neither presuming the primacy of institutional structures, nor the primacy of individual action, practice theory acknowledges the role of reutilization, while emphasizing the wider contextual embedding of daily practices. Where rational choice theories emphasize the cognitive and conscious decision making on (the reduction of) anxieties and the ways in which they co-shape supermarket adoption within the daily practice of buying vegetables, our focus is on the practical ways in which taken for granted food safety strategies are being constantly reproduced in everyday routines of shopping for vegetables. It is via routinized and taken for granted practices that Vietnamese consumers confront contemporary food safety scares in Vietnam (Giddens, 1984; Jackson et al., 2013).

We use a historical perspective because contemporary practices of shopping for vegetables and dealing with modern food safety insecurities cannot be addressed in isolation of the historical path of development of these practices (Warde, 2003). Historical analysis is conventionally used in social research as an introductory background setting for a contemporary study. In this chapter we use historical data to trace back the roots of contemporary practices. In this respect this study fits within the wider tradition of historically grounded research in sociology (Gorski, 2013), in which history does not serve the sole purpose of providing a temporal-spatial background, but instead is merged with the analyses of social practices, more specifically the dynamic of change in practices (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2014). In doing so, historical analysis becomes a method in its own right, without which present-day practices cannot be properly understood.

In the light of supermarketization's efficacy in mitigating food safety insecurities the practice-historical perspective is particularly relevant for a commodity like fresh vegetables. First, vegetables are important in the daily diet and the per capita consumption of 290 gr/day in Hanoi is amongst the highest in the world (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). Second, fresh vegetables are a fundamentally different category than

processed foods. Supermarket development is driven by its penetration in processed foods and non-foods in particular. Most of these products are in the category of new consumption goods (Nielsen, 2014) since they have become more abundantly available in Vietnam only in recent times. By contrast, fresh vegetables can be considered an all-time daily necessity, which historically is offered primarily outside the supermarket context. In this chapter we explore how and why the contemporary social practices of purchasing everyday fresh vegetables have emerged and evolved during the past forty years in northern Vietnam as well as how this can be shown to relate to the historical dynamics of economic and socio-political changes along the following research questions:

- What practices of purchasing/appropriating fresh vegetables do exist in contemporary Vietnam?
 - » For these practices, how do they relate to food safety concerns and dynamics?
- How did this set of contemporary vegetable shopping practices emerge and develop over time?
 - » What has been the relative importance or share of individual practices in the overall range of shopping practices?
 - » What factors are important for explaining the trends, e.g. the composition and dynamics of change in the overall set of shopping practices?
- What lessons can be learned from historically informed social practice research in assessing the present and future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies which imply the de- and re-reutilization of well-established contemporary practices of shopping for fresh food.

5.4 The use of a Mixed Method approach

Obtaining an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the set of contemporary practices of acquiring daily vegetables and their origin and development in the historical context of Vietnam requires a multi-dimensional approach (Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Nicolini, 2012). In the present research we use a mixed method approach, combining qualitative ethnography, quantitative survey and desk research to generate both contemporary and historical data. Our data collection and analysis along the above

research questions focuses on urban Hanoi (geographical coverage since the expansion of its administrative boundaries in 2008) over the period 1975 – 2015, 40 years since reunification.

The characterization of contemporary vegetable purchasing practices has been our starting point. We first identified and described the contemporary practices that were made the subject of our historical analysis. We used a combination of observational research of vegetable shopping and home growing practices across all urban districts of Hanoi during the period 2007 – 2014, in conjunction with monitoring market, supermarket and safe vegetable outlet development during the period 2007 – 2014. This included a street-by-street census count and 183 structured vegetable retail sites records in 2012. In addition, we carried out online social media research on urban gardening and safe-vegetable shopping. By following this strategy, we were able to situate the social practice of supermarket shopping within the broader context of a range of historically existing vegetable shopping practices and their associated food safety dynamics. For a deeper understanding of the relationship between food safety concerns and food appropriation practices we conducted in-store vegetable shopper intercept interviews (N=50) and in-depth household interviews (N=11, 2012 – 2013). We complimented our qualitative research with two face-to-face shopper surveys; one in 2009 across seven food retail sites in four urban districts (N=200) and one shopper survey across 45 food retail sites in all urban districts (N=1404), covering four wet markets (fresh food markets commonly found in Asian countries, in which wet refers to the wet-floors due to the abundant use of water), 14 supermarkets, 17 convenience stores and ten safe vegetable shops. In both surveys shoppers were randomly selected at the various retail sites. Only respondents who stated to be the primary person responsible for vegetable shopping within their household were included and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS Statistics 20. All interviewers engaged in this research were trained professionals. All interview guides and questionnaires were developed in English, translated into Vietnamese, crosschecked on meaning with professionals, and tested in the field before being implemented.

We then elaborated the historical analysis of the whole set of food shopping practices. In answering the research question on 'how' contemporary practices emerged and evolved the way they did, we first investigated the span of societal evolution over the period 1975 – 2015, making use of household interviews, combined with running

records (Vietnamese government statistics), archival data (translated versions of five year plans, decrees, laws and newspapers) and secondary sources (academic literature on urbanization, kinship and family structures, local governance, and political and economic development; non-academic literature on the banking sector, supermarket development, food consumption, and kitchen appliances penetration). Utilizing social historiography with a focus on food provision and consumption, we mapped the development of the food shopping practices over time. Then, by ‘zooming in’ on the particular practices (Nicolini, 2012) we were able to disclose the key elements or components that could be shown to be a prerequisite for their emergence and existence.

Lastly, we discuss how historical developments in Vietnam in that particular period impacted the ways in which food-shopping practices were performed (Shove et al., 2012). Utilizing what has been referred to as an interpretative historical approach, investigating why things are happening in a particular society, allowing communication with the cultural background of a society and an understanding of why things operate (Sack, 1984), we examined more in-depth the forms of agency and the material-functional and socio-cultural mechanisms (Crivits and Paredis, 2013) at work within the distinguished practice over this period of time. We explored the changing relationships between the systems of food provision in urban Hanoi and the citizen-consumers being enrolled into these systems via their routinized, taken for granted, daily practices of shopping for fresh vegetables. By deploying this method of ‘zooming out’ and discussing the ways in which specific social practices were embedded in the broader set of food shopping practices as developing over time, we were able to assess the present and future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies which imply the de- and re-reutilization of well-established contemporary practices of shopping for fresh food.

5.5 Contemporary vegetable ‘purchasing’ practices and food safety dynamics

In mitigating food safety insecurities, Hanoi consumers, who are confronted with globalizing food provision dynamics that entail the ‘uncoupling’ of food production and consumption (Oosterveer, 2005), appear to draw from a broad portfolio of food appropriation/shopping practices. Based on our fieldwork we were able to identify

six prevalent practices in which variations of more local 'space of place' bound direct personalized trust mechanisms coincide with variations of more 'space of flows' (Castells, 1996) shaped indirect abstract food safety dynamics. Although more abstract guidance systems like labeling, branding and certification are increasingly entering the playing field, our study shows how personal 'make believe' trust seems to prevail above officially sanctioned food safety certification in the context of local and global food safety dynamics. On the next page we present a brief description of each practice (overview in table 5.1).

Self-provisioning. This is the practice of growing one's own produce and includes the use of small areas, vacant lots, gardens, balconies, rooftops, parks and side roads to plant vegetables for self-consumption and neighborhood bartering. Self-provisioning is motivated by the need to re-establishing a direct link with production in terms of food safety. Although the consumers are not professional farmers and production regularly occurs in unfavorable environmental conditions in terms of soil and water quality, having the cultivation under their own control is the trust mechanism.

Kinship shopping. This is the practice of obtaining vegetables from relatives living in the rural hometown. This practice is motivated by concerns about the safety of the vegetable provision in the city. In the practice of kinship shopping the control on food safety builds upon the naturalness with which family members are trusted in their good intentions ('they care for me') and the conviction that people in the countryside know how to produce safe vegetables. Disregarding their own limitations in production knowledge, arguments like 'I know the people and I see how they grow' provide questionable food safety verification.

Farmer shopping. This is the practice of buying from the grower. The reconnection with farmers is sought as alternative for anonymous food shopping. The informal food safety sanctioning is based on the trust mechanism 'locally produced', therein referring to rural areas close to Hanoi. In this the shoppers trust farmer vendors in their cultivation methods, while having neither actually visited the production site nor knowing how the vegetables were produced and handled from harvest to moment of sales. The affirmation 'local farmer produce' is the food safety qualifier, but actually it is based on blind trust.

Table 5.1 Overview of contemporary vegetable purchasing practices in relation to food safety

	Types of vegetable 'purchasing' practices	Food safety dynamics	Food safety guarantee
1.	Self provisioning	Trust in oneself only	Own control
2.	Kinship 'shopping'	Trust on kinship level	Own observation and kinship confirmation
3.	Farmer shopping	Trust on local farmer level	Local farmer affirmation
4.	Market shopping	Trust at vendor level	Vendor advice
5.	Safe vegetable outlet shopping	Trust at shop level	Shop dedication and food safety certification
6.	Supermarket shopping	Trust at shop and product level	Company reputation and food safety certification

Trust mechanism	Quotes
Growing is knowing	<i>I can only know for sure when I grow it myself. I produced it myself, so I know what I did, so I am sure it is safe.</i>
In our neighbourhood we care for each other My family cares for me	<i>It is grown by my family/neighbours, so I know it is safe. We exchange the vegetables between our families so we can ensure diversity. Every weekend my mum provides me with plenty fruits and vegetables from our own garden. She is concerned the produce in the city is not safe.</i>
From here means not from China or from other far away and unknown anonymous areas	<i>I know this area so I trust it is safe. Of course I don't know how they plant and take care of the vegetables, but I trust that the farmers in this area are careful.</i>
Past experience in purchasing from regular vendor Friendship relation with vendor	<i>I have no choice but to trust the vendor that it is safe and so far I didn't have any problems, so I think I can trust my vendor. I always follow the advice of my regular vendor. She tells me what I should buy. Of course I trust her, she is my friend, I know her already for many years.</i>
Shop specialization in selling safe vegetables; sometimes also providing packed, labelled/branded produce	<i>Here they only sell safe vegetables. Of course I can't be sure whether they are truly safe, but at least they will be better than general vegetables.</i>
Abstract guidance systems like (store/product) branding and labelling	<i>I think such a reputable company will take care the produce is safe. I like to shop here since it is easy to recognize the safe vegetables with packaging and certification.</i>

Source: Authors' fieldwork observations; shopper survey and (intercept) interviews.

Market shopping. This is the practice of daily purchasing fresh produce at formal wet markets or more informal street markets (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). The manner in which control is organized importantly builds on the social culture of Vietnam, illustrated by a Confucian³ saying: 'It is more shameful to distrust our friends than to be deceived by them.' Personal (long-term) relations with market vendors provide 'make believe' food safety guarantees.

Safe vegetable outlet shopping. This is the practice of purchasing vegetables at dedicated vegetable outlets explicitly claiming to sell 'safe' vegetables, either designated stalls at markets, greengrocers or online ordering services. The common characteristic is the explicit food safety claim at outlet level, trusting that the explicit communicated dedication to food safety is at least ensuring the vegetables to be 'more safe' or 'less risky' than when purchased at other outlets.

Supermarket shopping. This is the practice of shopping in a clean and neat indoor air-conditioned environment and purchasing larger quantities of both fresh and processed foods, to be stored at home for days to come. Food safety is 'guaranteed' through 'company reputation' in combination with explicit food safety assurance through certification, labels and brands at product level. Although consumers do not fully trust the safety of vegetables offered in supermarkets, they regard supermarkets relatively safe compared to other channels. Consumers expect control on food safety to be more stringent than in other channels, in particular when it involves renowned international retail chains. The reasoning is, that supermarkets would not jeopardize their reputation and thus ensure the vegetables sold are safe for consumption.

5.6 Historical analysis on six situated practices and food safety dynamics

Our second research question regards the historical analysis on how these contemporary vegetable shopping practices emerged and developed over time. Over the past 40 years Vietnam transformed from a highly centralized, predominantly agricultural plan economy into a socialist oriented industry and services driven market economy.

3 Confucius (born around 551 B.C.) was a Chinese thinker and philosopher. As a set of social norms, Confucianism not only substitutes for the law in many aspects of life, but also contributes heavily to the conception of the law in Vietnam. (Pham 2005).

Initially, since the reunification of the country in 1975, Vietnam struggled with food shortage as a result of drastic agricultural collectivization policies. With the introduction of the Doi Moi, reconstruction of the agricultural based economy in 1986, the country carefully opened up to the global market, which culminated in entry into WTO in 2006 and the consecutive opening up of the country for fully foreign-owned retail chains in 2009. This transformation is laid out in table 5.2 along three major periods based on historical data relating to macro-economic developments with a focus on food provision and consumption.

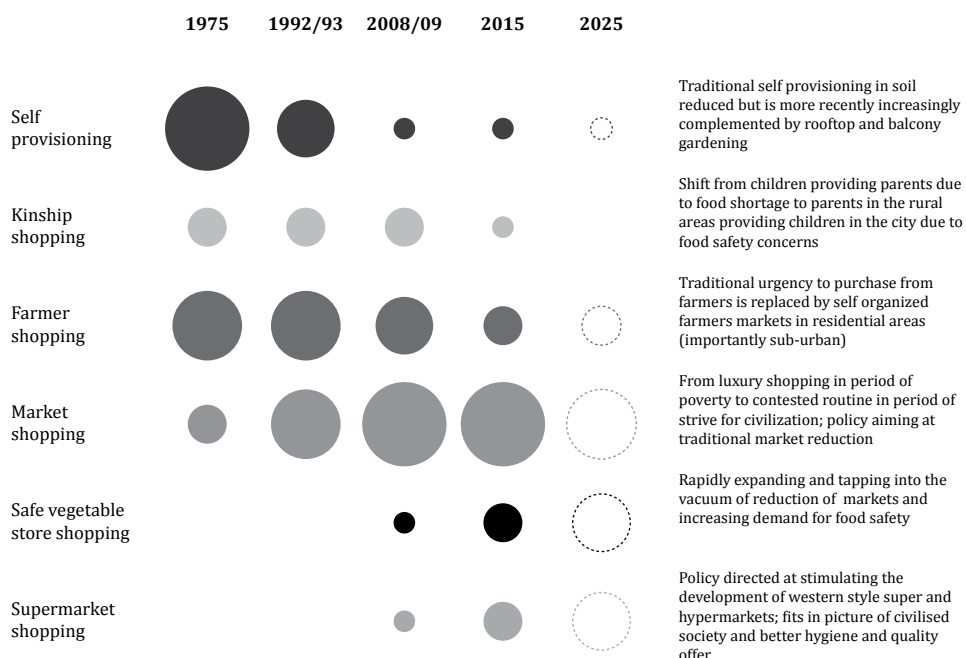
Table 5.2 Overview of reunification era subdivided in three periods

Period I 1975-1992 – From ‘food, food, food!’ to ‘Rice feeds the country!’		
STRUGGLE		
Poverty and shortage / Strive for survival		
1975-1985	1986-1988	1989-1992
Reunification and collectivization	Renovation (Doi Moi)	De-collectivization
Food shortage	Famine	Food exportation
Period II 1993-2008 – Golden age of market economy in Vietnam		
GROWTH		
Quantity orientation / Strive for economic prosperity		
1993-2000	2001-2008	
Internationalization and land law 1995 Vietnam joins ASEAN	Industrialization; 2001 abolishment fertilizer import quota 2007 Entrance WTO	
Diet diversification	Food commoditization	
Period III 2009-2015 – Towards new horizons of civilization		
GLOBALIZATION		
Quality orientation / Strive for modern civil society		
2009-2015		
Global integration; 2009 Middle income country 2009 Fully foreign ownership 2015 AEC free-trade pact expected		
Food globalization and diet westernization		

Sources: Brabant, 1990; Pingali and Xuan, 1992; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Hirschman and Vu, 1996; Knodel et al., 1998; Bich, 1999; Hop et al., 2003; Akram-Lodhi, 2001; Sepehri and Akram-Lodhi, 2002; Figue, 2004; Thang and Popkin, 2004; Tuan, 2006; Kirk and Tuan, 2009; Hoi et al., 2009; Labbé, 2014.

Tracing back the contemporary practices along these three main periods, it became clear that several practices, though with shifting relative importance, were sustained over time, whereas other practices appear to be more recent phenomena (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Practices and their development over time (illustrative indication of coexisting practices)

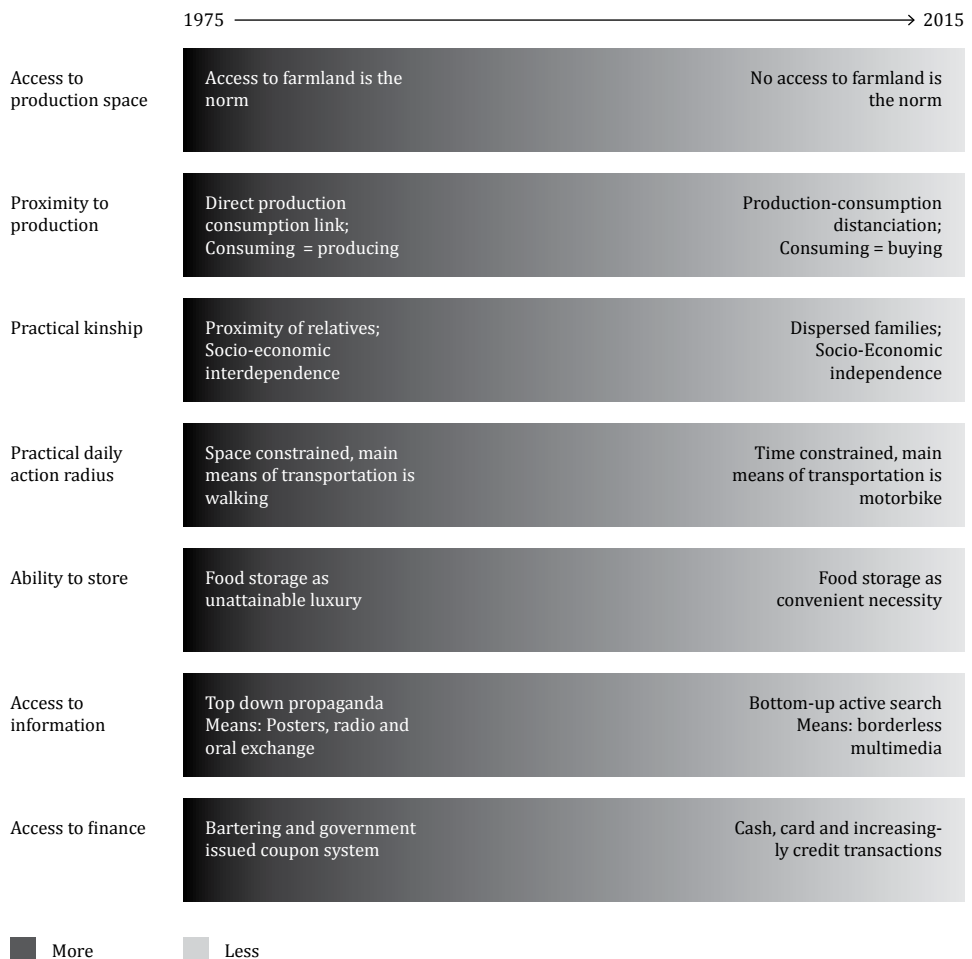


Sources: This graphic impression is based on author's fieldwork (retail development monitoring, recollection interviews and shopper surveys) combined with running records and archival data on markets and population, and secondary literature, incl.: Akram-Lodhi 2001; Bich, 1999; Brabant 1990; Fanchette 2014; Figue 2004; Fforde and De Vylder 1996; Hirschman and Vu, 1996; Kirk and Tuan 2009; Suu, 2009. The circle size is illustrative for the importance of a practice within a given period; 2025 is an illustrative impression of the authors' expectations on future development based on public and private retail policy ambitions and projections on supermarket expansion, and secondary literature on home growing. The figure is crosschecked with Vietnamese agri-food consultants.

Below we provide detailed temporal and spatial descriptions of the development of each practice. These descriptions portray how modernization and globalization developments allow both 'traditional' practices to be reinvented as well as new practices to take shape. The trends in the overall set of practices include the following

shifts: social relations moved from face to face contacts to online communities, from purchasing fresh everyday to weekly in stock, and the valuation of food shopping from looked down upon household chore to an aspiring lifestyle practice to be enjoyed. These trends are explained by how seven key components of the practices evolved over time, presented in figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Shifts over time in some fundamental elements of everyday vegetable shopping practices*



* Based on author's fieldwork (recollection interviews) combined with archival data and secondary source: (Bich, 1999; Hirschman and Vu, 1996; Knodel et al., 1998; Akram-Lodhi, 2001; Schwenkel and Leshkovich, 2012).

5.6.1 Self-provisioning

Over the past 40 years the practice of self provisioning underwent a profound change in meaning and configuration: from dominant subsistence practice as a main occupation to an alternative niche practice performed in leisure time. In particular since the turn of the century with an upswing around 2005 (when the scraping of fertilizer import quota's in 2001 resulted in multiple food safety scandals (Hoi et al., 2009) the motive changed from escaping hunger to protection against food safety threats.

An important element in self-provisioning is access to production space. Until the late 1990s Vietnam was predominantly an agricultural subsistence economy (Fforde and Vyllder, 1996; Akram-Lodhi, 2001):

"We had to grow everything ourselves, we had no money and could only sell the bit we didn't eat, but often we even didn't have rice to eat." (Interview woman late 30s, 2013)

Farming drastically decreased with the industrial development and accompanying urbanization process of consecutive expansion and infill processes (Hai and Yamaguchi, 2007; Labbé, 2014) currently resulting in the exponential development of high-rise buildings (both business and condominiums). Where modernization developments are driving the population out of farming and into other occupations (industry and services) urban 'farming' is recently re-invented as a leisure activity. Two distinct sub-practices were identified, characterized as public and private space gardening.

Public space gardening. Public Space gardening appears to have evolved from the period of food scarcity in which self-provisioning was the norm. Most practitioners are elderly people who were farmers before. Concern for food safety related to their grandchildren and needing 'something to do' motivates their return to farming activities. Increasing affluence allows them to enjoy their retirement. Deprived from farmland due to urbanization, while having sufficient time for vegetable cultivation, they accommodate themselves in parks, empty plots or on the side of the road. Cultivation remains simple and without advanced technology or inputs. Regarding food safety 'under own control' is considered a food safety guarantee rather than caring for proper agricultural conditions of professional farming. Below we provide two illustrative examples of the practice of public space gardening, as was widely observed throughout the city.

Interview with an elderly couple sitting in the street next to a self-installed water tap in front of their vegetable garden on the side of a main inner city dyke road:

"This used to be a village. We were no farmers, but most neighbors were. Now we are retired and although we never worried about food safety we started to do so since we have grandchildren and we heard more and more about it on the news. So we now grow most of the vegetables ourselves. We also produce our own seeds. We enjoy it. It gives us something to do, which is good for the kids. We can sit and relax here and watch the plants. Look we even made a tap to easily water the plants... Almost all people here grow their own vegetables, we exchange seeds and some people used to be farmers so they provide some advice when you need it. ... Of course we can't eat everyday the same, so we exchange our vegetables here. Only when we can't grow ourselves or can't exchange with others we buy at the market here down this street." When asking about food safety at the market: "We only have to do that a few times a week, so we don't worry too much about the safety at the market." When asking about food safety in their own cultivation (in the soil of a busy dyke road, next to garbage and an iron painting workshops): "Oh it is safe, we wash our vegetables carefully. The only problem we have is the policy, sometimes they become suddenly stricter and destroy our gardens, but now it has been quiet for a while. I know it is officially not allowed, but if we have no garden we have little choice."

Figure 5.3 Growing vegetables in side of a dyke road; elderly couple sitting out in the street next too a self-installed water tap



Public space garden



Couple watching their garden while sitting next too their newly installed water tap to easily water the plants

Source: fieldwork author.

Interview with a young woman, who grows vegetables in foam boxes along a public road. The woman was intercepted when she was carrying the foam boxes away from the road:

“The police do not allow public space gardening, but I have no space at home and with the food safety issues today we have to do something. I have small children (pointing to a toddler on a tricycle). ... We bring the boxes in now, as we have to leave, I don’t want the police to come and destroy our plants. Last month they destroyed the whole garden of our neighbor (pointing towards a small area (public space) a few houses down the road.)... We get the soil from a special provider. It is clean soil as they have a special place near the red river (can’t specify the source further)... The seeds we get from neighbors and friends and some we grow ourselves and sometimes we buy them. We don’t care much about the yield. We just plant and see what works. ... Sometimes, I take care of the plants as I have my shop here, but when I’m busy my father takes care of them. However, he is old and I don’t want him to carry the boxes, so I do that together with my mum when I go away for longer periods of time.”

Figure 5.4 Growing vegetables in foam boxes along the road; interview conducted when people were carrying their boxes from the street down the stairs to their house



People caught carrying boxes with vegetables away from the main road to their house



Stalling some boxes at the shop and some down the stairs to the house behind the shop

Source: fieldwork author.

The practice of public space gardening is rooted in past occupations and strong social cohesion based on interdependence at a local level. Within the local community, people depend on each other for vegetable versatility in diet, the exchange of inputs (seeds and soil) and the sharing of practical knowledge. The practice exhibits similarities with other forms of public space appropriation, like growing ornamentals to beautify the neighborhood and accommodating public space for mobile street side terraces. Public policy does not allow for these practices and is actively suppressing them, but despite regular police raids that demolish and confiscate private fittings within public space, the practices appear resistant to formal policy. This type of ‘civil disobedience’ is particularly observed among a group of older practitioners. For this group the use of public space was a means for survival during periods of famine and food shortage and for whom the more articulated boundaries between public and private space resulting from recent urbanization do not yet constitute a practical limitation. The group of main practitioners, mostly 50yrs+, is aging and their practices are expected to erode over time.

Private space gardening. Farming is also being reinvented by younger urbanites in communal gardens, rooftops and balconies. Personal food safety urgency is the main motivator of this increasingly performed and more recent practice – most information acquired during this research on rooftop and balcony gardening doesn’t date back before 2005. Online home-growing forum research revealed that people are worried

for their families, especially for young children; the most commonly mentioned concern is agro-chemical abuse. They don't fully trust the government food safety control system. Most practitioners have no background in farming and actively seek to improve their knowledge on vegetable production. Critically reflecting on their cultivation practices and striving for precise understanding, they are preoccupied with the influence of inputs on yields and nutrition and show interest in more advanced technologies. Besides growing vegetables for reasons of food safety, practitioners of rooftop and balcony gardening appear to enjoy the gardening. They explicitly prioritize time, spend money and apply more advanced cultivation techniques.

The practice is importantly enabled through the knowledge exchange on social media platforms and the availability of input and cultivation materials required by professional companies that advertise within the social media platforms delivering both hardware and information on cultivation.

"I am very interested in growing my own vegetables. I spend a lot of time online." Referring to an online platform: "I love this group. We exchange information as friends. Through this group I learned about hydroponic cultivation."

(Interview with male rooftop gardener, late 20s)

The urban re-invention of farming is development at grassroots, not supported by the authorities, which on the contrary try to halt the illegal appropriation of public space. Within the practice of self provisioning a shift is visible from more space of place bound time-passing gardening based on historically obtained skills and competences to more technologically advanced private space gardening facilitated by online community exchanges for which people prioritize scarce leisure time. For the near future, self-provisioning is expected to remain a niche practice, though it shows no signs of disappearing. Since 2014 ingredients for home growing (coco peat, potting soil and seeds) are being sold in supermarkets, which suggests a commercial acknowledgement of this trend.

5.6.2 Kinship shopping

Vietnam is by tradition a familial society in which kinship relationships are favored for social and economic action. Over the past 40 years the practice of kinship shopping has made a 180 degree turn in meaning and configuration: from a dominant

everyday necessity of children supporting parents in times of poverty and hunger (Knodel et al., 1998), to a niche phenomenon of parents in rural areas providing children in the city, motivated by concerns about food safety.

An important element in kinship shopping is proximity of kin. In the past most children lived with, if not then at least in close proximity to, parents (Hirschman and Vu, 1996). Poverty and food shortage necessitated extended practical kinship relations at village level. This changed in the 1990s especially around the turn of the century, when industrialization and economic prosperity started to result in rapid rural to urban migration, causing geographic familial dispersion (Jayakody and Vu, 2009). Nowadays the practice mainly involves families that have moved beyond the subsistence level. Children living in Hanoi, having the means to travel to their hometown regularly in combination with access to storage facilities (for students this is often a shared fridge), are receiving vegetables from parents in the countryside that have a profound distrust of vegetables offered in an urban context:

"I told my mum that the vegetables I buy come from our hometown, but she is still concerned and told me you can never know, so I should rather take them from my hometown every weekend." (Interview women mid 20s, 2011)

Meantime, children are all too happy to receive vegetables from their parents, they are not that worried about food safety themselves and are less prepared to spend on food than on lifestyle articles. While playing with a new model smart-phone in her hands:

"My mum always gives me plenty of fruits and vegetables. She is so scared about food safety and tells me I should be careful with what I buy. My mum says that you can never know, and that it is best to take it directly from my hometown. Who am I to object? I don't have to worry and I don't have to spend that often."
(Interview woman early 20s, 2012)

Besides students, a small part of the Hanoi urban population that since the second half of the 1990s increasingly migrated from the rural provinces to the city, regularly acquires foods from relatives or acquaintances in their hometowns. Some go as far as ordering vegetables and other foods by telephone or email to get them delivered once every two to three weeks. Larger volumes are ordered at once and in some cases

additional orders are placed for family and friends in Hanoi to reduce transportation fees. This practice is motivated by safety concerns about vegetables offered in the city:

"I know it is safe because my family grows the vegetables."

(Interview woman mid 30s, 2013)

The element of fresh everyday, which is deeply rooted in consumption culture in Vietnam, is in this practice less important than food safety. However, with progressing distanciation between family members both geographically, economically and mentally, kinship shopping is expected to disappear in its more traditional configuration, though being replaced by other alternative vegetable shopping practices like the below described online farmer shopping.

5.6.3 Farmer shopping

Farmer shopping has long been the norm in Hanoi. However since roughly the turn of the century, farmers have been pushed out of the city by land appropriation for urban development (Suu, 2009). In the context of food safety scares and anonymization of urban vegetable provisioning, shopping directly from farmers has shifted from being a standard to an alternative niche practice. Recently a trend is observed in online farmer shopping without direct personal contact. In this the practice of farmer shopping conflates with the practice of 'safe vegetable outlet' shopping, described below.

Where agriculture is looked down upon with occupations outside agriculture more aspired – *"My parents don't want me to work on agriculture, but would rather see me take on a job in telecommunications."* (Young graduate, 23 yrs.) – local farmers are increasingly cherished in the light of agro-chemical food safety scares. In reconnecting with farmers, as an alternative source to anonymous food shopping, different sub-practices are observed with a division between suburban and inner city farmer shopping.

Suburban. In 2008 Hanoi expanded its administrative boundaries. In the rural—urban transition zones dispossession of land for urban construction deprived large groups in the suburban area from growing vegetables, driving them to buy from 'neighboring' peri-urban farmers.

"In the past we didn't have to worry as I could grow myself or buy directly from the farmers in my village. Now I don't know where the produce is coming from. If I can, I buy from local farmer vendors who grew the produce themselves. They know what they did and when they tell me it is safe I do believe them. Their fields are close to my hometown. I know how they grow." Referring to the peri-urban area within Hanoi's administrative boundaries. (Interview women mid 40s, 2013)

This practice is remnant of past socio-cultural structures and appears a temporary by-product of urbanization unlikely to be sustained in the long term given the on-going urbanization and agricultural industrialization process.

Inner city. The infill of land within the urban boundaries of Hanoi especially increased after the turn of the century (Hai and Yamaguchi, 2007; Fanchette, 2014), making urbanites dependent on third party supply systems of questionable food safety: *"I don't know where the produce at the market comes from. I hear so many scary stories about produce from China."* Especially since 2007 a trend is observed in a return to buying from farmers. With the purpose to reduce food safety risks at grassroots farmers' markets are organized. Farmers' markets are however not an everyday-for-everyone solution. The increasing distancing between urban Hanoi and the surrounding production area physically impedes farmers to sell their produce in the city. However, in seeking protection from food safety risks a trend is observed in which consumers order fresh foods from the countryside online. Less frequent shopping (ordering often for at least a week ahead) requires proper storage in fridges and freezers.

"I order my vegetables from organic farmers. Although I can't always choose what I like and the assortment is quite limited, I am happy that I don't have to worry about whether it is safe or not." (Interview women early 30s, 2012)

"I have to order larger quantities at once. I can't eat fresh everyday. I store vegetables in the fridge and eat the most perishable items first. I am ok with this as at least I know it is safe." (Interview women mid 30s, 2013)

Buying from farmers has spurred new developments in which people who initially started to buy produce from farmers online for private use only become online farmer produce 're-sellers' in which they offer the produce as 'safe, green and clean from the

local countryside'. This practice conflates with the below described practice of 'safe vegetable outlet purchasing'. Internet access, ability to store and increasing affluence are the drivers of the reinvention of buying from farmers, closing the rural-urban distancing gap online.

5.6.4 Market shopping

Market shopping is estimated to account for more than 90 percent of total vegetable sales (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). Over the past 40 years market shopping has evolved from luxury – *'I don't have money, thus I can't buy'* – to shopping as necessity – *'I don't produce, so I have to buy'*. Although this practice only started to dominate vegetable provisioning in the last decade of the 20th century, with poverty and food shortage hampering economic money transactions the decade before, this practice is considered a typical traditional practice.

Small markets born in 'illegality' during the collectivization period, gained legality in the 1980s when these markets were officially put under local management at the so called ward level (Koh, 2006). But it was not until the period of de-collectivization (1990s) when farmers were officially stimulated to expand production through marketable surplus (Kirk and Tuan, 2009), that markets became the dominant commercial centers. In escaping from hunger the markets in effect 'saved' the country from starvation. However, more recently, food safety scandals and the ambition to transform Hanoi in a more civilized metropolis instigated policies that aim to reduce market retailing (MoIT, 2009). Reverting to past self-organization, both vendors and consumers re-accommodate themselves in informal street markets (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). Local residents who, importantly rely on these markets in their daily food provision, accommodate the street market vending by assisting vendors in hiding their products during unexpected police raids (see figure 5.5). This similar type of 'civil disobedience' as in public space gardening, seems rooted in the past structures of social cohesion and mutual interdependence at local community level, especially in elderly and childcare with the extension of formal safety-nets (health, child and elderly care) still largely insufficient (Masina, 2010).

Figure 5.5 Street market



Vending in the street



Quickly hiding products for the police at local residents' premises



Source: fieldwork author.

Markets face challenges in meeting the safety and hygiene requirements of modern times, but markets are not static and robust in self-accommodation at the grass-roots level. It is at markets that not only daily foods are purchased, but also where people meet and greet and facilitate with each other in daily life. It is essentially within this meaning beyond economic transactions of goods and money, that markets are a unique retailing concept that can't be simply replaced by other formats.

5.6.5 Safe vegetable outlet shopping

The fairly new practice of safe vegetable outlet shopping is still a niche, but of growing importance, in which fresh everyday has become subordinate to food safety. The first dedicated safe vegetable outlets in Hanoi emerged in the beginning of the 21st century as designated stalls selling safe vegetables within formal markets. However, over the past five years their presence is declining. Consumers shopping at markets mostly establish trust at vendor level and less so at shop/stall level:

"I just stick to the normal vendors. At that stall (pointing to a dedicated safe vegetable stall at the market) they sell quite a lot of different products. Maybe they complement with vegetables from the wholesale market? You never know. At least my vendor tells me her produce is safe as well." (Intercept interview woman mid 40s at market, 2009)

Further, cross channel price data collection revealed that safe vegetables are on average between ten and thirty percent more expensive than the conventional offer and selling within wet markets allows for direct price comparisons. This is important

for over 40 percent of the consumers in Hanoi living on income levels that constrain them to daily food budgeting (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2015).

More recent is the development of designated safe vegetable greengrocers outside the market premises; a phenomenon rapidly increasing across all urban districts of the city. These are small sized shops with clear external billboards signaling the offer of certified safe (rau an toàn), clean (rau sạch) or organic (rau hữu cơ) vegetables.⁴ Our survey revealed that most shoppers at these outlets live in the surrounding area and that the practice of shopping at these outlets is driven by a younger generation:

“My daughter told me to buy the tomatoes here as she believes it is more safe. I don’t know, I used to buy from my market, but it is her house and her money now so I do as she asks me to.” (Intercept interview women early 50 in safe vegetable shop, 2012)

Most recent is the development of privately branded greengrocers combining ‘bricks-and-mortar’ with online sales. Pre-packed and privately branded products are offered across channels, not only in own branded stores, but also in generic convenience stores and supermarkets. In particular the advance in online ordering indicates a remarkable shift from tangible food quality checks to trusting abstract quality guarantees without having the actual produce in sight.

Though, shifting from personal vendor relations to more abstract branding, labeling and certifying guidance systems, we observed that safe vegetable shops appeal to similar trust mechanisms as observed at markets: *“people I know are honest with me.”* A good example is the greengrocer ‘Uncle Tom’ (Bac Tom) that in an abstract way makes a more personalized appeal:

“Who has read the novel ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ will memorize the character Uncle Tom, the most loyal and honest butler of the landlord. The name of our store originates from this character. People working with Uncle Tom, from production to sales staff are always

4 The claim of safe vegetables (rau an toàn) indicates that the vegetables are certified by the Vietnam authorities; attesting that the vegetables have been produced in accordance with the national regulations on safe vegetable production (MARD, 2007). Vietnam has a national basic standard for organic products in Vietnam (since 2006) but no specific regulations or policies for developing the sector and certifying production.

honest in telling the real origin of products, wherever they come from.”
(Quoted from www.bactom.com)

The prerequisite of the development for this practice is the understanding of food safety certification and knowledge on where to purchase safe vegetables. This information is increasingly obtained online. On social media forums people advise each other on where to buy safe vegetables. Furthermore, it requires a high and stable enough income to buy vegetables significantly more expensive in advance. With increasing affluence among young dual income nuclear family households that are concerned about food safety and in need of timesaving convenience, ordering safe vegetables online is expected to grow. The organization of controlling food safety depends on ‘claims’ of which some (rau an toàn) are authorized by official government authorities, while others are building on more informal food safety guarantee systems (rau sạch, rau hữu cơ). The recent proliferation in acclaimed ‘safe’ vegetable outlets is hampering effective inspection control, especially when expanding online and mixing up with private individuals who offer vegetables from their hometown online, claiming that the vegetables they offer are safe for consumption. This jeopardizes the reliability of more formal food safety claims offered by institutionalized outlets.

The advance of mass media particularly since the turn of the century freed up access to more diversified information sources and enabled a more democratic use of information platforms that empower consumers to actively search for and share information beyond their time spatially constrained borders. On popular social media forums participants discuss where to purchase safe vegetables and offer assistance in ordering from hometowns. Online they establish a kind of virtual kinship relation. Even in this more distant production-consumption practice word of mouth, though increasingly online, remains dominant and food safety claims appeal to personalized trust and honesty rather than objectified checks and balances.

5.6.6 Supermarket shopping

Supermarket development started in Hanoi in the late 1990s, initially with domestic state-owned enterprises and especially since 2009 with acceleration in foreign ownership (Nguyen et al., 2013). Supermarket shopping is a recently developing practice, accounting anno 2012 for around two percent of total vegetable sales in Hanoi (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2014b). It is slowly becoming a routine practice for a limited higher

income group within the upcoming generation. These people that can afford larger volume shopping due to a high enough and stable income, adequate storage facilities (stable electricity and fridge/freezer combination) and the means of transportation from shop to home. In the last decade of the 20th century, economic prosperity led to the penetration of fridges that were initially mainly used for cooling drinks a couple of hours a day. Only over the past decade the provision of electricity in the city improved in capacity and stability for the fridge to become a trusted household cool storage facility.

“We are so lucky to have bankcards now. When I go to the supermarket I do not have to worry whether I have enough money with me ... When I was young my family got a fridge quite late. Most of my friends’ families had already fridges. Electricity was only available a couple of hours a day and we used the fridge and freezer to cool water and make ice-cubes during these hours. Now I use the fridge to store the vegetables I buy for my family. I have small kids and have to combine shopping with working. I go to the supermarket once or twice a week only.” (Interview woman mid 30s, 2013)

Within younger generations a gradual shift in household management is observed. Increasing out-of-home labor emancipation of women and the aspiration of modern shopping outlets with regard to urban lifestyles result in higher participation of men in household chores. Where traditionally, women were the informal managers of households in which household tasks, including daily food shopping, were looked down upon (Hirschman and Vu, 1996), an increasing involvement of men in food shopping is observed. Our survey research revealed that only around five percent of the practitioners in the practice of daily food shopping at markets is male, while the share of male practitioners in supermarket shopping amounts to nearly 30 percent. This hints towards a shift, from shopping for daily foods as low esteem domestic chore for women, to shopping as a more aspirational activity engaging men. The latter could be explained by the higher amounts of money and larger economic transactions involved when shopping in supermarkets. The fit of supermarket shopping in aspired new urban lifestyles is clearly observed in the manner of dress during shopping. For daily chores like housekeeping and food shopping most people wear ‘pyjama-like outfits’ and go out into the street for grocery shopping with rollers still in their hair. However, when visiting supermarkets most shoppers are neatly dressed with carefully styled hair. Enjoyment is an important factor in the practice of supermarket shop-

ping. Modern retail development is to date still at large a leisure outing in which visitors are spectators rather than daily shopping practitioners.

"Last weekend I visited the supermarket for the first time. It was so beautiful and so large I loved it. But no I wouldn't go shopping there regularly, I would go there for some special items maybe or to enjoy during the weekend." (Interview woman mid 30s, 2014)

"I like shopping here. I am curious to see what is on offer. There are always new products." (Intercept interview women mid 30s at supermarket, 2013)

Supermarket shopping is increasing, but the trend is importantly driven by 'new' product categories that are traditionally not offered at markets. Fresh produce sales to date remain behind other product categories. Retail formats attempt to attract fresh produce shoppers with food safety propositions that fit within their quality oriented general positioning. They offer similar products and brands as offered in more dedicated safe vegetable outlets, whether bricks-and-mortar or online, though without the personalized touch.

5.7 Conclusion and discussion

Without the aim of being exhaustive in our explanations this chapter demonstrates the complexities and multiplicities of the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables and the presence of the past therein. So what do our findings ascertain regarding our research aim in assessing to what extent the policy induced supermarketization will prove to be an engine of change in daily vegetable purchasing and food safety?

First, the historical analysis demonstrates how practices are not simply replaceable. The practice of buying in supermarkets is constrained or enabled by wider contextual developments over time beyond the practice of shopping only. Not only is supermarket shopping not a direct alternative for market shopping in the sense that it implies buying larger quantities to be stored at home in the fridge or freezer for days afterwards and involving larger money transactions, but the reluctance to adopt supermarkets in daily life is also historically rooted in self-accommodation and social interdependence. Public space gardening and street market shopping – 'civil disobedience' in the appropriation and accommodation of public space – date back to times

when people were stimulated in directions of self-accommodation in food provision (marketable surplus in late 1980s) and to date provide essential social safety nets at the local community level. A shift is occurring, specifically the increasing financial independency of dual income households. The employment of women outside the home is driving the trend of hiring domestic servants for child and elderly care, therein diminishing the need for kinship and local community support activities. However, more structural changes in health, child and elderly care systems appear to be a precondition for a change in food purchasing practices. Further, our research demonstrates how the reluctance to accept retail modernization is also related to cultural identity formation, in terms of cultural heritage and the prominence of daily vegetable shopping. The transformation of society, most importantly since its advancement in international integration, has resulted in a shift from time and place bound local community belonging to more abstract and reflexive cultural identification. Especially in rapidly changing contextual conditions, people not only tend to stick to the familiar but moreover tend to re-value or even romanticize the past, advocating the preservation of markets and farmer vendors.

Second, our study uncovered how the reinvention of apparent traditional practices is often enabled by societal modernization and how practices are not necessarily of competing, but rather of symbiotic nature. Practices have different dynamics and might appear to develop in opposite or competing directions, for example on the one hand a trend to re-establish space-of-place like connections with production – home growing, farmer shopping –, while on the other hand a trend towards space of flows like connections – purchasing certified produce online. However when studying the practices through incorporating historical development paths we were able to unravel significant symbiotic mechanisms that result in the concomitant re-invention of more traditional practices, though in a new ‘fashion’, and the shaping of new practices. Our research demonstrates how the various practices not merely co-exist, but moreover reinforce each other and even conflate, such as the ‘glocal’ (global-local) symbiosis of buying ingredients for home-growing at the supermarket, or ordering of organic vegetables from local farmers online.

Third, what appears new in the acquisition of daily foods is the factor of enjoyment. The past two decades of growing affluence has allowed for a more reflexive approach on spending time in relation to time competing practices. Supermarkets are appreci-

ated as a popular weekend destination, rooftop gardening is prioritized as a leisure activity and even in the practice of shopping at (street) markets, a shift is observed from vital interdependent relationships to more voluntary enjoyed interactions.

Over the past forty years in Vietnam a shift occurred in daily food consumption from concerns about enough to eat to concerns about safe to eat. Our research demonstrates that, although contemporary policies importantly rely on supermarketization, there exists no simple and one-dimensional narrative of the road towards modernization and the improvement of food safety. Evidently, the availability of supermarkets is a prerequisite for the development of supermarket shopping. But although the practice of supermarket shopping is expected to become more 'normal' in daily life, loosing its novelty edge, in the context of food safety concerns, the provision of supermarkets is shown to not automatically induce a shift of established practices towards supermarket shopping. Further, while the Vietnam government expects food safety issues and scandals to motivate consumers to shop in western style supermarkets, in western developed societies, scandals like the recent horsemeat scandal, are seemingly resulting in declining consumer confidence in foods offered in supermarkets (Yamoah and Yawson, 2014), driving food purchasing practices into AFNs. The advancement of farmers' markets, rooftop gardening, garden allotments and the rediscovery of driving grocery stores are globally observed phenomena. Rather than stimulating homogenization in retail system formation – enforcing complete breaks with established cultural and historical rooted practices an expecting re-reutilization in novel supermarkets – Vietnam policymakers could aim for versatility through glocal hybridization. In the past Vietnam authorities let go of top down enforced collectivization to stimulate economic prosperity with impressive results. The self-organizing powers of the population are still prominent; why not acknowledge these in the shaping of more grassroots practices informed policy development? Past events are not only important in understanding how contemporary patterns of social life came about, but moreover, we deem historically-grounded practices research particularly relevant for informing more versatile and holistic retail policies in Asian emerging food systems, accommodating both the globalization and the localization of food production, distribution and consumption.

Through our historical analysis of contemporary practices, building on the specific case of Vietnam, our research places emphasis on transition processes rather than

organizational fixes. We approached the practice of shopping in supermarkets in relation to other vegetable acquisition practices and uncovered the changes within the configurations of these practices over time. This delivers a broader perspective on thinking about future oriented policy development than the current stream of thought on modernization and supermarketization in realizing improved food safety. Understanding such historical shifts provides insights on the likelihood of the adoption of policy induced institutional changes in everyday life. Though, the specific patterns, which we uncovered in Hanoi, may not be representative for Asia, or even Vietnam, the struggle with food safety in the context of rapidly changing environments and shifting shopping practices is a recognized problem throughout Asia. Our practice methodological approach could benefit scholars and policymakers in addressing these social challenges.

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'Food Health and Safety in
need of practical projects.'



CONCLUSION



'TO WIDER HORIZONS'

6. Conclusion – To wider horizons

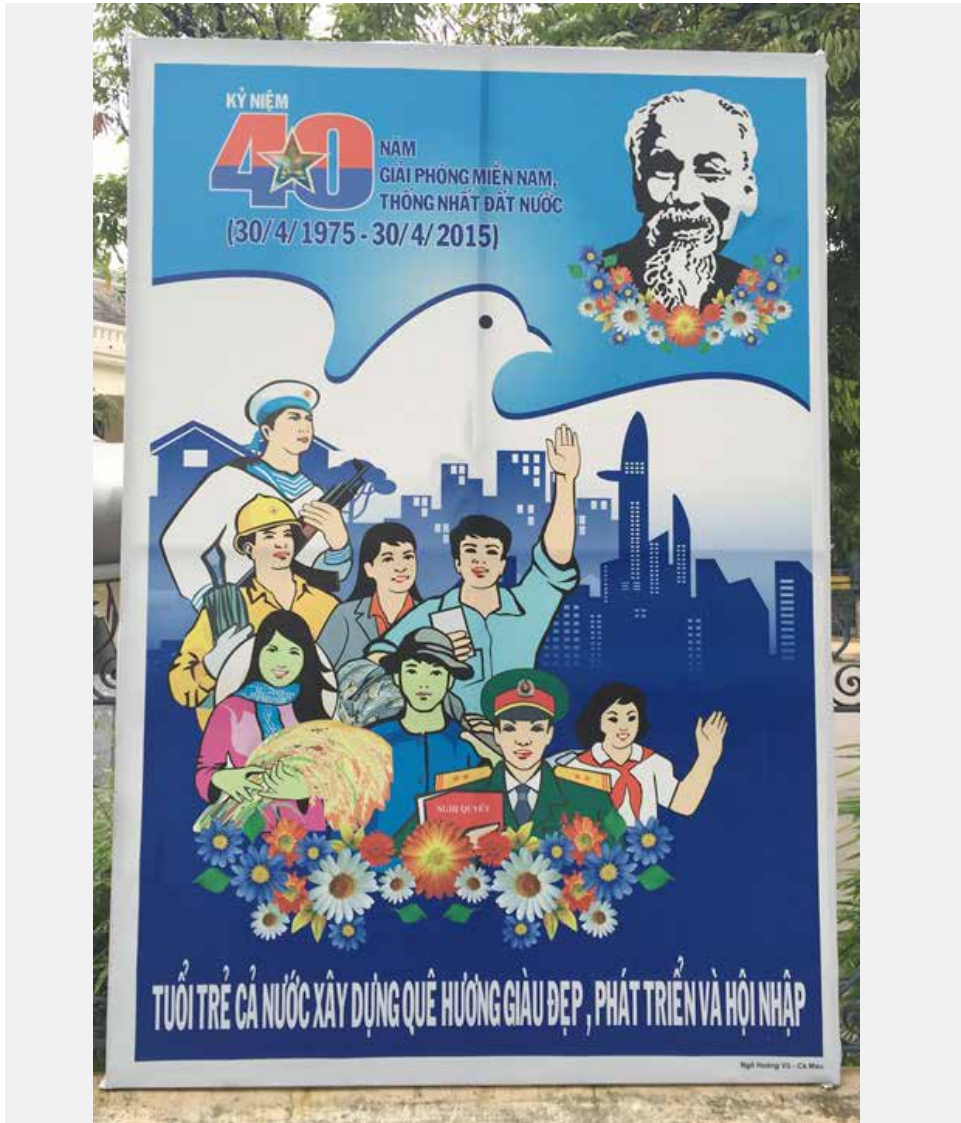
6.1 Introduction

This thesis is about how people in the performance of everyday life confront real risks that are difficult to influence and come to grips with. The main question addressed in this thesis is about how ordinary people in rapidly developing Vietnam confront modern food safety risks within their everyday vegetable shopping practices. Food safety is a recognized issue among policymakers as well as providers and consumers of vegetables in Vietnam. The year 2015 started with headlines such as *‘Awareness about food safety on the rise in Vietnam’*¹ and *‘Food safety is number one consumer complaint’*². Ensuring food safety remains a challenge not only in Vietnam, but also throughout the Asian continent as similar challenges are observed (Gorton et al., 2011; Kantamaturapoj et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2013; Othman, 2007; Zhou and Jin, 2009). Across Asia the official, institutional response to food safety concerns shows a tendency to attempt to influence peoples’ behavior through social engineering of ‘civilized’ retail models, consisting predominantly of imposing western supermarket blueprints on their transitional economies and societies. Therein Asian policymakers provide a conventional behavioral change interventionist response to these types of societal risks (Shove, 2010; 2011) leaning on theories of reasoned actions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), assuming that the provision of modern retail outlets will drive the adoption of supermarkets based on food safety concerns and modern lifestyle aspirations. Especially in the one-party communist state Vietnam, the strong government, struggling with the question of how to improve the safety of daily-consumed foods, actively enforces western conflated models of supermarketization, which is visible in the replacement of traditional wet markets with modern supermarkets. However, by viewing consumption as an outcome of supermarketization, policymakers detach external interventions from the distinct logic of daily life and thus run the risk of overestimating deliberate choice making by disregarding the inconspicuous nature of consumption.

1 <http://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Life/Natural-food-booming-as-safety-awareness-grows> (last accessed 20150611).

2 <http://www.vnnews24h.vn/economy/4704-food-safety--number-one-consumer-complaint.html> (last accessed 20150611).

Figure 6.1 'Building a prosperous and developed homeland'



Propaganda poster 2015 in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the liberation of South Vietnam and the reunification ('Kỷ niệm 40 năm, giải phóng miền nam, thống nhất đất nước'): Youth nationwide to build a prosperous, developed and integrated homeland ('Tuổi trẻ cả nước xây dựng quê hương giàu đẹp, phát triển và hội nhập'). Photo taken by Heiman Wertheim.

By applying a practices theory informed approach, with a focus on the mundane, routinized, and ordinary nature of consumption (Gronow and Warde, 2001), this thesis explored the middle ground of the two interlinked debates (in more detailed described in the introduction of this thesis): a debate with extreme positions on retail development, contrasting supermarketization with Alternative Food Networks (AFNs), and a debate on bringing about behavioral change in which the tendency to regard consumers as active and reflexive agents is being criticized to disregard inconspicuous consumption. Situated in the specific context of transformative Vietnam, with the capital Hanoi as the main study site, this thesis demonstrates how portraying supermarkets and wet markets as two contrasting extremes, fails to acknowledge the process of transformation and the dynamic interrelation of practices that constitute daily life. Mediating the dualism in structure agency opposition, this thesis studied situated practices of shopping for vegetables at distinct consumption junctions.

The objective of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how ordinary people in their everyday lives and within a transformative context confront real food safety risks that are difficult to influence or come to grips with by utilizing a practices theory based research approach. The research unraveled how ordinary people in the performance of daily life make resourceful combinations in mitigating food safety risks within their everyday routines that often appear diametrically opposed to the aimed for directions of top-down planned and enforced supermarketization policies. It is demonstrated how context matters and that there is consistency within the changing everyday practices. Despite government efforts in socially engineering everyday food shopping towards supermarkets, established practices persist or are creatively adjusted to the transformative context of modernizing Vietnam.

This concluding chapter reflects on the main results and the theoretical and methodological approach through which the results were obtained. Further, this chapter expands on the potential of practices based approaches for informing policy development, placing the discussion in a wider ASEAN comparative perspective, and casting a glance on the future of food shopping in Asia.

6.2 Answering the research questions

Centered at the consumption junction (see section 1.4.1 of the Introduction) the central research question of how ordinary people confront food safety risks and why and how they do or do not adopt alternative practices (such as modern retail shopping) to respond to their increasing concerns about the fresh-food made available to them. This was explored from four distinct perspectives (table 6.1). Each perspective delivered a complementary understanding on the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables in the transformative context of Vietnam, with a particular focus on Hanoi.

Table 6.1 Research questions and research perspectives per chapter

Research questions		Perspective taken per chapter
Q1	What are the characteristics of the practice of shopping at wet markets that account for its continued reproduction and how are food safety concerns confronted within this well-established practice?	Chapter 2 - Practice heuristics: Exploring food safety heuristics deployed within the routine practice of shopping for vegetables
Q2	What context specific processes and circumstances account for the continued reproduction of street market shopping and the limited uptake of modern(ized) outlets? How do consumers handle food safety concerns in combination with other choices in the performance of daily life?	Chapter 3 - Practice time-spatial dimensions: Exploring time-spatial constraints in the situated activity of daily vegetable shopping Chapter 4 - Practice realist perspective: Exploring the outreach of retail modernization policies in everyday life; the type of results they produce, for whom and under what conditions.
Q3	What practices of purchasing or appropriating fresh vegetables exist in contemporary Vietnam, how do they relate to food safety concerns and dynamics, why did they emerge and evolve during the past 40 years, and what factors are important for explaining the dynamics of change in the overall set of shopping practices?	Chapter 5 - Practice historical perspective: Exploring consistency in change based on historicized accounts of trajectories of practices in reaching their contemporary manifestation.

Practice heuristics

Wet markets constitute the core of vegetable retailing in Vietnam and daily shopping for vegetables is a taken for granted traditional routine deeply embedded in the life of Vietnamese consumers. Chapter 2 explores which characteristics of the dominant and persistent practice of shopping at wet markets account for its continued reproduction and how food safety concerns are confronted within this well-established practice. It shows how consumers reproduce trust in food safety by deploying specific heuristics for vendor and product selection. Three steps turned out to be relevant for consumers who are performing this practice. First, the site or location for the daily purchase of fresh vegetables is chosen in a highly routinized manner. Second, within the self-chosen limits set by the locale of nearby wet markets, consumers deal with food safety threats by selecting a retailer or a vendor they think to be trustworthy. Third, they use specific heuristics for the final selection of the product, combining product characteristics, like ‘*not too green, beautiful and big*’ and ‘*a bit eaten by worms*’, with seasonality, like ‘*in summer (off-season) the use of crop protection products doubles*’ and geographical origin, like ‘*from here it is safe but a bit further to Thanh Mieu it is not safe anymore*’. As long as these heuristics suffice in counterbalancing anxieties, food safety dilemmas do not urge consumers to break with the well-established practice of shopping at wet markets. Although consumers indicated to better trust the safety of officially certified safe vegetables, they would only purchase those when such vegetables would be sold ‘near here’. By performing the practice on a daily basis, consumers reproduce long established and culturally embedded informal relations of trust. *Food safety is continuously reproduced along pre-given lines within existing behavioral routines.*

Practice time-spatial dimensions

Government induced policies, however, aim at replacing wet markets with supermarkets and therewith enforce breaks in well-established routines. The premise that, by means of retail modernization interventions, shopping practices will develop into the direction of supermarket shopping, remains questionable. Street markets rather than supermarkets seem to thrive when wet markets are being demolished and replaced by modernized retail outlets. Chapter 3 investigates the persistence of vegetable shopping at street markets that do not offer formal food safety guarantees in the context of advancing retail modernization in Vietnam’s capital Hanoi. Studying the vegetable shopping practices at six different (illegal) street markets, this chapter exposed how consumers handle food safety concerns in combination with other

choices about where and when to buy vegetables. The everyday practice of vegetable purchasing is not only motivated by food safety concerns but is importantly shaped by temporal and spatial constraints. Shopping for vegetables is either a space constrained and socially driven practice, in which the practitioners combine vegetable purchasing with other social engagements, or a time-constrained practice, in which vegetable purchasing is a time competing activity that conflicts with other activities in the busy everyday lives of Vietnamese consumers. Supermarket shopping is a time consuming activity, especially when compared with the drive through convenience of a street market. Temporal and spatial constraints constitute a reinforcing mechanism for the persistence of uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets. When people are confronted with a reduction in formal wet market provision, private practitioners rather accommodate themselves to unhygienic street market shopping, than to resort to more modern food outlets that offer formal food safety guarantees. *Everyday routines are time-spatial constrained and where and how to buy vegetables is importantly shaped by other choices in daily life.*

Practice realist perspective

The persistent practice of wet and street market shopping in the light of formal policies actively stimulating supermarket development, prompted the question: what context-specific processes and circumstances influence the uptake of modified or modern retail formats by what groups within the population. By applying a practice realist perspective on six distinct retail modernization interventions, chapter 4 demonstrated how similar supermarket interventions yield contrasting outcomes when they do not accommodate for differences in shopper population and do not adapt to variations in the urban conditions. Consumers are not averse from shopping in supermarkets; on the contrary, they are rather positive and confident that supermarkets offer better-guaranteed food safety. However, studying the daily vegetable purchasing practices discovered that the current one-dimensional, supermarket oriented, retail modernization policies do not fit within and are thus dissociated from the established practices of shopping for daily vegetables by the large majority of the population. *Policy effectuation is contingent on differences in shopper population and variations in urban conditions.*

Practice historical perspective

The apparent misfit of the supermarketization model in the everyday lives of the majority of the population, together with the heuristics deployed in mitigating food safety risks within traditional routines, indicate that the induced reform of food provision in Vietnam currently has only a limited capacity to break existing consumer practices. Everyday life is a continuing process of change and adjustment. Discussing the way in which six situated social practices were embedded in the broader set of food shopping practices as developing over time, chapter 5 provided understanding on the historical processes of change. Historicized accounts of the trajectories of these distinct practices in reaching their contemporary manifestation unraveled, how societal modernization and globalization developments allow both ‘traditional’ practices to be reinvented, as well as new practices to take shape. It was shown that several practices, though with shifting relative importance, were sustained over time, while others appeared as more recent phenomena. Changes within the practices were demonstrated to relate to shifts over time in some fundamental elements of everyday vegetable shopping practices (see figure 5.2), among which are practical kinship, the ability to store produce and access to information. *The current niche practice of buying vegetables in supermarkets is both constrained and enabled by wider contextual developments over time, beyond the practice of shopping and beyond the consumption domain of food.*

6.3 Reflections on the theoretical approach

The results uncovered in the four empirical research chapters leaves us to answer the last question posed in the introduction of this thesis: what lessons can be learned from social practices research in assessing the present and future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies which imply the de- and re-routinization of well-established contemporary practices of shopping for fresh food?

Current food safety policies purposely enforce breaches with established practices with the aim that, through imposed de-routinization by demolishing and renovating wet markets, consumers will be re-routinized in desired directions, like towards shopping at supermarkets and renovated wet markets. The combination of zooming in on specific situated practices with zooming out through an historical mapping of a whole portfolio of practices overtime (see table 6.1), not only learned that practices

are not simply replaceable, but moreover delivered understanding on the making and breaking of linkages within and between practices. Approaching everyday practices at the consumption junction from shifting perspectives, uncovered a set of ‘rules’ (Warde, 2005) that importantly govern the daily practice of shopping for vegetables. In this thesis, rules are defined as commonly, and often implicitly, understood principles that determine the performance of situated practices. Uncovering these rules delivered an understanding on the routine and the mundane nature of the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables and why and how top down enforced supermarket models are or are not adopted in everyday life.

Supermarketization interventions in Vietnam were shown to work for some; when consumers do not yet have well-established shopping routines and a convenient modern alternative is made available to them, the modern format is more likely to be adopted (chapter 4). However, the current policies do not sort the intended de- and re-routinization effect among large groups within the population. When shoppers have well-established daily shopping practices, radical interventions are less likely to fit within their everyday life. This thesis uncovered how the everyday practices of shopping for vegetables and mitigating food safety risks are governed by (i) daily routines and hands-on know-how; (ii) temporal and spatial constraints; (iii) contextual conditions; and (iv) gradual changes over time beyond the act of shopping for food and beyond the domain of food.

Routines and know-how

Firstly, this thesis unraveled how human conduct importantly consists of automated, repetitive actions, which are not actively and consciously reconsidered, when hands-on food safety heuristics deployed within the daily routines suffice in counterbalancing anxiety and thus do not necessitate a break with established practices. Further, in utilizing food safety heuristics practitioners were demonstrating commonly understood and routinized ways of ‘knowing how’ (Reckwitz, 2002) to select safe vegetables; selecting a trusted vendor and trusted safe produce on the basis of external product characteristics, seasonality and origin. In essence:

- *Shopping at wet markets is an unquestioned, automated daily activity.*
- *Commonly understood and routinized food safety heuristics are deployed within the well-established practice of shopping at wet markets.*

Temporal and spatial conditions

Secondly, it was demonstrated how processes of de- and re-routinization are contextually defined. Even when well-established practices are actively disrupted, like when wet markets are being demolished, new alternatives are not adopted in daily vegetable purchasing practices when they don't fit within the temporal and spatial dimensions of everyday life beyond the act of shopping for vegetables only. The time-spatial characteristics of a practice define the fit within the 'multiplicity of practices' (Warde, 2005) that together constitute daily life. This means that the extent to which a supermarketization intervention might be successful needs to be assessed beyond the practice of shopping for vegetables only. Vegetable shopping was demonstrated to compete with other activities in daily life. These temporal and spatial dimensions constitute a reinforcing mechanism for the persistence of uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets, rather than the uptake of supermarkets. When shopping for vegetables is time consuming without producing the benefits of interpersonal engagement beyond the act of purchasing, it is unlikely to be performed on a large scale, as people either require time saving convenience or social interaction. In essence:

- *The temporal and spatial characteristics of the different practices in shopping for vegetables define to what extent and in what way the practices might compete with other activities in everyday life.*

Contextual conditions in re-routinization

Thirdly, this research uncovered that although practices are subject to change, new retail formats provided are not easily adopted when their adoption requires changes in too many essential elements from established ways of doing. The case studies of the renovated and modernized wet markets (chapter 4) portrayed in which essential elements the renovated markets/supermarkets differed from their previous versions so much so that they became impractical (for instance access hampered by stairs and closed doors, or lack of personal advice in product selection) and not recognizable (being hidden away in basements and exuding not for me luxury or distrust by guards and lockers) shopping options. Further, it was illustrated how a similar supermarket sorts different outcomes in different contextual conditions. This learned that in what way and to what extent modernized alternatives require breaks with well-established practices depends on 'life world rationalities' (Oosterveer et al., 2007), which in chapter 4 are illustrated by varying configurations in shopper population and urban conditions. In essence:

- *The aimed for re-routinization in modernized retail outlets through enforced de-routinization by actively disrupting established practices, is contingent on the extent to and the way in which essential components of well-established practices are changed.*
- *The recognition of modern alternatives is contingent on the transforming life world rationalities of the practitioners.*

Portfolio of practices and gradual change over time

Fourthly, this thesis explains in what way and why supermarket shopping is likely to remain just one among a wider portfolio of shopping practices. Through historical analysis, practices were shown to be subject to change on the basis of interactions between the components of a practice and its changing environment. An illustrative example provided in chapter 5 is the inherited practice of directly purchasing from farmers, which, despite increased distanciation between production and consumption, is being reinvented through the development of financial systems and internet motivated by increasing concerns on the safety of anonymously offered vegetables in the city. Tracing a portfolio of practices historically, to show how they are internally differentiated and dynamic, and to detect how the practices within this process of change are interrelated or even interdependent, makes it possible to point out the versatility in food safety mechanisms between the various practices, ranging from personalized trust mechanisms to more abstract guidance systems like labels, brands and certificates (chapter 5), as well as their embedding beyond the food domain over time for instance in altering kinship relations. In essence:

- *Practices are subject to gradual change over time, influenced by transformations in their environment, in which practices are interrelated with other practices beyond the act of shopping for food and beyond the domain of food.*
- *Thereby, practices show consistency in change.*
- *Food safety trust mechanisms show patterns of hybridization in which more modern abstract third party guidance systems are mostly treated as additional guarantees on top of first hand skills and knowledge and personalized food safety affirmations.*

Retail modernization demanding for hybridization

Uncovering these rules is important when assessing the present and future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies. In the debate on retail development in emerging countries, discussions are mostly framed along two extreme

positions, supermarketization through the advancement of transnational retail corporations (TNC) (Wrigley and Lowe, 2007) and counter dynamics in the development of alternative food networks (AFN) (Goodman et al., 2011). Both extremes reason from path dependency with outcome distinct organizational fixes. The main characteristics of AFNs, proximate consumer-producer relations based on organizing principles of trust, embeddedness and place (Goodman, 2003), show similarities with traditional food retail structures. When Vietnamese policymakers strive to move food shopping practices away from traditional practices, they aim for a break with AFN-like shopping practices and a re-routinization in supermarkets shopping, however to date with limited effect on changing the daily vegetable shopping practices from traditional markets to more modern supermarkets. Despite limited effectiveness, policymakers push ahead with retail development, aiming for 1000 supermarkets in Hanoi in 2025 with only 63 supermarkets available in Hanoi in 2014 (chapter 4). Relying so heavily on top down enforced supermarket development, policymakers, appear to lack an alternative for supermarketization and more abstract food safety guarantee systems.

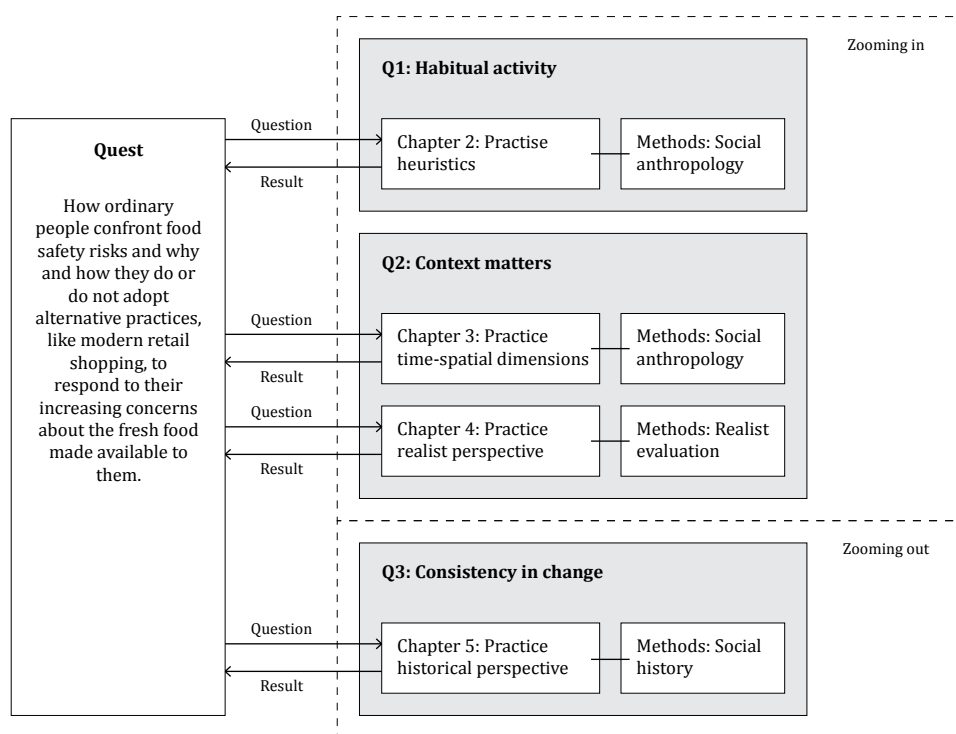
This thesis evinces the need to consider the relationship between the historically evolved, well-established practices on the one hand and global trends in retail modernization on the other. Food safety policies and interventions, that do not take into consideration the existing everyday consumption practices, will most likely fail to address acute food safety issues. As for supermarketization, instead of putting all strategic resources on either the one or the other, efforts of integration and mutual adaptation could be considered. Pursuing a trend of hybridization, building on incremental and emergent market transformations, prevents that consumers have to break with long established routines in an isolated, radical way.

6.4 Reflections on the methodological approach

Methodological variance, indicated as a form of ‘eclecticism’ by Warde (2014), is a strategic strength of this thesis. Theories of practice for the study of consumption are being criticized on their complexity and imprecision (Halkier et al., 2011; Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2001; Warde 2014). The lack of a unified approach to the study of practices and the inherent method neutrality are maintaining the aura of ambiguity and are argued to make practices based research impractical (Jackson, 2005). This thesis is novel in its programmatic empirical research approach, in which I tried to

remain responsive to new insights though also precise in methodological choices. I approached the central research question as a conundrum by strategically applying shifting perspectives in discerning the rules governing the practices. Assumptions and rigid method application possibly impedes the opening of new routes to bringing the rules governing the practices closer to discovery. That is why I deployed an iterative research process (see figure 6.2), which proved particularly useful in deepening the understanding of the dynamics and complexities of everyday life in which people confront real food safety risks.

Figure 6.2 Overview of iterative deepening* research process



* Iterative deepening research processes are commonly applied in computer science and refer to repeated depth-limited searches, increasing the depth limit with each iteration, until it reaches the depth of the shallowest goal state. In this thesis I applied a similar process approach in which I ran the same quest first within well-established practices, to expand the depth to include context and finally by zooming out with an historical perspective.

Shifting perspectives

Shifting perspectives were deployed as a strategic strength. Three distinct empirical studies exploring processes of transformation and stability within social practices, combined with a historical analysis on the longer term transformation and stability between practices, contributed to the understanding of how private practitioners confront food safety concerns within their shopping practices in the transformational context of urban Vietnam. As discussed in sections 6.2 and 6.3 along the research questions, the different research perspectives delivered a range of different and complementary information. Zooming in and studying situated practices in-depth delivered information on *habitual activity*; how historically rooted hands-on and interactive heuristics, like seasonality and origin, help practitioners to navigate the uncertainty of food safety within the routine practice (chapter 2). Zooming in also demonstrated how *context matters*; how time-spatial constraints and contextual conditions hamper or facilitate the uptake of modernized retail formats in the performance of everyday life (chapter 3 and 4). Thus, zooming in on specific practices as performances delivered understandings on what constitutes situated practices.

To uncover how practices of shopping for vegetables and their inherent food safety dynamics emerge, evolve or die out within the rapidly transforming urban context of Hanoi, this thesis research needed to go beyond situated practices by including a perspective on the connectedness of vegetable shopping practices with other practices in daily life and their historical path of development. Zooming out, focusing on a broad portfolio of contemporary food shopping practices, this research examined the material functional and socio-cultural mechanisms (Crivits and Paredis, 2013) at work within the practices over time and discussed the ways in which the specific social practices were embedded in the broader set of food appropriation practices as developing overtime (chapter 5). Analyzing trajectories of change by exploring relationships between transformations in the system of food provision and changing life-worlds of the citizen consumers, delivered information on *consistency in change*; on the embeddedness of practices and their capacities in recruiting practitioners against the transformative economic and cultural background of society. Thus, zooming out provided insights on how and why shopping at supermarkets is not only currently limited in recruiting practitioners, but that also when looking ahead it is not reasonable to expect homogenization in food retail system formation.

The systematic combination of shifting perspectives in this thesis delivered a thorough understanding on both the situated dynamics in reproduction (zooming in) and the longer-term transformation (zooming out) of everyday practices of shopping for fresh food. The combination delivered a holistic understanding on the emergence, the persistence and disappearance of food shopping practices, which allows making informed predictions on the future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies, which in turn imply de- and re-routinization of well-established contemporary practices of shopping for fresh food, discussed in more detail in section 6.5.

Mixing methods and crossing disciplines

Mixing methods was in this thesis deployed as a strategic strength. Borrowing from other real-life fields of research, a method mix was applied for the detection of patterns and filtering out individual performance aspects. With the research focused on practices at the consumption junctions, where structure meets agency in the performance of everyday life, the research needed to include methods that provide information on agency as well as on institutional contexts at work within the practice. In exploring this middle ground I importantly borrowed from three distinct fields of research: social anthropology, realist evaluation and social history (see figure 6.1).

Studying real-life situations, I made use of social anthropological methods. Researching practice through performance, an important aspect regarded observation, with a focus on 'doings' in full complexity. This involved placing myself in the research context for extended periods of time to gain a first-hand sense of the everyday practices of shopping for vegetables and how food safety concerns are dealt with. However, instead of studying people in-depth, by using a practice research prism, I studied situated activity, multiple times, at multiple sites, to allow detection of the rules governing the practice to understand the practice logics and characteristics.

Illustrative examples are the heuristics in selecting vegetables by sniffing them to check for chemical smell (chapter 2) or the time constrained practice of shopping for vegetables while remaining seated on a motorbike with the engine running while simultaneously talking on a mobile phone (chapter 3). From the perspective that context matters, a practice oriented realist approach was applied in chapter 4. On the basis of a collective case study of policy induced retail modernization interventions, this research revealed how similar interventions can yield contrasting outcomes. Bor-

rowing from realist evaluation theory, structure and agency were extensively studied as embedded in the social reality that influences to what extent interventions are successful in recruiting practitioners. Depending on context conditions, the supermarketization model was demonstrated to successfully attract, or alienate daily shoppers; *‘here it is easy to find safe products’* versus *‘there is no one to advise me in product selection’*. Borrowing from social history the method mix in chapter 5 included a combined analysis of archival data, running records, secondary sources and recollection interviews. Using a historical interpretative approach was useful in unraveling both the complexities and multiplicities of the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables and the presence of the past therein (Bourdieu, 1990). Mapping practices historically uncovered the ways in which the past is integral to the present, even when practices are reconstructed or newly configured as was illustrated with the example of a green grocer selling certified safe vegetables with the personalized claim of their staff always being *‘honest in telling the real origin’*.

Reflecting on emergent insights and seeking precision

Throughout this thesis, methods were not leading the investigation, but the pursuit of insights was guiding method selection; digging deeper into emergent topics, while consolidating research rigor through method triangulation. With the aim of uncovering logics within the complexity of the performance of daily life, I needed to get close to the practices but at the same time distance myself from the practices in order to mitigate subjectivity in interpretative observation. In order to avoid personal interpretation and restricting the range of insights, multi-site fieldwork was conducted involving multiple investigators using method triangulation. Above all, leading this thesis investigation was my personal strive to dig deeper and not settle for assumptions. Having experienced how unsubstantiated assumptions can lead to misinformation for decision-making – for example the assumption that consumers do not buy at supermarkets, because of a perceived higher price level³ and limited availability of su-

3 The collection of price data within this research learned that vegetables offered in supermarkets are not necessarily more expensive than at wetmarkets, but that vegetables offered in dedicated safe vegetable shops are generally more expensive (on average between 15-25 percent). Second daily fluctuations in vegetable pricing hamper inter-channel comparisons of price levels. If consumers make price comparisons, then this is done between different types of vegetables on offer within one retail channel, rather than between different channels.

permarkets⁴ – I constantly questioned ‘assumptions’. In constantly checking the validity and uncovering underlying mechanisms of potential assumptions, I drew on aforementioned real-life fields of research and disciplines to make an appropriate selection in research methods. This aided in avoiding stereotyping and simplistic classifications, such as identifying practices as typical modern or traditional, and allowed for more nuanced and precise perspectives. It is generally assumed that consumers buy certified safe vegetables because of food safety concerns on pesticides. This thesis confirms this assumption, but by seeking precision this thesis revealed how purchasing safe vegetables might for instance also be motivated by the aspect of time saving (chapter 3): *“I buy safe vegetables when I don’t have time for cleaning.”* In modern lifestyles timesaving is important with regard to food shopping and preparation practices, in which certified safe vegetables were demonstrated to be timesaving, while shopping at supermarkets was demonstrated to be perceived as time-consuming.

A good example of precision by seeking clarification is the experience in obtaining an understanding of certified safe vegetable shopping practices in dedicated safe vegetable shops (table 6.2). It is easily assumed that consumers purchase certified safe vegetables for food consumption. During field research in a dedicated safe vegetable shop, a consumer was observed buying tomatoes. This could have easily led to the assumption that the observed consumer is concerned about food safety and thus buys her certified safe vegetables in a dedicated shop. However, instead of settling for this assumption, satisfied with the observed purchase, in seeking for precision table 6.2 presents how more nuanced logics govern the practice. Uncovering these more nuanced, divergent logics within everyday practices requires curiosity and creativity of the researcher, ‘wondering why’ even when the answers might seem obvious.

4 This thesis demonstrated (chapter 3, table 5) that even when supermarkets are available within the direct vicinity of their homes, consumers do not necessarily adopt these outlets within their daily shopping routines.

Table 6.2 Illustrative example of research precision

Question:	What is it that I observe? Do I observe someone buying vegetables at a safe vegetable shop, or do I see someone buying tomatoes?
Answer:	Someone buying tomatoes.
Question:	Is this a regular customer? Does she buy also other vegetables here?
Answer:	Yes a regular customer, who buys only tomatoes here.
Question:	Where does she buy her other vegetables?
Answer:	At the regular wet market.
Assumption:	She is mostly worried about the food safety of tomatoes.*
Question:	Why specifically tomatoes here?
Answer:	She buys the certified safe tomatoes here because she is concerned about agrochemical residues on tomatoes, because she uses tomatoes for facial skincare.
Question:	Why not all vegetables here?
Answer:	She goes everyday to the wet market for daily grocery shopping (habitual activity) and only sometimes here to only buy tomatoes. Yes, she is concerned about food safety for food consumption, but cleans the vegetables well (food safety mitigation).

* *This might seem plausible given issues with disrespecting pre-harvest intervals (the amount of time that must elapse between making an insecticide application and harvesting the crop) on fruity vegetables in Vietnam.*

Although practices approaches are criticized on their complexity and ambiguity, this thesis shows that it might be less complex and ambiguous than assumed. Rules governing the practices and transformation processes can be unraveled, through borrowing from other real-life fields of study, while applying a practice theory informed research prism. This thesis demonstrates how food-shopping practices are socially constructed and real at the same time (Elder-Vass, 2012). Practices are socially constructed through their emergent properties in which the conception of food safety is situated; practitioners are shown to deploy knowledge and skills in (re-) establishing trust in food safety within their contextually constrained activities.

This thesis also substantiates that practices are real. The historical pathways of development and the shifts in configurations and meanings of whole sets of practices

are demonstrated to exist, independently of how we think about this change. Practices based approaches explore the middle ground, neither prioritizing structure, nor agency of individual consumers and thus the selection in the mix of methods applied needed to allow for the inclusion of both structure and agency. Practice theory is therein considered method neutral and mixing methods is argued to be beneficial (Browne et al., 2014; Halkier and Jensen, 2011).

This thesis expands on this by showing how practices theory based empirical research can be designed programmatically, while still remaining open to method variation. The methods utilized in this thesis are extensive though not exhaustive. This thesis does not aim to prescribe a recipe for practices based research, but instead aims to contribute to more precise definition in method selection, especially with empirical research considered important in theory formation. Practices are not only complex and ambiguous; they also have identifiable internal logics and interlinked development paths that are argued valuable in informing future oriented retail modernization policy design. The approach used in this thesis is proven to deliver concrete results and might be useful in the study of similar cases.

Practices based research will remain subject to methodological debate, which includes discussions about the limitations on studying the observable (Schmidt and Volbers, 2011; Schmidt, 2012). Acknowledging these discussions, during the study of the everyday vegetable shopping practices of Vietnamese consumers I was well aware of the natural tension in subjecting the complexity of everyday life to discipline. As such, I do not deem a uniform prescription for doing practices based research desirable. Rather, I advocate for precision and critical reflection on the methodological approach taken, especially with empirical research at the foundation of practice theory formation.

6.5 Relevance of practices based approaches to policy design

“Food Health and Safety in need of practical projects.”

[Deputy Prime Minister Vũ Đức Đam, June 24, 2015]⁵

This thesis research was executed in the context of Vietnam’s historical transition from a pre-modern to a modern society. Within this transition policymakers struggle with improving the food safety situation in agricultural food products, admitting that the organization of agricultural food chains is still insufficient to ensure safe quality. With policies originally and primarily focused on agricultural production, the more recent policy responses to food safety concerns increasingly include the stimulation of the engagement of enterprises in linking farmers with markets in a more controlled way.⁶ Prominent in these policies is the strong push in the modernization of food retail, by replacing traditional wet markets with supermarkets (see figure 6.3), which are considered to better guarantee food safety through private food safety and hygiene management systems (Reardon, 2006). Besides, in Vietnam all vegetables offered in modern retail chains are required to carry the certificate of the Vietnam authorities attesting that the vegetables have been produced in accordance with the national regulations on safe vegetable production (MARD, 2007). This strategy builds upon the idea that societies developing from predominantly agricultural into modern (industrial) societies gradually do away with traditional, personalized trust relations, and replace these with modern commitments like objectified certification schemes.

5 Vertaald uit het Vietnamese: Phó Thủ tướng: VSATTP cần nhiều dự án thiết thực, cụ thể; <http://baodientu.chinhphu.vn/Tin-noi-bat/Pho-Thu-tuong-VSATTP-can-nhieu-du-an-thiet-thuc-cu-the/229978.vgp> (last accessed 20150627).

6 Interview with Mr Cao Đức Phát, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD): <http://www.tienphong.vn/Kinh-Te/bo-truong-cao-duc-phat-tong-siet-ve-an-toan-thuc-pham-nong-san-823513.tpo> (last accessed 20150611)

Figure 6.3 Illustration of food safety discussions on the highest political level in Vietnam



Deputy Prime Minister Vũ Đức Đam in discussion with bi- and multilateral donors and NGO's on food safety issues in Vietnam, Hanoi June 24, 2015:

"According to the Ministry of Health's Food Safety and Hygiene Department, in recent years, food safety issues have received special attention of the Vietnamese Party, Government and National Assembly ... Deputy PM Dam shared with the delegates that at present, 80 percent of food sold at small markets has yet to receive full quarantine, while many farmers are lacking knowledge in using fertilizers, pesticides and growth stimulants. Therefore, he stressed the importance of narrowing the gap in quality between products sold at supermarkets and markets, controlling the smuggling of pesticides, and growth stimulants, and reorganizing food production and distribution systems at markets. For the long term, Vietnam should speed up the development of a distribution system in supermarket chains and supply chains of farmers, while for the short term, the country should continue installing mobile food testing machines at markets."

Source: ; <http://baodientu.chinhphu.vn/Tin-noi-bat/Pho-Thu-tuong-VSATTP-can-nhieu-du-an-thiet-thuc-cu-the/229978.vgp>.

This thesis demonstrates the limitations of the western conflated ideal-type supermarketization model in the transformative context of Vietnam. Research on the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables in Vietnam, with a focus on Hanoi, warns against making food safety policies strongly dependent on a single supermarket model, since the induced reform of food retailing has limited capacity to change existing consumer practices. Although consumers are not averse to shopping in supermarkets and are rather positive and confident that supermarkets offer better-guaranteed food safety, supermarkets in Hanoi account for less than two percent of the total vegetable sales (chapter 3).

The way in which policymakers view the world can help or hinder their ability to make effective strategic decisions. When their perspective is fixed, like supermarketization, their predefined field of view only selects what fits within this field-of-view. Practice theory approaches provide a broader way to look at the world. Exploring the middle ground in the current discourse on globalization through supermarketization versus localization in AFNs as strategies to sustainable food provision, this thesis explores how practices theory based research can deliver more versatile and precise perspectives on retail development. Practice theories are beginning to be acknowledged for having policy relevance (Evans et al., 2012). Some might argue that the value of practices based approaches is mainly in confronting policymakers with complexity and the limitations to a ‘makeable’ society (Shove et al., 2012). This thesis substantiates the potential of practices based approaches beyond confronting policymakers with complexity. By deploying a programmatic approach of shifting perspectives in empirical research, this thesis contributes to making practices based research relevant and practicable to policymakers.

Lessons learned

This thesis demonstrates that, for policymakers who are striving to bring about societal change, it is vital to recognize consistency in social change and how the programmatic practices theory based approach deployed in this thesis might enable this recognition. Firstly, this research learned how taken for granted and trusted ways of ‘doings and sayings’ are rooted in traditional ways of performing the practices. It is informative for policy makers to understand the heuristics with which consumers mitigate food safety risks, which do not (yet) necessitate breaks with established routines. The efficacy of food safety strategies depends on the articulation within locally embedded shopping practices and their built in mechanisms for confronting food risks.

Secondly, this research unraveled how changes in practices presuppose changes in their emergent properties, in which changes in objects (‘things’) and meanings always also require changes in the skills and knowledge of practitioners. The disruption of long established practices, for instance when wet markets are demolished, drives people to reestablish a new habit similar to their old behavior at the next easily accessible opportunity. On the basis of traditional food safety heuristics consumers appeared to prefer to re-routinize in less controlled street markets than to adopt new

structures in the performance of daily life, which require new heuristics.

Thirdly, this research indicated that studying changes in situated practices also demands looking at the interdependencies with other practices in the performance of daily life. Instead of addressing consumption as an isolated practice, it is beneficial for policymakers to also look at the time-spatial embeddedness of the practice in relation to other food and non-food practices, acknowledging that consumers make constrained choices. It is informative to understand what contextual conditions enable the making and breaking of practices. Policy effectuation is conditional, since contextual conditions put limits to the ability of practitioners to break with well-established routines. An illustrative example is the dependency on elderly care and childcare within the local community, facilitated by local street market shopping, which inhibits the adoption of supermarket shopping in daily life. Looking beyond the practice of shopping for vegetables in isolation delivers understanding on when an intervention might work or not.

Finally, this research points out that it is informative for policymakers to think in terms of transition processes rather than about actively enforcing de-routinization and pursuing organizational fixes. By means of a historical analysis, this research learned how changes come about over time. Understanding how practices shape up over time is considered valuable in informing future oriented policies (Harvey et al., 2013). This thesis shows how this can be studied and unraveled. By applying a practices historical approach this thesis demonstrated the permanence in the change of practices. Hence, the constellations and configurations of contemporary practices importantly constitute institutions and infrastructures of the future.

The practices theory based programmatic approach deployed in this thesis, which revealed the rules governing the practices – uncovering the specific food safety heuristics within well-established practices (chapter 2), the contextual constraints in breaking with well-established practices and adopting new alternatives (chapter 3 and 4), and the relation and cohesion of distinct shopping practices over time (chapter 5) – substantiates the practicability of practices theory based research approaches for retail modernization policy design in realizing improved food safety in a rapidly transforming Asian context.

Policy recommendations

Clearly, changes in infrastructures in themselves are not sufficient for changing the daily practices of consumers. Policymakers should neither depend on a single model or approach for retail development, nor take a policy approach as if they are engineering society in the aimed for direction. The limited adoption of supermarkets in the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables is by no means the result of an active or organized resistance against modern retail formats. On the contrary, modern outlets like supermarkets are well recognized and valued for their food safety/quality proposition, but their adoption appears to be inhibited by the broader embedding in daily life.

Instead of putting all strategic resources on one strategy, efforts of integration and mutual adaptation of modern and traditional structures could be considered. Pursuing a trend of hybridization prevents that consumers have to break with long established routines in an isolated and radical way. Specifically in the context of emerging countries like Vietnam, which focus on progress through modernization, there is little room for reassessing and re-appreciating the past. When policymakers disregard inherited practices they might fail to acknowledge the value of ‘resurrecting practices’ (Maller and Strengers, 2015). There is not a single clearly mapped path that Vietnam can follow towards modernization.

Acknowledging the complex task of policymakers in stimulating development for social betterment, we do not pretend to know the solutions. Yet, this thesis aims to show that there are alternative ways to view everyday life, in such a way that it is not only ambiguous and complex, but in a way that it delivers understanding beyond isolation and ineffective simplification. Based on the results in this research I argue that policymakers would benefit from deploying multiple perspectives in designing future oriented policies and steering instruments. Allowing for multiple vantage points delivers a range of information that can contribute to a better understanding on how interventions might configure with other practices in daily life; both in-depth understandings of the practices and their internal logics as well as the cohesion of practices even beyond the domain of food.

6.6 Discussion on findings on Vietnam in a comparative Asian perspective

In Vietnam, state intervention in retail development is clearly visible in the dominance of domestic retail corporations. Only recently in 2009, as a result of WTO commitments, Vietnam also allows fully foreign ownership. The effects of the opening of the country for foreign corporations are starting to become visible. In particular regional players like the Japanese AEON, Korean Lotte, Hong Kong Dairy Farm and Thai Central Group are actively pushing penetration in Vietnam. Also privately owned domestic retail chains are accelerating their foray into the market. Supermarketization is undoubtedly an advancing trend, in which supermarkets will gradually lose their aura of exception and novelty, to become more normalized in daily life. More consumers will turn to supermarkets as a possible option for routine shopping when these become more available. However, the question remains to what extent supermarkets will be popularized as a preferable alternative to wet markets. It seems reasonable to expect that supermarkets, in particular in the fresh food category, will remain just one alternative among others. Even in the most mature market in Asia, Singapore, wet markets remain important in fresh food sales (Mele et al., 2015). The daily early morning routine of grocery shopping at wet markets is a pan-Asian phenomenon. Markets function as a center for people from all walks of life. They represent the Asian love for food and the social cohesion in communities. It is at markets that not only daily foods are purchased, but also where people meet and greet and stories are shared. It is essentially within this meaning beyond economic transactions of goods and money, that markets are a unique retailing concept that can't be compared with 'modern' supermarkets and convenience shops. Indeed, markets face challenges in meeting the safety and hygiene requirements of modern times, not only in Vietnam, but also across the region. Some argue that if wet markets want to survive, they need to work on quality and safety (Bougoure and Lee, 2009).

This thesis shows how food retailing is not on a crossroad between past and present, or wet market and supermarket, or local and global, or traditional and modern. Food shopping practices are demonstrated as evolving processes with varying consistencies in change. The retail landscape therein is shown to develop into directions of more versatility (see figure 5.1) that include the reinterpretation and reinvention of more traditional food retail forms by adopting certain aspects of modernity, like

drive-through street markets. Consumers can choose from an increasingly broad spectrum of food retail alternatives. By applying a practices based research prism, this thesis demonstrates how and why it is not justified to expect supermarkets to simply replace wet markets in the future.

Vietnam-like food safety problems are prominent across the Asian region and mitigating food safety in the transformative context of emerging Asian economies is more fluid than rational and conscious choice-making. Consumers are creative in finding solutions to enhance the performance of daily life as they balance between abstract and personalized food safety guidance systems and vending structures. Government agencies could deliberately engage community groups, residents and researchers, to identify disparities in access to safe foods and to re-conceptualize the retail modernization intervention model. Efforts should focus on the whole spectrum of food shopping practices, beyond the extremes of wet markets and supermarkets only. Engaging citizens in public policy design enables policymakers to become more receptive to locally embedded food practices and the associated rules and routines for managing risk and uncertainties. This can inform and influence the development of a more versatile and amenable portfolio of public regulations and resources, which accommodate for amelioration in food provision, not only in the longer-term, but also addresses the immediate food safety problems in the everyday lives of urban populations. As such, practices based perspectives provide for *wider horizons*, beyond ideal-typical supermarketization, in safe and healthy food provision.

6.7 References

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'This thesis
is about how
ordinary people
in their daily
shopping practices
confront food
safety risks
within the
transformative
context of
modernizing
Vietnam.'

Summary

This thesis analyses how people during everyday life confront real food safety risks that are difficult to influence and come to grips with and focuses on food safety risks in modernizing Vietnam.

Over the past 40 years Vietnam has developed from war torn country with a highly centralized planned economy ranking among the world's most impoverished nations to a socialist-oriented market economic power house, currently ranking highest among the world's largest growth economies. Throughout this transition Vietnam has struggled with food security in which concerns have shifted from 'is there enough to eat?' to 'is it safe to eat?'. Food safety has become a major social and political issue in Vietnam. Urbanization puts pressure on the provision of daily fresh food. The distancing of production-consumption relationships and the intensification of cultivation methods, as a response to growing urban demand with a declining farmland acreage, results in regular food safety incidents related to the inappropriate use of chemicals in agricultural production. The wide media coverage of such incidences has resulted in food safety being the 'number one consumer concern' in Vietnam.

To improve food safety and to restore trust among consumers, authorities in Vietnam, as in other parts of Asia, promulgate policies that focus on the modernization of the food retail system. Western models of consumption and retailing strongly influence these retail modernization policies, placing supermarket development at the core of strategies. The retail modernization policies are designed to influence choices and persuade consumers to change their behavior based on the idea that consumers make rational choices, assuming that food safety concerns will drive consumers into supermarket channels. However, despite consumer food safety concerns, in the performance of everyday life, consumers don't 'en masse' adopt the policy enabled risk-reducing alternative of supermarkets. Traditional channels such as wet markets continue to dominate in the daily fresh vegetable purchasing practices. This phenomenon is observed across the Asian continent. As it turns out, transitions in the food buying practices of Asian consumers are not so easily established.

This thesis addresses consumption as a social practice. The application of social practice based approaches to the analysis of consumption started around the turn of the

century and has since gained importance in thinking about food system changes with a strong focus on western developed societies. By applying the research on the specific case of shopping for vegetables in Vietnam, this thesis exemplifies how a social practices approach is relevant beyond OECD countries. In studying the relation and dynamics between local cultural tradition and advanced globalization at the consumption junction, this thesis uncovers how practices of shopping for vegetables and their inherent food safety dynamics emerge, evolve, or die out within the rapidly transforming urban context of Hanoi, Vietnam. This thesis is concerned with the question:

How do ordinary people in Vietnam confront food safety risks and why and how they do, or do not adopt alternative practices, like modern retail shopping, to respond to their increasing concerns about the fresh-food made available to them?

The conducted research and its findings are described in this thesis over six chapters. It starts with an introductory chapter 1, followed by four distinct, though coherent, empirical research chapters (chapter 2 – 5). Each of these chapters delivers a complementary understanding on the everyday practice of shopping for vegetables in the transformative context of Vietnam. Combined these empirical research chapters provide an understanding of how practices of shopping for vegetables develop, are sustained and/or die out within a rapidly transforming urban context. The thesis ends with a concluding chapter 6.

The first chapter describes the research problem, the theoretical framing of the problem and the research questions. The chapter explicates why this thesis takes a social practices theory based research approach. Exploring the middle ground of two interlinked debates – a debate with extreme positions in retail development and a debate on how to bring about behavioral change, – it is discussed that a social practices approach is relevant for obtaining understandings of everyday life, because of its non-individualist perspective, its empirical focus on habitual activity, and its inclusion of the local context. Next, the chapter outlines the conceptual approach in which relations between provision systems on the one hand and consumers on the other are mediated at the food retailing sites. By giving primacy to neither agency nor structure, it is discussed how practices based research, might deliver an understanding of the relation and dynamics between local cultural tradition and advanced globalisation. It then elaborates on the novel programmatic methodological approach of shifting

perspectives – zooming in on situated practices and zooming out through a historical mapping of a portfolio of embedded practices – that allow the detection of the dynamics in situated habitual and contextually constrained activities, as well as longer term transformations of practices over time. Chapter 1 concludes with an exposition of the mix of methods applied.

Chapter 2 investigates which characteristics of the dominant and persistent practice of shopping at wet markets account for its continued reproduction and addresses the question of how food safety concerns are confronted within this well-established practice. Taking a rural city not yet touched by retail modernization as the research setting, this chapter presents in-depth empirical research insights on interactions at wet-market from the perspective of both sales persons and citizen-consumers. This chapter shows that food safety is a well-recognized dilemma by both providers and consumers of vegetables, but that food safety concerns are not the principal factor in determining the purchasing practices. Shopping at wet markets is a highly routinized taken for granted activity and food safety concerns only become prominent within this habitual shopping setting. Deploying specific heuristics for vendor and product selection, food safety is shown to be continuously reproduced along pre-given lines. As long as the existing, ‘practical’ repertoire of food safety heuristics deployed by consumers suffices in counter balancing their anxieties, consumers adhere to their established food shopping routines of shopping at wet markets.

Chapter 3 explores the persistence of shopping for vegetables at informal, uncontrolled, and unhygienic street markets in the context of advancing retail modernization in urban Hanoi. Government induced policies aim at replacing wet markets by supermarkets and therewith enforce breaks with well-established routines. However, although supermarkets are recognized and valued as safe vegetable retailing sites, they are only marginally successful in attracting daily vegetables consumers. This chapter addresses the question of what context specific processes and circumstances account for the continued reproduction of shopping at street markets that do not offer formal food safety guarantees. The empirical study of vegetable shopping practices at six different street markets, reveals how consumers handle food safety concerns in combination with other choices about where and when to buy. It shows how and why daily routines are time-spatial constrained. Where and how to buy vegetables is importantly shaped by other activities in daily life. The empirical research illustrates

that temporal and spatial dimensions of practices in contemporary daily life in Hanoi constitute a reinforcing mechanism for the persistence of uncontrolled and unhygienic street markets, rather than the uptake of supermarkets. This chapter points out that food safety policies and interventions that do not take into consideration the existing everyday consumption practices, might fail to address acute food safety issues.

Chapter 4 assesses the extent of the outreach of modernized retail formats in terms of who benefits, who is excluded and what context specific processes and circumstances influence the uptake of modified or modern retail formats by different social groups. A practice realist perspective is demonstrated to be relevant for addressing outreach and social inclusion and understanding how policy interventions play out in practice. On the basis of a collective case study of six distinct policy induced retail modernization interventions, this chapter illustrates the emerging and on-going process of food retail transformation. This approach exposes how and why similar supermarket interventions can yield contrasting intermediate outcomes when they do not accommodate for differences in shopper population and do not adapt to variations in the urban conditions. The current one-dimensional, supermarket oriented, retail modernization policy that aims to reduce the exposure to uncertified 'unsafe' food, is shown to lead to the exclusion of a large proportion of the population. This chapter points out the importance for Vietnamese policymakers to consider the risk of social deprivation and to explicitly reflect on the unanticipated consequences of the normative direction of their interventions in food provision. This chapter indicates that reaching a more diverse population requires more flexible policies that allow for malleability in response to local conditions.

Chapter 5 addresses the questions: what practices of purchasing or appropriating fresh vegetables do exist in contemporary Vietnam; how do they relate to food safety concerns and dynamics; why did they emerge and evolve during the past 40 years; and what factors are important in explaining the dynamics of change in the overall set of shopping practices? Deploying a practice historical perspective, this chapter unravels the complex evolving relationships between the local and the global as they can be read from the ways in which Vietnamese consumers deal with food safety risks when shopping for fresh food, by analyzing a portfolio of shopping practices against the background of historical changes over the period 1975 – 2015. Discussing the way in which six situated social practices are embedded in the broader set of food appro-

priation practices, this chapter portrays how practices show consistency in change over time, influenced by transformations in their environment, in which practices are interrelated with other practices in daily life beyond the act of shopping for food and beyond the domain of food. Further this chapter demonstrates how food safety related trust mechanisms as deployed by Vietnamese consumers show patterns of hybridization of personalized trust with abstract guidance systems. The historical approach provides insights on why shopping at supermarkets is not just currently still limited in recruiting practitioners. Also looking forward, it is not reasonable to expect homogenization in food retail system transformation.

This thesis concludes with chapter 6 which addresses the question of what lessons can be learned from social practices research in assessing the present and future role of supermarkets and the accompanying food safety strategies, which imply the de- and re-routinization of well-established contemporary practices of shopping for fresh-food. Along the four empirical research chapters, it first sets out to answer the research questions. Next it elaborates on the theoretical and methodological approach. The chapter describes the iterative research process and depicts how methodological variance can be used as a strength when applied as an intelligible program of shifting perspectives – zooming in and out on practices – and a mix of methods. It is pointed out that although practices based approaches are criticized on their complexity and ambiguity, the approach used in this thesis is proven to deliver concrete results and might be useful in similar cases. Lastly, this concluding chapter discusses how practices based perspectives have the potential to inform a more versatile and amenable portfolio of public regulations and resources when striving for amelioration in food provision, not only in Vietnam, but across the Asian continent.

This thesis demonstrates how changes in infrastructures are not sufficient for changing practices and thus warns against making food safety policies strongly dependent on a single supermarket model. Instead of putting all strategic resources on one strategy, efforts of integration and mutual adaptation of modern and traditional structures could be considered. Pursuing a trend of hybridization prevents that consumers have to break with long established routines in an isolated, radical way.



Acknowledgments – “Thank you!” / “Cảm ơn!”

Hanoi, early morning – ‘chop – chop – chop....’ The sound of the steady rhythm of the butcher cutting the meat below our bedroom window mixed with the soft chatter of vendors and shoppers exchanging the latest novelties and making the habitual bargain; the horning of motorbikes trying to make their way through the narrow streets of the morning market.... the sounds of our daily wakeup call.

The journey has come to a new destination, not only as a figure of speech, but also literally with our remigration from Vietnam to The Netherlands. Over the past years I have had the most wonderful opportunity to combine research with my work and family life in Hanoi, Vietnam. A combination that allowed me to truly discover and explore the everyday food consumption practices in Vietnam and so much more. It has been a journey that I have tremendously enjoyed and it is thus with mixed feelings that I am writing this final part of my thesis.

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Dear both, if my PhD would be the end of our collaboration, I wouldn't even have the slightest incentive to complete this thesis. I truly wish this to be the start of more to come.

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The data used for my PhD thesis have been partly collected within larger programs.

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A warm thank you to all the people that so generously let me in on their lives for my research, welcomed me into their homes, and shared their experiences and aspirations with me. Your daily routines have been the subject of my research and I hope that this thesis is also giving something valuable back to you. Up and close personally I have experienced the rapid changes in Hanoi's modernizing society. I have witnessed how the buffalo in our street made room for expensive motorized vehicles and how the last single-story village house was being demolished and replaced by a seven-story apartment building. Amidst these changes I have also observed the resilience of 'our' neighborhood market. Despite construction, police raids and retail development, the vendors in our street reappeared day after day, year after year, providing our 'daily bread'. To all of you, I hope: hẹn gặp lại!

Thank you, cô Oanh / Cảm ơn cô Oanh!

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Q: What do you hear when you wake up?

A: The horning of motorbikes

Q: What do you smell when you walk out-of your door?

A: Raw meat

Lara, you worked in the field with the Fresh Studio agronomists and shared lunches with my colleagues at your favorite Xuan Dieu street food stall. Your appetite for the authentic Vietnamese cuisine will be hard to fulfill in The Netherlands, but let's try to make a decent Phở together. Allerliefste Heiman, Lara en Peer, wat hebben we het

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Now it is time for me to propose a toast to all of you: "Mot hai ba, YO!"



About the author

Sigrid Wertheim-Heck (1971) is Director Marketing and Business Development of the Southeast Asia based agro-food consulting firm Fresh Studio, and researcher at the Environmental Policy Group of Wageningen University in The Netherlands. Her research explores sustainable food consumption theory and practice and in her commercial work Sigrid provides advisory services at top management level in the fields of product development, innovative agro-food business strategy and marketing. She holds a dual masters degree from the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University with one from the Institute of History (1995) and the other from the Institute of Russian and Eurasian Studies (1997).

During her academic and professional career, she spent extended periods living and working abroad in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, of which the last nine years in Vietnam. Sigrid started her professional career at the Centre for International Business Studies (CIBS), a consultancy in intercultural management in Amsterdam, where she was responsible for business intelligence on Eastern Europe. She moved to Ukraine for the Dutch National Telecommunications Company (KPN) for business development in Eastern Europe. At KPN she gained international management and -marketing experience, first in Kiev, Ukraine and later in The Netherlands. Sigrid's interest in processes of creative and analytical thinking led her to work at an international management consultancy, Publicis Consultants, focusing on solving challenges in international fast moving consumer goods. It appeared to her that branded conspicuous consumer goods had a large interest, whereas fresh foods did not. Combining a consumer driven approach with her desire to attribute to a significant cause, she went to work at the Agricultural Economics Institute (LEI Wageningen UR) in The Hague. As senior researcher marketing and consumer studies she focused on demand-driven agro-food chains, brand strategy, product innovation and consumer behavior. In 2007 Sigrid moved to Vietnam and has since then worked for Fresh Studio where she set up Fresh Studio's Marketing Department and is leading a team of consultants across Vietnam and the Philippines responsible for consumer and market research, business development, and marketing strategy within the Asian food sector. Sigrid combined this PhD research with her work at Fresh Studio. She currently continues her work for Fresh Studio in The Netherlands and is as senior research fellow affiliated with Wageningen University, Environmental Policy Group.

Cover:

Propaganda poster 2007, photography Sigrid Wertheim-Heck, 4 September 2007

Chương trình chất lượng vệ sinh an toàn thực phẩm

The quality of food hygiene and safety

Vì sức khỏe và phát triển bền vững, hãy sản xuất ra những sản phẩm thực phẩm an toàn

For health and sustainable development, please produce safe food products

Photography by Sigrid Wertheim-Heck

Lay out by Wouter Pasman, Fresh Studio, Vietnam

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