How Ghanaian migrants shape Almere's foodscape

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This research is about the food routines of migrants living in Almere. The specific research question is "How do Ghanaian migrants living in Almere shape Almere's foodscape?" The aim of this research was to display how the existing Ghanaian migrants' food culture has been shaping the current foodscape of Almere. Consequently, it provides insights for further research and integrated policies on how to support sustainable and healthy food choices of migrants living in Almere.

Background

In this research I cooperated with Flevo Campus. Flevo Campus connects entrepreneurs, educators, researchers and policymakers. The research institute is looking for solutions to urban food issues through research, innovations and experiments and aims to create a sustainable, healthy and accessible food system for everyone. Using interdisciplinary approaches, Flevo Campus looks for new solutions that harness healthy and sustainable urban food. The aim is that in this way citizens and producers are equipped to make more conscious food choices (https://flevocampus.nl/). Flevo Campus studies the food routines of migrants in Almere, and is specifically interested in how people use, change and adapt to Almere's foodscape, in order to better understand food routines and associated food identity.

Food routines are influenced gradually by for instance economic forces, technological progress, historical legacies, political settings, environmental issues, sociological and cultural contexts and psychological determinants (Capone et al, 2014). Also migration plays an important role: as a result of migration, a more diverse food culture comes into existence, associated with a diversity of food practices and patterns.

Almere and its population

Almere's population development is characterized by rapid growth. Behind this growth are the factors of migration, fertility, and mortality. The prognosis is that the total population will increase until the year 2033. The total Dutch population, on the other hand, is projected to decrease, while the non-western population continues to slowly increase. Almere is a multicultural city with almost 200 different ethnicities (Hammash and Marskamp, no date). The increasing diversity of migrant citizens in Almere means that food consumption diversifies, and that the foodscape changes accordingly.

Because of the historical relationship to food and the highly diverse urban population, Almere is an interesting field site for exploring emerging questions around urban food system transformations (Brons, 2022). The question is how the diversity of urban dwellers — in this case focusing on Ghanaian migrants - influences the present foodscape with respect to healthy and sustainable food choices, and how this may influence future

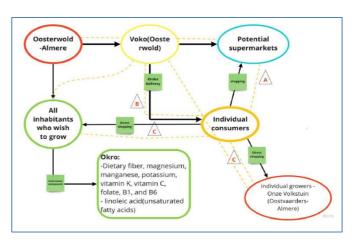
interventions that harness a healthy and sustainable food environment. In addition, what role can the municipality of Almere and other actors play in this regard? Other aspects captured under this thesis work are how Ghanaian food routines impact the food transition dynamics and culture of Almere, what factors influenced migrants' grocery shopping patterns, and how different supermarkets contribute to food routines toward healthy and sustainable food.

Design thinking

I used the design thinking approach of handling complex challenges, since not much is known about Ghanaian migrants' contributions to the foodscape of Almere. In this approach one first **empathizes** with different stakeholders about the challenge, so as to generate as many insights as possible. These insights are then synthesized into a common defined challenge to be addressed, using desk research, stakeholder mapping and engagement, and focus group discussion. Based on the challenge **defined**, a survey was sent to 25 Ghanaian migrants living in different locations of Almere. In addition, I conducted structured and semi-structured interviews with other stakeholders. This was part of the **ideation** process to generate several insights and potential interventions. When all insights and ideas were received, they were synthesized in the form of **prototyping**, conceptualized and developed into tangible approximations of intervention solutions for the stated challenge. This intervention was then **tested** through different fora, which include stakeholder meetings, focus group discussions and a presentation during the so-called food system innovation festival (an event where students presented their respective interventions / prototypes for testing to public and staff of the university).

Results

I found that the growing demand for certain food ingredients may slightly influence the food culture of present and future Ghanaian migrants. This influence potentiality impacts the production and supply chain of these ingredients. Some of these ingredients, for example okra, travel over 6000 kilometers before reaching the Netherlands. This has environmental impact. Therefore I conclude that creating a short chain of okra production in Almere is an interesting intervention to consider. A short okra supply chain will contribute to a reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the price fluctuation of this product. Additionally, it will support healthy and sustainable food choices due to the nutritional component of this ingredient. I identified Almere Oosterwold



Intervention of short okra chain production and retail

(earmarked for urban farming) and Onze volkstuin in de kas as potential growing places for the okra. However this intervention would require several stakeholders and actors working together.

Sources

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