Who Owns This Jungle?
Changes, Landownership and Traditional Authority in the Tropical Forests of Western Ghana

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Master’s thesis in Global Environmental History
Abstract


At present, in Adansi and Daboase, two rural communities in Western Ghana, changes are both internally and externally driven. Combined with ongoing negotiations of authority, landownership, history, tradition and culture, the interconnectedness of these areas shapes the realities of these communities. This thesis investigates these land-related conflicts and authority negotiations from a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Inspired by action-oriented research, the lives of local residents are investigated and attempted to be understood through their own explanations. Four months of internship with an oil palm and rubber plantation company, focus groups and semi-structured interviews in two local communities to the plantation, lay the foundation of this thesis. It shows an intimate connection between landownership and resource rights, and history, heritage and traditional authority. Land is key to power or a secured future for one’s family, which makes it an inflamed topic. Landownership and the underlying negotiations are crucial to the understanding of what occupies many local residents in a setting of globalised markets. The thesis points to gaps of understanding and varying interests in-between government, external actors, chieftaincy and community members. Thorough consultation process procedures prior to projects in rural communities are proposed. The project adds to a larger discussion on sustainability, corporate social responsibility, local knowledge and experiences on land conflicts, and post-colonial settings in Ghana.

Keywords: Action-oriented research, Change, Chieftaincy, Ghana, Hermeneutic phenomenology, Landownership, Landscape history, Local communities, Negotiations, Oral history, Traditional authority, Western Ghana.


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Introduction

On a Wednesday afternoon in January 2019 in the Western Region of Ghana, I spoke to a local resident who had been living in the community for several years. He was not a native from the town but called it his home now. We spoke about his community, the people, their culture, surroundings and some issues they had with external authorities and parties. I asked if he thought that it was illegal when the company they called PSG and the Forestry Commission came to their lands and took them for plantation operations.

He answered: “No it was not illegal. Because they cannot just come here and claim the land. Maybe they went to the government, or Forestry, before they took the land. So, I don’t think it was illegal. It was legal, but they should have consulted the people of the land first.”.

To which I asked him: “So, do you think they have a responsibility in collaborating?”.

“Yes, that didn’t happen. They said it themselves the other day, they should have met the community, but they didn’t do that. They just came in, bulldozing the land, without talking to us beforehand. We told our Chief he should have taken something better for the community. They should for example have done our roads, before they worked on the land. But they just came in. Now, after they have been here for four or five years, they are yielding the palm fruits, which brings them profit. Our Chief told them to come and see us. But they have not come. So, we are going there to try to talk to them and make them understand they should have spoken to us, before they started working on the land. There are certain things we want from them. They have told our Chief to go and crucify for our gods there. Every year the Chief will go and crucify and poor libation. But we want certain things, before our Chief should go again to do it. Because whatever we need, they have not met our needs. Look around.”

The conversation above is a fragment of a two-hour long talk that I had with a local resident of in a village, situated in the tropical forests of Western Ghana. The issue of land, authority and negotiation has become the foundation for this thesis, alongside other and related conversations with local residents on history, society and landscape. What you are about to read is based on conversations taking place over a period of five months, where I lived in Ghana and worked with an agricultural company in the countryside of the Western Region, close to Ghana’s third largest city Takoradi. During my time and work there I had the opportunity to get to know the local communities, some of the local residents and leaders, their surroundings, the plantation and rural life in Ghana.
The landscape of Western Region is dominated by tropical forests, interspersed with fields and settlements. The two local communities we meet in this thesis are Adansi and Daboase. Adansi is a small rural village of approximately 1,000 inhabitants, and Daboase is a rural town counting around 10,000 inhabitants. Both communities dwell in the so-called Subri-forest area and have over time been subject to various changes, driven by both external and internal factors. The traditional authorities in the communities, usually lead by a chief, his Elders and other advisors, are seen as the custodians of the land. Custodians of the land means that they are the caretakers, which is a role that has been granted by the Ghanaian state. These hierarchies have existed in pre-colonial times, throughout colonial times, and after the country’s independence in 1957 (Brempong, 2006). With increased modernisation and globalisation, traditional leadership has met new changes and challenges in their communities and landscapes. The chief’s role is to protect and represent the community’s best interests. Earlier, wars and loosing territories were the main threat to such communities. Today, the threats are different. They consist of illness, hunger, poverty, crime, environmental degradation, land conflicts and increased interest in land from external parties. Rights to land and resources are bound by traditional and customary rights through a chief. Since the chiefs are the custodians/caretakers of the lands, land is connected to power positions, which need to be negotiated or protected continuously.

At the first glance few things seem to be changing in Adansi and Daboase. Through closer inspection, almost all areas of the local residents’ lives are under continuous changes. Although there is a strong sense of ‘community’ in terms of social cohesion, the state of their communities is perceived as very far from permanent. The ongoing negotiations of authority and landownership are interconnected with history, tradition and culture that together shapes the lives of the individuals and communities. There is an intimate connection between landownership and resource rights, and history, heritage and traditional authority. When conflicts occur or emerge in community settings, the issues are rarely viewed as isolated, but as interlinked with tradition and customs. A major issue for Adansi and Daboase residents is conflicts regarding their land. Landownership and the underlying negotiations are crucial to the understanding of what occupies the concerns of many local residents. Land is key to power but also a secure future for one’s family, which makes landownership such an inflamed topic.

External actors tend to stir up conflicts or create new conflicts in the communities. Both Adansi and Daboase have been subject to interference from colonial authorities. Land was appropriated by the government just after the independence for the building of a railroad in Adansi, which never appeared. Part of this land was signed over to a European oil palm and rubber company (PSG) in 2012. The following year the company came to the area and established a plantation and offices after agreement with the Ghanaian Forestry Commission. Although the land previously was a forest plantation, the company still has to negotiate land assimilation through the local channels of traditional political structures. The introduction of a new large actor in the area stirred up old and created new conflicts on landownership, resource rights and authority as I will discuss here.

1.1. Aims and Research Questions

In this thesis I investigate the ongoing negotiations and perceptions of changes and landownership in relation to history and the current presence of the oil palm and rubber company. During the conversations with local residents in both communities, we discussed many themes, which are not all covered here. Additional, or complimentary information can therefore be found in the Appendix. In the process of interviewing and conducting focus groups, I myself was drawn into negotiations of history, landownership and traditional authority. Therefore,
through a scaling down process, the core angle of this thesis became change and landownership.

In order to understand these matters, the oral history of the two communities, and the individual stories of some village Elders are explored here. I address three broad questions. The first question relates to how history is recorded and applied in terms of land and resource rights, traditional authority, and landscape changes. Central to this question are the histories of the communities, which are preserved through oral tradition and safeguarded by the traditional authority. Preserving knowledge of the past relates to resource rights for the community, the rights to which usually are bound to a chief. Secondly, I ask how selected local residents explain internal and external influences of change in and around their communities. Changes come in various forms in these communities. Some are welcomed and some cause disturbances. The causes for both historical and current changes described by individual residents are contemporary snapshots – or rather glimpses – of an everchanging Adansi and Daboase and their surroundings. My third question relates to how selected local residents explain land conflicts, in terms of changes over time and negotiations of authority, landownership and resource rights in the present. Landownership and traditional authority are key themes in both communities as already discussed above. These issues are examined here through the ongoing negotiations between community leaders, members and external parties.

1.2. Tools, Framework and Outcomes

Working in the interdisciplinary setting of global environmental history, several academic fields and methods form the framework and applied tools for this thesis. The overall theoretical framework I used for this thesis is hermeneutic phenomenology, which is a philosophical approach that grew out of phenomenology (Brinkmann, et al., 2014), led by Martin Heidegger in the 1920’s (Schacht, 1972), and later followed and expanded by himself and several other philosophers (see Kafle, 2011). When doing research, hermeneutic phenomenology does not seek to separate the researcher from its own social or cultural background (see Figal, 2012). Rather it seeks to describe and interpret, and to find underlying structures of the research area and interviewees (Ibid.), since hermeneutic phenomenology realises that all reproduction or reviewing in some ways already is interpretation (Schacht, 1972). Hermeneutic phenomenology has allowed me as the researcher to acknowledge the central role I play in gathering material, formulating questions and conducting the interviews. As mentioned above, hermeneutic phenomenology rejects the attempt to have an objective perspective, free from one’s cultural and social background as a researcher but shifts its focus towards the subjective perceptions and experiences of individuals or groups (Kafle, 2011). When working with the qualitative field methods and action-oriented research, I draw on the humanities’ branch of sociology and social and cultural anthropology (Brinkmann et al., 2014). It is far from uncommon to traverse several disciplines, when working with qualitative research (Ibid.) and oral history methods (Abrams, 2016). Overall, this research touches and navigates in several scientific fields, which in a kaleidoscopic way showcase the interlinked connections of the themes and conflicts that are presented. In Chapter 3, I will come back to my methodology and conceptual framework.

The internship that started this thesis was with a company named Plantation Socfinaf Ghana, which will be referred to as either ‘the company’, PSG or Socfinaf. It is an oil palm and rubber plantation company, which began operations in the area in 2013 and that have already been referred to above. Through working with the departments for Sustainability and Community and External Relations (CER), I built knowledge on local communities and environmental issues which functioned as base for developing the research questions. Initially, I intended to
investigate how the impact of the company was perceived by local residents. Designing a research plan, I built a methodology inspired by action-oriented research coming from sociology (Small and Uttal, 2005), where I as the researcher could become an actor in the targeted investigation field. Through this methodology I sought to combine academic research with practical experiences and voices. This approach seemed fitting, since the internship already made me somewhat of an actor and many interactions with the community members had taken place prior to the study. I also had the opportunity to gather local resident’s knowledge through focus groups. By including community members in the initial research stages, where research questions and themes were still being developed, community members had a great influence on topic and direction of research. The experience from the focus groups also changed the topic of this thesis from being oriented towards the company and its impact, to land and authority negotiations in the communities as land matters and resource management emerged as a key concern of the local residents that participated in the focus groups.

Focus group participants were gathered through the established channels of the company in the communities of Adansi and Daboase. The participants were chosen by the community representatives themselves and were mostly somehow in representative roles. One focus group was held in each community, which functioned almost as a form of ‘crowdsourcing’ of the research themes and questions. The focus group also allowed for building more knowledge about the local definitions of identity and culture, important for choosing the direction of the project. Seven selected local residents, who had, all but one, participated in the focus groups, were later interviewed using semi-structured interview techniques (Bernard, 2011), an interview technique that grew out of anthropological qualitative research studies, but used by many other disciplines nowadays. The interviews opened up the opportunity to express views and explanations on land matters and resource management and how they relate to the communities’ history, culture, traditional authority, landscape, and changes they might experience. Most of the interviewees hold authority positions in the traditional social and political hierarchies of the villages, and also act in these representational roles in the community. However, in the interview situation they all solely represent themselves and their individual views.

The semi-structured interviews with the local residents were carried out and completed in January 2019. The interviews and focus group information are the core source for the thesis. The analysis and presentation of the material is presented as a narrative but structured thematically. Other sources used here consist of maps of the area, relevant research on Ghana’s landscape, climate, history, ethnography, chieftaincy, development, economics, land laws, politics and land matters. Relevant research and reports have been included on related topics, such as land tenure matters, biodiversity loss in the area, and conflict cases of landownership in other African countries.

This thesis is the outcome of an interdisciplinary research approach, that touches upon several academic branches, fields and concepts, the approach to which some must be explained here. Following the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I followed the concepts and questions defined by local residents, rather than me pre-defining them or letting pre-set definitions pervade our conversations. As mentioned, through this process change and landownership became the main themes. Change is a broad term and concept, which would be impossible to capture in this thesis. As pointed out by Bammer (2015), change, and knowledge thereof, is fragmented and not covered comprehensively by any academic discipline (Bammer, 2015), although many disciplines in one way or another work with change. However, in this thesis I let the interviewees define the concepts that are introduced by them, as I will come to show in Chapter 5 – Landscape History and Changes. Landownership has been extensively studied by various disciplines (see for example Alao, 2007; Amanor, 1999; Hammer, 1998; Lund, 2013; Massey, 1980; Moene, 1992; Wunderlich, 1984; Yaro, 2010) but here I have allowed the term stay
broad, again allowing for the interviewees to define it how they perceived it. I therefore worked with landownership as in the ways land has been or is owned. From a local perspective land ownership can be understood as both spiritual and/or physical ownership of land. Landownership is addressed thoroughly in Chapter 6 – Negotiating Authority and Landownership.

The term and use of history we also need to take closer look at. This thesis navigates in the oral history branch of history research methods, that focuses on memories and narratives of the past (Abrams, 2016; Portelli, 2016; Tonkin, 1992), and how stories are used in relation to property rights and negotiations of authority (Fortmann, 1995; Ekblom et al., 2017), rather than solely written source-based history research (Carr, 2012). Source-based history and oral history do not exclude each other, but they both serve each their own role, that the other cannot fulfil (Portelli, 2016). Oral history and memory are “not a passive depository for facts, but an active process of meanings.” (Portelli, 2016, p. 37). In this thesis, I do not focus on large historical events, but the meaning of the history that I was told in the conversations in Adansi and Daboase. As Carr formulates: “Story telling is not just for the amusement of small children by night or visiting researchers by day. Rather it plays a strategic and serious role in the life of communities.” (Carr, 1986, p. 161). Oral histories can tell much about choices, interpretations and negotiations of the ones telling the stories in these traditional communities (Fortmann, 1995) and how politicised the stories are. The stories we meet, are the efforts of the ones telling the stories, to make sense of the past (Portelli, 2016). It is also important to point toward the role of the research process. The narrative and stories that are presented in this thesis, are the result of me conducting focus groups and interviews. Abrams defines four stages of oral history research process: the original interview, the recorded version, the written transcript, and the interpretation (Abrams, 2016). These are key to conducting oral history, and I used all four stages to build the narrative of this thesis. This aligns with the theoretical framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, where I looked at history and memory through asking, how history presented itself and how the interviewees experienced and utilised history. The stories that are told in the communities are linked to ongoing negotiations of authority and power. As will come to show in Chapter 4 – In the Oldin Days, history is used and safeguarded by the traditional authorities in ways that speak directly into multi-levelled social and political negotiations. The traditional authority that safeguard the community history and are subject to these negotiations, are in this context, understood as the leaders I spoke to in these communities, who represent and practice the traditional and political and cultural establishment. The concepts, how they were worked with and the outcomes, will be presented throughout and in the final discussion of the thesis.

The conceptual framework biocultural heritage (Lindholm and Ekblom, 2019), which is a concept that allows investigation and understanding of the historical nature-culture relationships of a landscape, and across academic disciplines, has inspired the thesis throughout. Although biocultural heritage is not actively integrated, the thesis contains several elements that could lay foundation for further research under the framework. In working with the interviewees’ descriptions of their surroundings, the concept of landscape, as in the manifestation of natural-cultural landscape, came to be crucial to understand how the communities and their surroundings look like and are used by the people and how this is perceived to have changed over time. In formulating questions and in thinking about landscape, I leaned towards Ingold’s uses of landscape and memories, where natural and cultural landscapes are brought closely together, rather than kept separately (Ingold, 1993). By investigating landscape changes and local resident’s explanations of their surroundings, landscape studies and historical ecology also join the mix of academic fields that I traverse. In Chapter 5, I ask how the surroundings have influenced the communities and vice versa.
Land conflicts are far from unusual in Ghana and other African countries (Lund, 2012; Yaro, 2010; Alao, 2007; Boone, 2013). They stir up many historical and contemporary unresolved issues that are deeply rooted in colonialism, inequality, and conflicts in practices of customary rights. This thesis can therefore contribute to both a deeper understanding of local residents’ perceptions of land-related issues and be helpful for any project planning in similar areas, where local residents and village communities historically have been excluded from planning. The conversations that this thesis is based on, I see not only as local political negotiations, but also as emanating from a critical commentary or stance through which resistance and collaboration towards development projects and other projects are negotiated. By investigating the interconnected issues of concern from the perspectives of local residents we can better understand how to create improved conditions for consultation processes with residents, not as here in hindsight but rather as part of the planning.

Additionally, a deeper understanding of the landscapes and how the changes are experienced from the viewpoints of local residents, can help in understanding how individuals negotiate community belonging in a local, national and global setting and also how they relate to global concerns, such as deforestation, loss in biodiversity, and ecosystem-conservation. Debates and perceptions of change, their causes and consequences, are also contemporary debates on sustainability. Focusing on the historical and contemporary changes, the narratives and experiences of landscape and environmental change amongst local residents also reflect individual thoughts of globalisation and modernisation. The discussions of this thesis are as much about the present and future as they are about the past. History is in this case fundamental to negotiations of land and authority, since history is utilised to legitimise traditional authority and defend resource rights, and to question present settings of authority, landownership or resource rights.

1.3. The Structure

Throughout this thesis we meet several community members, who have shared their perceptions and thoughts on their lives and surroundings. Their stories and my narrative will jointly build a story that in several ways introduces us to the communities of Daboase and Adansi. Before we meet the interviewees and hear some of their stories, we will take a look at Chapter 2, where I introduce relevant knowledge on Ghana’s history, administration, culture, geography and I will present the research area. Chapter 2 is followed by four analysis chapters. In Chapter 3, I present the methodology and framework thoroughly, and we meet the interviewees. The following Chapter 4 – In the Oldin Days, investigates how history is remembered and applied in the traditional communities. Oral history is tied to the traditional authority in both communities. In Chapter 5 – Landscape History and Changes, we meet the local residents’ experiences of how their surroundings change. The sixth chapter takes us to the negotiations of landownership and authority, and conflicts that are present in the communities (Chapter 6 – Negotiating Authority and Landownership). The seventh and final chapter is a discussion that concludes the thesis. The Appendix presents knowledge that was gathered through conversations but could not be included in the thesis analysis. Though before we take the journey to Ghana and the communities of Adansi and Daboase, we will first dig into Chapter 2, that equips us with background knowledge for the rest of the thesis.
Background

“The presence of the past in the present is notable in Africa.” 1

The presence of the past and understanding thereof, has shown to be crucial in this thesis. In order to understand the community settings in present Ghana and how local residents explain changes, negotiations and land-related matters, we have to acquaint ourselves with the past (and other aspects) of the country. This chapter provides the historical, administrational, cultural and geographical context of the research area, in order to understand the settings of the community lives. At the end of this chapter, we will begin our journey to the communities of Adansi and Daboase.

2.1. History and Chieftaincy

Ghana is an independent republic, with a history connected to European and trans-Atlantic colonial operations. Not all aspects of Ghana’s history are relevant for the setting of this project, but a few major historical developments will be summarised here. Commerce of natural resources and slaves, negotiations between locals and outsiders, conflicts and wars, are amongst many influences part of the country’s colonial history (Awoonor, 1990). However, much of the recent historical literature on Ghana’s history seeks to re-centre Ghanaian and/or African history in contrast to past Eurocentric interpretations of history (Awoonor, 1990; Davidson, 1974; Gnielinski, 1986). These works will be the basis of this historical background section.

In pre-colonial times, there was no country called Ghana or a defined territory. The country’s national borders were finalised with the Berlin Conference of 1884, and have lasted to this date (Klundze, 2000). In 1957, when gaining independence from colonial British powers, the name was chosen after the pre-colonial empire (situated in Mauretania-Mali) (Gnielinsk, 1986), symbolising freedom from European influences or supremacy. Ghana’s shoreline is 535 km long and easily accessible from the Guinean Gulf. Historically, Ghana’s coast, or the Gold Coast, has been used frequently by ships to go ashore (Kuada and Chachah, 1989). The Colonial period is considered to begin with the arrival of Portuguese ships in mid-fifteenth century and the establishment of fortresses for commerce in the 1470’s and 80’s (Gnielinski, 1986). The European interest in the West African coast was rooted in the presence of natural resources like ivory, spices and gold, and later slaves. Gold was an especially important recourse after which the region obtained its colonial name (Ibid.) Fortresses emerged along Ghana’s coast, built by Portuguese and other European countries in the decades and centuries to come. In 1844, the British Empire ceased all forts along the Gold Coast from other European powers (Sackeyfio-Lenoch, 2014). Eventually, they moved the administrative capital from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877 and finally, the country was then affirmed a British colony during the Berlin conference in 1884 (Ibid.).

1 Lund, 2013.
On March 6 in 1957, Ghana became the first country in Africa to gain independence from its colonial powers (Ninsin, 1998), where after a transition to democracy began. Ninsin describes this process thoroughly and paints a picture of a democratic process which is still ongoing in the country today. The political scene and system changed drastically after gaining independence, and with a mixture of civil governments, several coup attempts and military governments, the transition to democracy was challenging (Ibid.). Many other changes came along to the new independent republic and the transition can in some ways still be seen as unfulfilled, as Ninsin points out (Ninsin, 1998). Most exposition materials on Ghana’s history follow a chronological division of history in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial time periods, which I chose as well. In parallel with historical shifts and system changes, local political system has continued to exist throughout, namely the chief-based institutions, called chieftaincies or traditional authority (Brempong, 2006). All over Ghana, most communities are based on traditional hierarchies and usually led by a chief (Lentz and Nugent, 2000). Chieftaincies remains an important institution of local and community governance in Ghana. Historically, a chief’s main task was to lead his people to war and protect the territories but also to ensure the overall health of land and people (Brempong, 2006). Today a chief faces other challenges, such as mitigating of poverty, illness, hunger, environmental degradation, crime, and land conflicts with increasing pressures on land. Ghanain chieftaincies are protected by the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana from 1992 (Ibid.) and incorporated in present Ghanain democratic administration. Chieftaincies are also seen as part of an ancient African heritage (Kludze, 2000). Being important to social and political life in Ghana, chiefs are seen as key persons for communities, both when it comes to governance of local resources and land areas, and for social and political life (Brempong, 2006). In practice, the political Ghanai is a system of dual authority. The political authority being with elected officials in government, regional and local administrations. The traditional authority of chiefs and the associated hierarchies represent the communal layer, where consultation takes place through the chiefs (Ibid.). Consultation processes can shape differently. A chief can initiate broader consultation processes within the community or other chiefs, but decisions are also made solely by a chief, or the decisions are made on governmental level without consultation. Governmental administrations will reveal themselves to be essential for the conversations I had with local residents. In this thesis we meet stories of such consultation processes – or the lack thereof. chiefs, chieftaincies and their relationship to their communities, landscape and history will have a leading role in the narrative. As will be shown through a traditional institution, the roles and responsibilities of the chief and establishment are constantly negotiated. The traditional authority system of chiefs is important for negotiating projects initiated from the governmental administration but is also important for mobilising local resistance as will be shown here.

2.2. Land and Law

By now the reader is well familiar with the fact that landownership and changes are the core themes of this thesis. Land is described to be the most important and valuable resource in Africa (Alao, 2007). The meaning and importance of land excels in varying layers, such as economic, political, social, and spiritual (Ibid.). Land law and land issues in African countries (and Ghana) covers many academic fields. In the 1990’s, the first trans-disciplinary approaches to land-issues in Ghana started to appear, labelled as political ecology (Hammer, 1998) and later in

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2 In 1993 the last military government ended its rule after 11 years. By then only 13 years and 9 months since 1957 civil governments had been at rule, and 22 years and 3 months military governments had been in office (Ninsin, 1998).

3 For a comprehensive outline on chieftaincy in Ghana, see Brempong, 2006.
other fields, especially African studies and developmental studies. Such studies covered land tenure from various academic angles, often socio-economic, drawing on other fields as a background (see review in Hammer, 1998). Land-related topics have rarely been discussed using qualitative research methods, which is the purpose of this thesis.

After the country’s independence, the legal field sought ways to integrate cultural characteristics of Ghana with either colonial legislation and/or through new political and legal aims (Hammer, 1998). Although the discussion lacked unity on what the cultural characteristics were and what role they should play, the customary law and traditions of Ghanaian culture were integrated in Ghana’s legislation (Ibid.). The state allows chiefs to represent the communal level of the country in national legislation. As pointed out by Amanor (1999), this, at least in theory, enables the state to integrate the communal levels of the country in developmental planning. Although, as discussed above in practice, the manifestation of this relationship varies and it also in itself changes the extent of the power of the chieftaincy continuously, sometimes also challenging the authority of the chief within the community (Ibid.). We will see several stories of such changing power relationship throughout this thesis. Representation through traditional systems are inherently hierarchical and also problematic in many ways. The law assumes that communities are homogenous, and that chiefs can rule under local consensus but, as we will see in this thesis, on local level this depends on many factors. Many of the inhabitants will have differing opinions than their chief or than each other and these views will also change depending on the popularity of the chief or different situations. Tradition and customary law mediated mostly through oral tradition play a large part in these negotiations. The Ghanaian land system is based on various land rights, which are divided in-between farmers, chiefs, and/or the state (Amanor, 1999). Farmers have user rights on agricultural land, the chiefs have ‘de jure’ rights to the land and rights to high profits from use of the territory, such as from minerals or timber (Ibid.). These customary rights have to be respected by the state and other parties, like PSG. Amanor goes as far as calling the customary and traditional rights to land to be ‘anachronisms’ in a free market setting, because they get commodified and become “antiquated before they can ossify” (Amanor, 1999, p.19). In my opinion, Amanor points here towards a crucial paradox in the relationship between communities, chieftaincies, the state and the economic system, which this thesis also attempts to address in part. This thesis provides a deeper knowledge into the land-related issues and interconnectedness of the customary rights, land-ownership and chieftaincy in the communities, from the perspectives of local residents, which cannot be covered from one field’s perspective only. Thus, I add to an already complex discussion on land-related issues, by investigating the complexities within these inhomogeneous communities. Land-related conflicts have in some areas of the country even resulted in ethnic conflicts (Codjoe, 2007). Although such ethnic conflicts will not be discussed in this thesis, it is relevant to take a look at some cultural aspects of Ghana and the research area.

2.3. Cultural Aspects

The ethnic groups in Ghana are manifold (Lentz and Nugent, 2000). The 1960 consensus of Ghana’s ethnical groups was a manifestation of diversity in language and culture of the many ethnical groups. The Ghanaian nationality embraces approximately one hundred compound cultures (Gnielinski, 1986). The ethnic group we meet in this thesis count their ancestry from

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4 Besides the legal discussion post independency, customary (law) and tradition have also been discussed thoroughly from three other academic angles, which roughly were the political-economic, environmental and historical fields (Hammer, 1998).

5 In some literature and by most interviewees referred to as ‘tribes’, which is an obsolete terminology. Although the correct term would be ‘ethnic group’, ‘tribe’ will be used throughout the thesis when information from local residents is used.
the Wassa territory in the Western Region, and as a sub-group of the Akan people. They speak the local language *Twi* but also learn the official national language, English, in school. In both Adansi and Daboase, there are local chiefaincies. Adansi has an installed chief that is now becoming old. In Daboase, there is no chief installed at the moments, since the former one passed away. Instead the village is represented by a tufuhene (an advisor to the chief) and the Queen Mother. Who actually has authority the authority in Daboase is debated locally, as will be shown later. These traditional leadership positions are described thoroughly in the Appendix of this thesis, here only a short explanation of the relevant positions will be provided.

The chief is seen as the main social and cultural leader of the community (Brempong, 2006). As explained above, a traditional leader needs to balance internal relations and demands/needs and in relation to the external world, such as governmental or corporate organisations, where he represents his community (Ibid.). A chief is surrounded by a council of Elders, who advise him and also safeguard the history and tradition of the community (Kludze, 2000). There is also the tufuhene, who is the right hand of the chief and his main advisor, who also acts as a kind of opposition to the chief. The Queen Mother in Daboase is currently the only female representative in the traditional structure, and in such a leading role. Traditionally the queen mother is crucial in putting forward candidates for the chieftaincy after a chief has died. The communities are organised around extended families, also referred to as clans, by the interviewees a term that will be used throughout this thesis. The leader of a clan is called busuapenne and is also crucial for the functioning of the traditional structure in the community (Ibid.; see Appendix 2). The last position that is relevant for this thesis is the Youth Leader, who organises and leads the youth of the community.

The chieftaincy is tied to what locally is referred to as the ‘stool’, symbolising both power over people and territory. The stool lays the foundation of the traditional right for a community to have a chief and be an independent traditional community. The stool is not central to the understanding of this thesis, but the expression was used by several interviewees as crucial to their community identity. Christianity and Islam have taken over as the main religions in the country, and also in Adansi and Daboase. Although these two world religions dominate much of the culture, especially Christianity, many traditional customs are still practiced in the communities both the traditional leaders and the community members (Salm and Falola, 2002). Thus, a combination of traditional customs and either Christianity or Islam defines Ghanaian life and worldviews (Ibid.). The customs, religious and spiritual beliefs influenced many conversations I had in the communities and a strong connection between such matters and social and natural relationships re-appeared in the interviews which is discussed further in the Appendix.

2.4. Climate, Geography and the Research Area

Having explained the social and political situation both nationally and locally in the above, I here provide a broad understanding of the physical geography of the area. The Republic of Ghana is located at the centre of the Guinean coast line with a surface of 238,533 km² (CILSS, 2016). The country shares boarder with three countries: Togo to the East, Ivory Coast to the West and Burkina Faso to the North and is fringed by the Gulf of Guinea in the South. With an

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6 The chieftaincy’s hierarchy organizes around paramount chiefs, with divisional chiefs under them and then sub-chiefs, which are under the divisional chief (Kludze, 2000).

7 The ‘stool’ is a carved wooden object, usually made to sit on, and guarded/occupied by the sitting chief of a community. It is a religious and political object combined. The stool enshrines the souls of respected ancestors and/or unborn. Politically the stool represents the place for political decision making of the chief with consent from his Elders (Hammer, 1998).
estimated population of 30,013,690 people (World Population Review, 2019) and a rich amount of natural resources, Ghana is among the wealthier nations of West Africa (CILSS, 2016).

The topography and climate vary across the country, mostly covered by low plains, with some uplands and one major plateau in the south-central between Accra and Winneba (Ibid.). From north to south and from east to west, the country covers different bioclimatic regions (see CILSS, 2016). The research area is situated in in the western part of Ghana and the so-called Guineo-Congolian Region (Ibid.). Overall, the climate can be described as tropical (World Population Review, 2019) and average temperatures are between 26 – 29 degrees Celsius (Kuada and Chachah, 1989). Annual rainfall here lies between 2,200-5,000 mm/year and falls over two rain seasons annually, with sporadic rainfall during the two dry seasons. The research area is characterised by dense tropical forests with a combination of evergreen tropical forest and deciduous tropical forests.

Ghana is divided into ten administrational regions and 64 districts (Gnielinski, 1986). The Western Region is situated in the south-western corner of the country, with the regional capital of Takoradi (Districts Ghana, 2019a). The area this thesis focuses on, is situated in the south-western corner of Ghana (see fig. 1, p. 17). The communities of Adansi and Daboase are located in a north-eastern direction from Takoradi. The communities are situated about 15-20 km into the country from the coastline and just outside Ghana’s largest forest reserve, the Subri River Forest Reserve (Buzzard and Parker, 2012) where the PSG plantation is situated. The head office of the PSG plantation is placed in Daboase community. The Western Region is classified into eighteen districts. Daboase and some of the PSG plantations are situated in the Wassa East District, where Daboase is the capital (Ghana Districts, 2019a). Adansi is located in the Mpohor Fiase District, where the capital is Mpohor community. Formerly, both communities were administratively under the Wassa Fiase Mpohor District, but in 2012 an administrative division was made separating them into two districts (Ghana Districts, 2019b). The administrative change also changed the local social and political structure to some extent as will be further discussed here. The two villages both lay in the eastern part of the tropical forest zone and bordering to the deciduous forest area (Buzzard and Parker, 2012). The topography is plain, with few semi-hilly areas. About a fifth of the land mass area is used for cultivation and plantation purposes (Ghana Districts, 2019a).

Ghana’s population is densest around the coastline (Gnielinski, 1986), which naturally also affects the two communities discussed here, especially Daboase. Daboase town itself counts about 10,000 inhabitants. For the area, the 2010 consensus of the Wassa East District states the population of the district to be 81,073 people, hereof 40,089 females and 40,984 males (Ghana Districts, 2019a). Mpohor Fiase District counts 42,923, with almost equal groups of women and men (Ghana Districts, 2019b). The Adansi village has about a tenth of Daboase’s population and is much smaller. Compared to the rest of Ghana, the two districts have a medium population density of 63.64 per km² (City Population, 2019).

The communities are located close to each other, with many similarities in demographics and landscape, however the impact of the establishment of the PSG plantation, has been different and we will now take a closer look at the history of the establishment of the plantation.

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8 The numbers are based on the interviews and not official population counts or consensus numbers, since they were not easily accessible for Daboase and the numbers for Adansi were non-existing in the material that was researched.
2.5. Newer Developments and Plantation Socfinaf Ghana

Historically and today, the Republic of Ghana has rich and varying natural resources as discussed above. Historically the research area was mostly forested in the past but is today only covered by tropical forests in fractions (CILSS, 2016). In the 60’s the country started to export cocoa and became amongst the world’s largest exporters, a position it still holds today (Ibid.). Deforestation and degradation are amongst the most critical issues for the country (Nunifu, 2010). The natural resources, which is mainly what the country’s economy is based upon, has been over-exploited and ill-managed (Ibid.). Several explanations are presented in academic literature, whereof the most frequent are the already mentioned over-exploitation of farming and unsustainable forest management. This, in combination with a large and ongoing population growth, which since the 1960’s has risen exponentially (Codjoe, 2007), and is estimated to even double by the year 2050 (World Population Review, 2019). The demographic pressures are often seen both in academic literature and the media as the main driver of deforestation, since more people need farming lands and fuelwood (Codjoe, 2007). However, other scholars break with the assumption of solely local farming to work against the forest – or exclusively cause deforestation – such as Fairhead and Leach (1995). A weak legislation and low enforcement have also caused a very high degree of forest loss through large scale state organised deforestation and also illegal logging activities, the numbers of which are difficult to estimate (Glastra, 1999). It is far more complicated than solely placing the blame with the farmers. Legal and illegal logging and plantations are also strong drivers for deforestation (Yaro et al., 2017), combined with ‘land grabbing’ of foreign companies that have acquired enormously large areas of land altogether in Ghana (thoroughly examined by Rafiee and Stenberg, 2018. See also Nyantakyi-Frimpong and Kerr, 2017).

In addition to deforestation and degradation comes that legal and illegal mining operations cause local degradation and water pollution (CILSS, 2016). Besides cocoa, minerals and wood, Ghana has also begun to operate oil drilling platforms and the exporting thereof (Ibid.). Amongst the natural resources that the country has to offer, is also land for oil palm plantation, which is how I came to the area of research. The company I interned and stayed with for five months is called Plantation Socfinaf Ghana. It is an agricultural company that is part of the European Socfin group (Socfin, 2018c). In total the group has fourteen plantations, spread over Southeast Asia, and West and Central Africa. PSG works with both oil palm and rubber plants.
and has around 6,500 hectares of planted land in Ghana (Socfin, 2018b). PSG is a young company that acquired the land from a Ghanaian forestry company in 2012, mediated through the government (Socfin, 2018c). The former owners, a company called SIPL, had been granted 18,880 hectares by the Ghanaian government in 1990 for them to operate forestry for paper production. This project failed due to reasons I have not been able to identify, but it led SIPL to sell off the land. PSG began operating the plantation in 2013. PSG then replanted the area with oil palms and rubber and in 2019 the construction of an oil mill will be finished and begin operations. The Socfin group has taken a sustainable approach in their operations in the past three years (Socfin, 2016), which comes to light through their commitment to work towards RSPO-certification (Socfin, 2018a). RSPO is a certification for sustainable palm oil production. PSG has also employed around 2,000 Ghanaians (Socfin, 2018c), which contributes to local community development. This Socfin commitment to sustainability stipulates a strong collaboration with the local communities in and around the plantation, a work I was deeply involved in during my internship and which also laid the foundation of this thesis. A social responsibility agreement⁹ exists between PSG and the Daboase town but has not yet been established with the Adansi village. Through the agreements, PSG supports or pays for local development such as schools, medical clinics, clean water supplies, infrastructural development and employment for community members (Socfin, 2018d). The social responsibility agreements are part of the company’s sustainability approach and responsible management policy (Socfin, 2016). However, as this thesis will show, collaboration issues between the company and the communities are present and came up during most conversations I had with local residents.

2.6. Encountering Daboase and Adansi

Having laid out the necessary background it is now time to move to an introduction of Daboase and Adansi. After three and a half hours drive from Accra on the international road, which is the main road along the West African coast, the Daboase junction appears. Taking the road that branches in the northern direction we pass an open savanna, freshly green in the rainy season, but dark green and dusty red during dry season. Daboase emerges shortly after leaving the international road. It is a somewhat hilly area with the Daboase town as the centre. Daboase’s population is today a mix of the old Wassa tribe, and newcomers from different regions and clans around Ghana – also some resident from neighbouring countries. Next to the Daboase town, in the hilliest part of the landscape, lies the head office of PSG. The vegetation around Daboase is dominated by forest, bush areas, plantation and cultivation. Cultivation is the main occupation for most of Daboase’s community members. They grow yam, cassava, plantain, bananas, pineapple, cocoa, rubber, and oil palm. Most of the produced crops are eaten or sold internally. The area is good for cultivation, because the soil and weather patterns are advantageous, as also commented by the interviewees. The surroundings and the community are dominated by the rainy season and dry season, which dictates the times for land clearing, harvesting and planting. The rainy season provides enough rain for most of the farms, that practice only rainfed agriculture. The Pra River, which passes close by the town, is essential to Daboase. It is used for fishing and the water in the town comes from the river, since a pipe system for the water was installed some years ago. Some farms are also settled along the river, so the necessity of carrying water for long distance is maintained at a minimum. The community and their farms are located in former tropical forests, of which much has been cut down (see Chapter 5). Further

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⁹ The social responsibility agreements are the contracts between the company and the local communities that are in or around the plantation and therefore affected by the plantation.
north, there is still thick primary forest to be found, but around Daboase the landscape is dominated by savanna, shrub regrowth areas and farms. In their nearer surroundings, there are also forest reserves, owned by the government and that the Daboase members are not allowed to use. Movement in and around Daboase is manifold: Many drive through to and from the international road, and the company and other institutions are located in Daboase. Some governmental institutions are located in Daboase as well, since it is an administrative district capital. For PSG it is the gateway to the plantation’s head office and from there one follows the seven-kilometre road to the plantation, located to the north-west of Daboase (see fig. 3, p. 20). When driving to and through the plantation, the landscape continues to be somewhat levelled but with a few hilly areas. After driving through a wooded savanna, the PSG oil palm and rubber plantation can be seen with its company-guarded gate. Driving into the plantation, one passes the nursery for the young rubber plants, and continues in a south-western direction, through oil palm fields and a construction site for the new oil palm mill. Continuing further into the plantation, one reaches the southern nursery for the oil palm plants and leaves the plantation through a gate. From here the Adansi village is just a few minutes’ drive ahead to the south. Adansi lies in a flat topography and is located to the west of Daboase, almost at equal distance from the coast line and the international road. It lies only a few hundred metres away from the border of the plantation where the landscape becomes more elevated. Adansi is a smaller community than Daboase, with less traffic and more isolated to external influences or movement. The lands in and around Adansi are fertile lands, good for crop cultivation (see Chapter 5). Cocoa is the main crop here and is sold by many of the community members. The Enikoko River lies close to the village and is frequently used by the community. About a third of Adansi community members work at the plantation from Monday to Saturday and walk the two roads that lead to the plantation on those days. Less than half of Adansi’s population are originally from Adansi, and originate from the Wassa tribe, and the rest are newcomers.
Figure 2 – Adansi and Daboase community and the southern half of the PSG plantation. Map created in December 2018 by Philip Bentum, cartographer at PSG, and approved for publication in this research project.
Building the Study

Before we can dig further into conversations I had with the local residents of Adansi and Daboase, we will first take a look at the composition of the interviews. I structured this chapter as a personal narrative to give the reader a feel for the context of how this research emerged slowly from the internship to the interviews. When initiating the interviews, I had already been in Ghana for several months working with PSG. Working with the PSG and navigating in the two communities from September 2018 to January 2019, prepared me for conducting the interviews, but only to a certain extent. With only a broad idea of topics I was interested in, I had decided not to define research topics beforehand, but let them emerge from my interactions with local communities. The first two months I spent in Daboase and at PSG, I focused on working and getting to know the local communities. The interactions within the communities, and the collaboration with company and continuous contact and discussions with local residents and the managers from the company, gave me an overview of what possible themes I could investigate further. It became clear that focus groups could help vastly with digging deeper into those themes and also in encouraging some community members to tell me about their understandings and concerns with regards to these themes. In collaboration with the manager for the community-related issues, Nicholas Adorsu, some leaders from Daboase and the Chairman of Adansi, we set up the two focus groups, which were held three months into the internship. The main question of the interview was to talk about what was important for me as an outsider to know about the communities and places, to be able to comprehend their community, its people and their surroundings.

Jointly, my work experiences, the knowledge I had gained the first couple of months, and the focus groups worked as a form of ‘crowdsourcing’ for the main research theme and questions. After the focus groups, I visited Daboase and Adansi several times, both through work with the internship and later alone in my own project, to talk to some of the participants and thank them for participating in the focus group. Interviewees were selected during these visits as well. Six of the seven interviewees had participated in the focus groups. About four and a half months into my time in Ghana, I spent two weeks working intensely on conducting the conversations with the interviewees. In order to go deeply into the personal stories of the informants, I decided to restrict myself to seven interviewees. We will now take a closer look at how the interviews came about and who the interviewees were.

3.1. Getting to Know Daboase and Adansi

During the internship I worked mainly with two offices. The Sustainability office, which consisted of one superintendent only, and the Community & External Relations office (CER), where I was linked to Nicholas Adorsu, the manager of the department. Through the varied work tasks, I built a broad understanding of the plantation’s operations. Naturally, through the work with Nicholas, I also learned about the surrounding communities and some of their leaders. Three communities were the main collaboration partners of the company: Adansi, Daboase and Manso. The head office and my house were located in Daboase that was therefore familiar to me, but Adansi and Manso I did not visit until several weeks into the internship.
As a company with a sustainability profile, occupying lands so very close to these communities, the company is trying to build up collaborations locally, designing social responsibility projects, and the company also go through the local channels of traditional hierarchies. The closest relationships and most active collaborations existed between Daboase and the company, due to the proximity to the head office. Other communities, which are located further away, are not as integrated in company activities.

Four meetings a year are scheduled with each community. In addition to these quarterly meetings, ongoing projects are discussed and managed throughout the year, like for instance the construction of a new school building in Daboase. As part of their social responsibility agreement, PSG funded the building of a new secondary school for the Daboase area, since the old school was too small. Through the meetings held regarding this new school building, I was introduced to Daboase community representatives already a week into my stay in Ghana. These community-PSG meetings were held every week and already during the second week, I sensed tensions between Daboase representatives and PSG. Prior to this meeting, I had not yet sensed any contentions between the company and the community, but at this particular meeting the feeling of discontent seemed to be strong regarding some specific issues. However, the reasons
for contention were confusing, since I did not know the norms, roles or personalities very well at that time. In the days after the meeting at the school, I asked several people about the disagreements to understand the situation and discussed issues better. Although this helped clarify somehow, I also let the matter rest after a few of such conversations.

Tensions were noticeable not only between the company and Daboase representatives: Political tension between the leaders in Daboase became clear to me on one of my first work days with community-related issues. In September, Nicholas showed me a letter that he had received from the Queen Mother of the town. It stated that the Tufuhene of Daboase should not be considered the regent, but that the Queen Mother was the rightful leader of Daboase. In the letter the Queen Mother asked for all company and community-related matters to be directed towards her, and not the Tufuhene. At that time, this request made very little sense to me. I knew there was a queen mother in the traditional hierarchy, but what her role was I did not know exactly. The meaning and hierarchical position of the Tufuhene on the other hand, was even less known to me. I was acquainted with both these two individuals not so long after I had read the letter. The Tufuhene (which as explained in Chapter 2.3. is a form of advisor to the chief) was a man named Eric Annan, who worked as a teacher in mathematics and natural sciences. He was forty years old, born and raised in Daboase. Men in his family had held leadership positions in Daboase community in the past. In 2012 he was installed as the Tufuhene of Daboase community. I experienced him as a calm and passionate man, who expressed his desire to negotiate what is the best for his community. He often stressed in our conversations how he in his view had been taking care of the community since his instalment in 2012. At the time I was there, there was no chief in Daboase, and there had not been one for over 10 years. According to the tradition, in the absence of a chief, the tufuhene takes care of the chief’s duties. Eric, the Tufuhene, had been acting as a substitute for the chief since his installation. To me he seemed like a positive person, quick to laugh and happy to talk to his community sisters and brothers.

The Queen Mother’s full name is Nana Ama Animah II and she was 62 years old when I met her, which was about a month into my time in Ghana. I had heard that she had been ill for a long time. Now she was recovering and starting to intervene with political matters again, confirming to me the situation of complaint in the letter I had seen in the beginning of my stay. I went to her house with Nicholas and we were welcomed by her so-called followers, which were daughters, sons and other family members that live with her and help out. During my first visit, she was quiet and seemed somewhat weak health wise, but forthcoming and kind. It was not until the end of my stay, I had the chance to discuss the conflict regarding the Tufuhene, and to hear her side of the story. The political contention will be discussed in this thesis and a thorough elaboration is presented in the Appendix 3.

For the first few months of my internship the political tensions within Daboase’s leadership layer, were confusing to navigate in and understand. Through the internship and privately, I continued to visit Daboase and started to visit the Queen Mother on my own. With time, these visits showed to be very helpful for the thesis, but also revealed how complicated the situation was in Daboase.

About two months into my internship, I also visited the Adansi community for the first time. To reach Adansi one had to drive through the plantation for about half an hour. This naturally made my knowledge of the town more limited than my knowledge of Daboase, where I visited frequently, since I lived right next to the community. Prior to my first proper visit, I had driven

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10 I later realised that the terms daughter, son, sister and brother are less stringent than I was used to, and I became sister or daughter to several Ghanaians during my time in Ghana. Even the Queen Mother started to call me daughter at one point.
through Adansi only once to go to Manso community. The purpose of my first visit in Adansi was the quarterly meeting between PSG and the Adansi community. Since it was the end of November, it was the last quarterly meeting of the year, which meant the community would be making demands on what they want the company to do for them in the upcoming calendar year. Nicholas had at the beginning of my internship elucidated the company’s relationship to the communities and explained that the relationship between Adansi and the company was relatively uncomplicated. This was about to change. Nicholas and I went to Adansi to the quarterly meeting, together with his secretary Helena Boadu. Helena would later be a great help for the focus groups and interviews, since she spoke Twi fluently and could translate across otherwise restrictive language barriers.

We drove to Adansi together and when we arrived, people were starting to gather slowly at the Chief’s house. We met the community Chairman on the road, outside of the Chief’s house and courtyard. The Chairman’s name was Richard Halifax and would later be helping with the focus groups in Adansi and he is also an interviewee. One could see in his face and the many smiling wrinkles, that he was the type of person who was a humorous and social person. Mr. Halifax was 66 years old and had been living in Adansi for about a decade. He had come to settle in the community to open a private school. He accompanied us into the courtyard of the Chief’s house and showed us to some chairs under a roofed construction. Slowly the Chief and his Elders joined us, and we greeted each other in the customary way from left to right. The Chief was an elderly man in his mid 70’s, silent and calm. He welcomed us, and the meeting started. Several community members turned up continuously and the numbers of participants kept increasing from around 30 to a hundred participants. The courtyard was not large enough for this number of people, but this did not seem to matter.

Figure 6 – The Chief of Adansi waiting in his chair for the meeting to begin, January 2019. Photograph by author.
Nicholas began to explain the Free Prior Informed Consent-approach\(^\text{11}\), which the company in recent years has implemented in their community work as part of their new sustainable approaches. Around ten minutes into the meeting, the participants began to get restless and the atmosphere started to become tense. Without understanding all that was going on, since the meeting was held in Twi, I could still read people’s body language and tone in their voice, when they spoke. Many of them were not pleased. This atmosphere worsened and after some time, most of the people present were shouting at each other and arguing. The Chief was quiet for the most part, but his Elders were talking for him. A younger man stood out as the angriest participant of the meeting. He kept interrupting others and would not calm down, even though others tried to tell him in several ways to let others speak or to calm himself down. After 45 minutes we left the meeting, since the debate remained heated and discussions could not proceed. Nicholas, Helena and drove back to the head office. On our way, Nicholas explained the reasons for the tumult. Apparently, it had been about landownership and how much land Adansi owned according to legal papers, compared to how much the community members thought Adansi owned. The Chief and his Elders knew the area’s size, but the community members did not. Many community members argued that they owned larger areas of lands and could therefore make larger demands of the company. However, at the meeting they were informed about the legal situation as documented by both the government, through the Forestry Commission and by PSG, which upset many of the community members. Nicholas also explained that within these contentions around the land situation there were some family tensions going on during the meeting. The man, who had been the most upset and loud in the discussions, was the son of the Chief. I did not make much of it at the time, but later came to realise that family-related issues combined with those of the land matters, heightened the son’s worry and concern. At that time, I was not sure how the community members regarded me, but it was to be explained to me later on. This meeting in Adansi will from now on be referred to as ‘the Adansi meeting’, since it will be discussed and explained by some of the local residents in the interviews.

Around the time of the Adansi meeting, I had started to more actively think about a direction of my thesis. I had through the internship, somewhat learnt how to navigate in the communities and their hierarchies, but still I knew too little about Daboase and Adansi, their culture, history and how they regarded their communities and surroundings. To gather knowledge about these topics I decided to hold focus groups. In the following paragraphs I will touch on how I approached the research and focus groups.

### 3.2. The Focus Groups

Inspired by action-oriented research methods, and with the help of PSG and some community members, I set up the focus groups in Daboase and Adansi. Action-oriented research grew out of various trends in sociology and started to take actively form in research in the 1990’s (Small and Uttal, 2005). It seeks to minimise the gap between academic scholarly and theoretical university research on the one hand, and pragmatic research with community partners on the other. As written by Small and Uttal: “The purpose of action-oriented research is to generate knowledge that can be used to address practical concerns of local communities, organizations,

\(^{11}\) The FPIC-approach is a bottom-up inclusion and consultation with local communities and indigenous peoples, which in 2007 was approved by the UN General Assembly under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2008). The FPIC-approach is a working tool for protection of indigenous people’s rights and is today used by several international institutions, non-governmental institutions and companies (FAO, 2016).
and groups and incorporate local understandings of specific practices and issues.” (Small and Uttal, 2005, p. 938). This approach I found to be well-fitting for my purpose. The community members could, through the focus groups, share their own knowledge and perceptions of their practical problems and thereby shape my research.

My own role as the researcher, is in this sense a ‘half insider’, as I was a co-producer of knowledge, rather than just an outsider looking in. By introducing myself into the field and interacting with interviewees, I myself became an actor shaping the research direction. Incorporation of myself as a researcher but especially of the local residents, was key to my philosophy around methodology and how it should shape the research. By not defining the research prior to the commencement of the investigation, I let time, the local residents I interacted with, and my own experience of the surroundings shape my research questions as part of the thesis process. This approach is consistent with both action-oriented research methods and hermeneutic phenomenology, as discussed in Chapter 1.2. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach is based on interpretations of descriptions, rather than just describing (Schacht, 1972). Looking for the underlying structures and possible explanations of the practical problems that local residents describe, are parts of the main intention of this thesis. Although one of the most common uses of action-oriented research is to generate knowledge with direct applicability in the researched field (Small and Uttal, 2005), this was not the main aim of this research, but rather to build a deeper understanding of practical issues and concern identified by the communities of Daboase and Adansi.

Focus groups are widely used in many academic disciplines and research fields (Hopkins, 2007). A focus group can be any kind of group that wants to explore a specific or well-defined topic, with about eight to ten people and a moderator. In this case, the moderator was me with the help of a translator. Focus groups are a strong tool to gather knowledge and to listen to a community (Marlett, et al., 2010). To plan the focus groups, I was required to work through the established channels of both the company and the traditional communities of Daboase and Adansi. I therefore asked Nicholas for help with the focus groups, which he gladly did. In Daboase, the Tufuhene and Youth Leader helped with the organisation of the focus groups and picking the participants. The participants were chosen through these leaders and consisted by people with different leadership roles in the community. Also, in Adansi, Mr. Halifax, with whom we met just prior to the Adansi meeting, organised the participants for me. The Manso community was actively deprioritised, since I had only visited Manso once with the sustainability department and there were some conflicts between PSG and the community. So, when the time had come for the Manso quarterly meeting, it was neither fitting for me to join, nor would it be proper to attempt to hold a focus group in the community. Therefore, this community was left out of the study, since I wanted to avoid stirring up an already existing divergence.

Other considerations also affected how the study was shaped. The established channels had some advantages considering how the research topic emerged. As I through the focus groups became interested in history and traditional authority and the relationship with land-issues, working with representatives from the traditional hierarchies was to my advantage. Within this political layer there were several conflicts and contestations. Had I expanded my research and included more interviewees, other stories and narratives would have appeared, but I had to restrict myself due to time and the scope of the research. Restricted time was a concern. If I would not go through the established channels, but tried to gather groups on my own, it would have taken much more time, which I did not have. The aim of the focus groups was also to

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12 During December 2018, a meeting was to be held between Manso community and the company. Since they had to sort out contentions between the two parties, they decided to hold the meeting on neutral grounds, meaning neither in Manso community or at the plantation’s head offices. I never became properly familiar with the issues that had to be discussed.
gather knowledge to build an informed background for the choosing of a direction for the thesis. Therefore, a gathering of representatives with roles in the traditional hierarchy did not stand in the way of gathering such knowledge – rather the opposite. Naturally, different participants would have given me different answers and perhaps the study would have ended up being about something else than it did. Such running risks are present with action-oriented research and when holding focus groups. On the other hand, I preferred this community-oriented approach, rather than setting off to design and execute a research, without letting the community members have their say. As “a focus group is effective in gathering the opinions and insights of people without controlling their responses” (Marlett, et al., 2010, p.104), I hoped for the outcomes to help me with further understanding of what the focus group participants perceived to be important. Even though I had pre-defined the topics we would discuss, the groups could still set their own distinct mark on the direction of the conversation.

3.2.1. Summary of the Meetings
The two focus groups were very different, and the group meetings had different outcomes, which is to be expected (Citizens Advice, 2015). On the agenda was the main question: What is important to know and understand to truly comprehend Daboase or Adansi, its people and the surroundings? To work with this overall and broad question, the focus group discussed five topics: people, culture, nature, history and power. I prepared sub-questions for the themes, but did not use all of them, since many of the participants took charge during the focus group.

Before we started speaking about the chosen themes, I introduced myself and my research field, so they could get an overall idea for what I was working on (see Appendix for focus group structure). We spoke about what a focus group was and that I would use it for gathering information and then research design. I also emphasised that I was there as a student and researcher, and not there as a representative from PSG. I suspect that not all participants comprehended the difference, as they sometimes spoke about specific things they wanted from the company. In such cases I had to repeat my background and aim. I also tried to repeat throughout the focus groups, that I saw them as the experts and wanted to know their own thoughts and opinions on the chosen topics. Helena, Nicholas’ secretary, who had been at the Adansi meeting a few weeks earlier, joined both focus groups for translations.

The physical surroundings of the Daboase focus group was the community centre. The Tufuhene was amongst the participants. The Queen Mother was unfortunately too weak to participate, so in her place was Kate Kwaw, whom I had met a few times earlier, when I visited the Queen Mother. Kate is somewhat of a jester in her forties, continuously trying to make other people laugh. Other positions amongst the participants were the Stool Secretary, youth representative, representative of the Unite Committee, a District Assembly representative, the leader of all the clans, a representative from the women’s group, and last, a head of a clan. The head of clan was called Elijah Nkrumah, who was very forthcoming and eager to participate. I had not met him before the day of the focus group, but he was very talkative and good at explaining how he understood community settings and matters.

Not all participants spoke for the same length of time. Some were more dominant than others, while some seemed to be content with not speaking. I was later told by several that they thought the silence of some was due to language barriers. In Daboase, I tried to include all participants as best as I could during the focus groups and at the end I asked for all to say a few concluding words, where all but one spoke their mind. In Adansi, the language barrier was more widespread, so the atmosphere was not as open. During the focus group in Adansi, which was held
in Mr. Halifax’s school office, most spoke and discussed in Twi and Helena translated.\footnote{All my questions were translated into Twi, which was not the case in Daboase, since there were some who were quick to answer in English when I had asked a question, leaving no time for Helena to translate. Sometimes I could get her to translate, but the interruption of participants also felt impolite to do too often. Balancing these dynamics was not easy, however they were inevitable.} The conversation in Adansi’s focus group was slower and longer than in Daboase, as we spoke in two languages and Helena translated it all. I did not know any of the participants, except for Mr. Halifax. Other participants were the Youth Leader, a youth representative and two Elders. One of the Elders was female, and her name was Efua Badu. She was a composed woman in her late 40’s. When our eyes met, she smiled almost bashfully, and participated well in Twi. She did not speak English. The others were male participants and most of them spoke in Twi as well. I tried to ask as many open questions as possible, but at times I was intentionally leading, since I had some knowledge due to my work with the company and the community prior to the focus group. I wanted some topics to be a part of the focus groups, to hear if I had correctly learnt and understood aspects of their communities. In other cases, my leading was unintentional, as it was the first time I did focus groups. On occasion, I spent a great deal of time explaining the questions to ensure their understanding, but to also let them know that I had understood their replies. My nerves also played a small part at the beginning of the focus group. In both communities, this was the first time I could properly speak to community members without a company representative present.

By mid-December, I had held both the focus groups and worked through transcription and summarised the acquired knowledge. In both communities they spoke about all the issues I brought up as interconnected. The history of the community was related to their traditional chieftaincy; the chieftaincy was related to their customs, traditions and beliefs; which had much to do with their surroundings. Likewise, their nature and surroundings were to be found in their explanations of their history; and all the mentioned areas were discussed in relation to change or the lack thereof. The complexity and interconnectedness of these topics is a major part of this thesis, which I tried to integrate due to the outcomes of the focus groups. Another main theme that came to show through the focus groups was land matters.

3.3. From Focus Groups to Interviews

In the focus groups, they expressed that many areas of their lives were exposed to change, since their country was in transformation. Modern technologies came up frequently in the interviews. Increased mobility in Ghana affected their communities as well, as more outsiders came to their towns and several left to live elsewhere. Newer beliefs like Christianity and Islam have changed some of their traditional customs. The internet changed how the youth interacted with each other, and that they did not care much for the traditional customs, as the older generations do. Changes had also come to the area when PSG arrived and started plantation operations. When addressing change directly, the Adansi groups expressed discontent due to a lack of change, as they felt PSG only focused on Daboase and not on development in Adansi. Content and discontent with PSG were discussed in both communities. Also, land seemed to be important in many ways. Landownership and the right to land or resources was at the core of the problems in Adansi, which had emerged during the Adansi meeting and was discussed during the focus group. In Daboase, there was not a direct conflict which they spoke about, however landownership and resource rights kept on coming up during the conversation. Land-related issues and the company’s role became therefore something I wanted to investigate further, as it seemed of significant importance to the participants.
During December, I asked people who had been in the focus groups to become interviewees, whom I thought would give interesting perspectives for the thesis. In Adansi, the establishing of agreements with interviewees was a bit harder than I had anticipated. This process needs a separate unravelling.

3.3.1. Approaching Adansi

Unfortunately, the cell phone reception is bad in Adansi and I often had to wait several days to get an answer from the local residents. Therefore, it was sometimes easier to drive to Adansi in person and talk to a specific individual. Mr. Halifax was an obvious candidate and during our first talk, I suggested to interview Efua Badu, which he thought to be a good idea, as she was the niece of the Chief and was well-informed about community issues. This seemed rather interesting to me, as I had the impression from the focus group in Adansi that she was critical towards the Chief. I also decided to interview the Chief of Adansi, which I asked Nicholas about. He would arrange it for me, however I still wanted to make a pre-visit in order to ensure that the Chief and I were more familiar with each other prior to the interview. I drove to Adansi in the beginning of January. The Chief expected me in the same courtyard as the Adansi meeting had been held in. The quiet, but smiling Chief agreed to be an interviewee and we decided on a day the following week to do the interview.

Outside the Chief’s house, as Mr. Halifax and I spoke about the upcoming interview, we were approached by Prince Anderson whom I recognised from the Adansi meeting. It was the Chief’s son, who had been agitated and loud during the meeting. He expressed concerns regarding my study and asked several times who had told me who to interview for my study and why I chose those individuals. He signalled an interest in being an interviewee himself and I therefore asked him if he might want to participate and he readily agreed. Though others in the village were discouraging me from including Prince as an interviewee, I decided to include him and be open about it towards other participants. I also found that he added important information to the study and I have tried to balance the different voices.

3.4. Interviews and Interviewees

My accidental stirring up of the already existing dispute in Adansi helped me learn how to better navigate in the political situation of hierarchies and agendas. Rather than avoiding the problem I decided also to interview Prince who was my final and therefore seventh interviewee.

We have now already met all seven interviewees. In Daboase, I interviewed the Tufuhene, the Queen Mother and Elijah. In Adansi, Mr. Halifax, Efua, the Chief and his son Prince participated. The presentation and names of the interviewees were chosen to be as closely to how they themselves or other community members referred to them. During the interviews, we sometimes touched on sensitive issues regarding landownership and external authorities, mainly the government and PSG. When these sensitive matters are discussed, the interviewees’ names will be omitted.

Since I had a direction and some main themes that I wanted to explore through the interviews, I excluded structured interviews quite early in the process. I wanted the interviewees to be able to set their mark on the conversation, which is why I ended with a semi-structured interview style, where I prepared the themes and a direction for the dialogues, but let the conversation remain open for the interviewees to shape as much as they wanted (Bernard, 2011). A semi-structured interview is useful when one does not have more time to redo the interviews, but a
set of topics and questions are prepared which have to be addressed during the conversation (Bernard, 2011). Questions were prepared as in the focus groups, however I let the interviewees take over the conversation to a very high degree. Sometimes however, I had to lead the conversation back to the topics if we had discussed something for a long time or if we had diverged from the original subject. The overall topics we spoke about were; traditional leadership and authority; culture, religion and customs; history and heritage; changes of the surroundings; internally and externally driven changes; landownership and resource management.

3.4.1. Transparency and Challenges
Like the focus groups, challenges also emerged during the interviews. Several visits prior to the interviews helped with familiarity and trust building, but not all can be prepared for or solved with a few visits.

The interviews with the Queen Mother and the Chief were tricky. I asked if I could interview them individually, which they agreed to, but in both interviews, they were not alone. The Queen Mother had her followers and Speaker with her, who were all eager to participate, so that I did
not always get her opinion directly, but through the words of others. I often asked if she agreed with what had been said by the Speaker\textsuperscript{14}, or Kate, who also participated in the focus groups in Daboase. The Queen Mother would then either confirm or quietly say her opinion if it differed. The Chief of Adansi had four of his Elders and Mr. Halifax present. They were all eager to discuss the matters and I sometimes had to interrupt to ask the Chief directly, if he agreed or had other viewpoints. I addressed this topic with the Queen Mother and asked if they knew her opinions or if they spoke for themselves. They answered, that they spoke for the Queen Mother, because they knew her opinions. I was not always entirely certain of this being the case, but these established positions and the followers and supporters, I had to respect. The interviews with the Queen Mother of Daboase and the Chief of Adansi therefore, became a mixture of opinions from the people present during the interviews. The given Elder or follower will be referred to directly and not through the name of either the Queen Mother or the Chief in this thesis. The opinions of Kate and the Speaker will therefore sometimes appear in the interviews represented here.

Interviewing the Tufuhene, Elijah and Mr. Halifax was relatively straightforward, and we sat down in settings, where they felt comfortable. The Tufuhene came to my office at the PSG offices where he had been many times before. I visited Elijah at his house, where I also met his family, and Mr. Halifax I interviewed at his office at the school, where we also had held the focus group in Adansi. Efua and I also met in Mr. Halifax’s office and Helena came along for translation. Helena was also present during the interview with the Chief of Adansi and with Prince. Prince had clearly prepared by asking other interviewees what sort of questions I had asked. He jumped right into telling and explaining, in particular the land issue. He stressed that he ‘just wanted the best for his community’, but I also had to make sure that we addressed all topics and kept somewhat of a structure. Language barriers were natural and inevitable. Helena did a very fine job and translated as best as possible, but since English is neither of our first language, even we had to describe what we meant sometimes and ask for the other to elaborate. Sometimes, when the interviewees’ English was insufficient to understand my English, Helena stepped in. It took her some interviews to get used to her role as translator. However, she was very useful throughout the process. Translations were made by Helena and after a while we developed a good communication, though sometimes the translations would be vague, since direct translations from Twi to English or vice versa would not always be possible.

I tried to keep my questions open and neutral. In cases where the question was unclear to either the interviewee or Helena, and our language barriers became an obstruction, I had to rephrase or describe what I meant, which enabled them to answer the question. Prior to and during our conversations, the interviewees were reminded several times that they did not represent others, but only themselves. It is uncertain, if they all fully understood that this fact, or not. In this thesis however, that is how the conversations and opinions of the interviewees are treated. Even though most of the interviewees hold leadership positions in Daboase and Adansi, they will not be seen as representatives of others’ opinions, but only their own. With the limited amount of time I had, I could not investigate further what lied behind their answers – if they answered for themselves or as a representative for other community members, or the two combined. This speaks into the theoretical approach of hermeneutic phenomenology, where the subjectivity of both the interviewees and I as a researcher becomes the research focus.

After careful consideration I decided to thematise the conversations based on the communities’ history, landscape changes, and negotiations on landownership and traditional authority. In the following chapter we will hear the histories of the two communities and what role history plays.

\textsuperscript{14} The Speaker’s name is Kwamena Fynn. He will be referred to as ‘the Speaker’ throughout the thesis.
Figure 14 – PSG oil palm plantation, October 2018. Photograph by author.

Figure 15 – Queen Mother (right) and her Speaker, Kwamena Fynn (left), during the interview, January 2019. Photograph taken by Andrea Baily and approved for this publication.
As explained in the introduction, history is key in understanding the negotiations of land and resource rights. In the focus groups and interviews, history and stories about the past came forward as a central theme. When talking about the past, all participants, without exceptions, spoke about the past using the expression “in the oldin days” (pronounced with an ‘i’ instead of an ‘e’). I had heard the expression several times during my internship work, but through the interviews the expression stood out and therefore came to name this chapter. There are reoccurring key narratives in the historical traditions of the two villages. The history of both Daboase and Adansi begin with stories of migration. Another central point of the historical narratives is the justification and validation of the lineages of the royal family and their authority. However, the narratives of the two communities’ histories also differ. Here I separate these histories based on the two villages.

4.1. Local History and Legitimacy

When speaking of the oldin days, I was told different stories from all of the interviewees. Some were comfortable with talking about the past, while others were less open. To illustrate I will give one example here. In Adansi, both Mr. Halifax and Efua were very cautious when talking about history. Mr. Halifax explained that one has to be a native from the community to ‘know’ the history of that community. As Mr. Halifax was not from the area originally, he claimed that he himself did not know the history. Instead he referred me to Efua, she would be able to tell me the history, since she was the niece to the Chief. When I later spoke with Efua, she responded that she was not told about history when she was a child. Efua had not been told the history by her grandparents or parents and had also not asked about it. Therefore, she also did not ‘know’ the history. In the beginning of my study, I could not make sense of Efua and Mr. Halifax’s modesty regarding history. From my perspective, even if one is not a historical expert, it would still be possible to share one’s knowledge of history. I soon was to learn better how political history is recorded and told.

4.1.1. Oral History and Legitimacy

Several of the interviewees used the expression “I saw it”, showing me that their telling about history was legitimate. They would not use this expression about times before they were born. For times further back in the past, other similar expressions were used, such as; my grandfather or father “saw it”, or he “was there”. Like Efua, others referred to history saying that they had or had not been told the history from their forefathers. This comment was otherwise often used as a rhetoric to make arguments stronger when speaking about other matters than their community’s history.

Efua was clearly not very comfortable telling me about the history, but did refer me to either her uncle, the Chief, or an Elder called Estabo. So, I took my questions about Adansi’s history to the Chief the next day and continued to ask Efua questions on other subjects. Although our conversation also concerned subjects other than history, Efua would use the past for elaborating and somehow, we ended up talking about the history anyway. During the conversation with
Efua, I realised that when I asked other questions about the past but would not specify that it was ‘history’, she knew much more, than she had acknowledged in the beginning. Therefore, when talking about other themes like landownership, customs or culture, these questions also presented me with information about the community’s past.

In Daboase, I asked the Queen Mother about the term ‘oldin days’. Kate spoke for the Queen Mother at this point and explained that the oldin days are years that have passed. As she explained now is from now on, perhaps the ongoing year, but “when we think of last year, it has passed and is in the oldin days”. I then asked to understand more clearly when the oldin days started and if yesterday also was in the oldin days:

“Yes. It has gone. So, what you saw it, what we did yesterday, today is changed. So, it’s come to be a new day. So, yesterday is an oldin day. What trans passed yesterday, today is a different thing.”

Even though oldin days then refers to everything that is in the past, interviewees have varying ways of talking about the oldin days. There was a distinction between the oldin days the interviewees remembered themselves and the oldin days they have heard about from their forefathers. Forefathers were clearly used to legitimate the telling of the history and also to authorise the ones that tell the history.

4.1.2. History is not for Everyone

History then seems not to be for everyone and is safeguarded and passed on by the Elders of the traditional authority. Neither Mr. Halifax or Efua hold leadership positions in their community. All the other interviewees, the Chief, Prince\(^\text{15}\), the Queen Mother, the Tufuhene, and Elijah, hold leadership positions and did not hesitate when I asked about the history. During the focus group in Adansi, elder members\(^\text{16}\) of the community were similarly reluctant to speak about history. The traditional leadership positions hold the responsibility and authorisation to speak about history. The individuals I spoke to, who were not holding leadership positions, preferred to direct me towards the traditional authority, like the Chief and his Elders, who would be able to tell me the ‘correct’ history. The Chief is authorised to speak about history through his family ties and lineage. When the Chief referred to his Elders or forefathers, he refers to the royal lineage and the experts of the community’s history. However, when I asked the Chief, if he could tell me, how many people ‘knew’ the history of Adansi, he answered, that many people knew. The Chief explained how he in turn was told by his Elders, who would also tell it to his family or relate the history when many people were gathered. When asked a question such as how one knows the history of the community, the Chief and the people attending the interview agreed that they were told by their forefathers and parents, or Elders of the community. The Elders and Chief thus play an important role in keeping the history of these communities and passing it along.

In both communities, the history is not written, but told orally. In Daboase, Elijah explained during our conversation. “The history is oral. It’s not everybody who knows. Especially the young ones they don’t know. But we try to pass on. We pass on the information to the next generations.”. According to Elijah they had made efforts in Daboase on educating the youth for the preservation of the history. In Adansi, I asked the Chief, how one knew the history. He

\(^{15}\) Even though Prince did not hold a position in the traditional leadership, he was the son of the Chief and had heard the history from his father and the elders, he told me.

\(^{16}\) Elders as in elder members of the community and not ‘Elders’ as appointed by the Chief to be an Elder for the community.
explained that “*this is tell history, so we tell everything.*”. Thus, even if people in general are reluctant to speak about history but refer to traditional leaders, there is the ambition to pass history on to the following generations and for the narratives to be correct. In Daboase, the Tufuhene and the Speaker of the Queen Mother also let me know that they have the intention of writing the community’s history and customs down and thereby documenting them for posterity.

4.1.3. History as an Argument

As exemplified above, though people in general are reluctant to talk about ‘history’ they often refer to the past. The past and tradition are often used to back up arguments (sometimes contrary) or to legitimise stories told.

The negotiation of history also comes in focus in relation to landownership. This will be discussed at length in Chapter 6, but here I will just give a short example. When Prince and I talked about landownership and how conflicts emerged, he speculated: “*Maybe if his family, his ancestors did not tell him the truth or not, I don’t know.*”. His comment was specifically related to landownership based on customary rights and he was discussing the difficulty of sorting out landownership based on information from ancestors about which land the family owns. Prince implied that one hears the truth from one’s own forefathers and that oral tradition was therefore a reliable source; however other people’s ancestors can also be ‘dishonest’. Official documents would facilitate conflict in cases where families have conflicting claims and when old land conflicts between families are inherited into the following generations. Lack of documentation is, as will be elaborated in Chapter 6, one of the main problems for land-related conflicts.

On other occasions when history was told, it was used to argue to the benefit of traditional leadership and the royal family of the community. For instance, the Tufuhene used history as an argument, when he spoke about the different forms of landownership in Daboase: “*It is history. We have stool land, we have family land and individual land.*”. History is also used to legitimise the reigning family in the community. The Chief and the Queen Mother are descendants from the royal family and the founders of the communities/villages. In the following narratives of the foundation of the villages the legitimation will also come to show.

4.2. The Foundation of the Villages

The stories about the evolution of Daboase and Adansi bear many similarities. The history of both communities begins with history of migration and where their forefathers come from. The stories of migration of their people took place many years back. Although it is unclear when exactly, migration was a central element in their history. From some interviewees I heard that the migration took place due to wars in the country, or that people wanted to resettle somewhere else. Both Daboase and Adansi people belong to the Wassa area and tribe, the evolution of which is also unclear from the interviews. Daboase seems to be older than Adansi, but the exact date is not an important element of the narratives in either of the communities. Another central element to their histories is the justification of their royal family and how they became the Chief over the town as discussed above. The royal family is important, as it is closely linked to the stool land, which is important to the whole community. In both communities, the histories of the community locations were strongly influenced by external surroundings, such as river floods or hunting prey.
4.2.1. Daboase

Through the focus groups and speaking with the Tufuhene, Elijah, the Queen Mother, her Speaker and Kate, I built a comprehensive understanding of the history of the Daboase community. There is broad agreement that the Daboase community developed when people from different tribes came to settle in a place called Echikrom, about 6 km from where Daboase is today. The timing of this event was unclear. One informant suggested the 14th century. Elijah told me that the settlement started about 300 years ago, but that he did not know exactly when. According to some local tradition, the tribes that established themselves in Echikrom were from an area called Benso and Wassawest, whereas others say it was only the Wassa tribe. The Tufuhene explained the process of the first settlement, that Echikrom was there before Daboase existed. So, it was Echikrom people who gave the Daboase land to Daboase people. The people who came to Echikrom, came with a stool, which gives the people the right to reign independently, as explained by the Tufuhene: “When Daboase people were coming, they came with their stool. That is why they are now the chiefs of Daboase.” The stool gives the clan authority to have a chief, meaning that it is the seat and symbol of the royal family of Daboase.

According to the stories, the Daboase ancestors stayed in Echikrom for some years and then a flood forced them to move to the second Daboase location. The place where they moved to is referred to as the old Daboase by the interviewees. The Tufuhene explained how they lived there for some years and then due to another flood they moved to the present location of the community:

“[…] then a flood came and destroyed their land. So, they moved from there to where we have Daboase old town. But that place is not far from Daboase here. Just down there and over there. In 1968 I’m told another flood also came there to destroy their oldin. And they moved to where we live now. So, where we are living in Daboase here is the third Daboase. We had the first, second and third. But Echikrom is still there.”

The old Daboase was located at the Pra River where water levels raised above its banks in 1960. As a result, some people moved to the new Daboase. During the focus group conversation, participants similarly told me about several floods that disturbed the people in the second Daboase, and how the Elders therefore decided to move Daboase to a new location. Due to another very large flood in 1968 (as related by the Tufuhene above), everyone finally moved to the third and current location of Daboase. The present day Daboase has thus been settled for a little over 50 years. When Elijah told me about his own family and the history of community, he told about a transition time, where some people from Daboase still lived in the Old Daboase and where many people had already moved to the new Daboase.

4.2.2. Adansi

According to the Adansi Chief, his ancestors migrated from Asem in the Eastern Region of Ghana, which happened in the 17th century, or more than 200 years ago. The Adansi ancestors were appointed an area by the traditional parliament chief of the area. He appointed them a place not far from where Adansi is located today. Prince, the son of the Chief, described how his father’s forefathers came and settled not far from where Adansi is located today. The Adansi ancestors first settled at the so-called old Adansi, until one of the forefathers decided to relocate to the new Adansi. Prince explained why they moved:

“From then to now, it will be 200 years. According to the history, a hunter went to the bush, and he killed one elephant. It was very,
very huge. So, when they killed that elephant, the people came there, and said no, everybody must have a part. So, then everybody got a part and they were trying to settle there. […] So, after settling here, the Chief and his family, they came here and settled here to stay”.

Because of the weight of the elephant, people moved to where the elephant had been killed to divide the meat. Subsequently, Adansi was founded at the kill site of the elephant. The Chief and the Elders also told this same story about the location of the community. The elephant was shot around 200 years ago, and the story of the elephant is also related to the seat of the royal family. If the chief had not decided to move to the new place, where the elephant was, Adansi would still be in the old place. However, since the chief chose to move the chief’s palace to the elephant, the new Adansi was established and the whole community followed.

4.3. Chapter Summary

From the above narratives we have learnt about the history of the two villages, the interactions between migration and landscape changes and also about the founding histories of the villages that are drawn upon to legitimise ruling lineages. History is clearly not for everyone and is safeguarded by the traditional authorities, but also used as an active tool in their political leadership. Only the interviewees that held leadership positions spoke about the history of their community. In both communities I could get a somewhat comprehensive history on these topics, but since the early migration days, I only heard fragmented stories about the communities. The historical narratives are key to understanding how interviewees perceive the community, places of origin, and formation of political authority and landownership. In general, they also reflect the continuous negotiation of history and traditions, where traditional authority figures are considered the historical ‘experts’ in the communities.

More recent history will be discussed in the following chapters, when changes in their communities and surroundings are discussed. The informants did not necessarily connect newer developments and changes with history or the oldin days but had many stories on changes they had heard of.
The Landscape Changes

Landscapes are ever-changing (Balée, 2006) and a manifestation of both cultural and natural influences (Ingold, 1993), but here I asked the interviewees to define their relationship with their surroundings and changes. Which factors or actors have impact on the communities and how is change explained and defined? What changes do the interviewees either wish to welcome or reject? Some changes can be hard to welcome. As stated in Chapter 1.2., I let the interviewees put the concepts in their own words. We therefore also spoke about the concept of change. According to many of the interviewees, changes are not perceived as easy in the communities. The Tufuhene of Daboase described this difficulty of his community sisters and brothers:

“Change is, it is not an easy thing. It’s not easy for one person to change from maybe he’s used to. It’s not easy. So, unless you talk, and talk, and talk. You have to educate them, before they accept. [...] They don’t like to change. So maybe if you want to do in a different way, they will not do it. It’s not easy.”

The Tufuhene explains how they in the town have to talk over and over about plans of change or changes that are happening. The community members sometimes also resist changes, and the Tufuhene argues it is not easy to negotiate a change even if it is a positive one. When discussing change with Elijah he worded a definition of change:

“Well, when you talk of change, for me. I will say that is something, one moves away from the old. To something new. You see and old habit or old situation, to a very new this thing. That is the change.”

Change for him, is much about habit or old things, that one moves away from, to something new. I like this definition, since it does not decide if the change to be necessarily good or bad. Interviewees and focus group participants spoke much about changes in their community – both positive and negative that had influence on various things they experienced. Those changes of the landscape and communities will be examined in the following.

5.1. Landscape Changes

During the conversations with the interviewees, we repeatedly came to speak about the surroundings. To talk about the landscape and changes thereof, different terms and tools were used in the conversations. We drew maps, pointed in directions for clarification and spoke about history or the oldin days, the effects of the company and land issues, which were the three main topics that landscape related to. The conversations on landscape, related history and changes differed. Some interviewees responded with detailed maps and descriptions of the land topography, geography, weather patterns, and likewise. Others responded vaguely about the landscape and the changes, but through talking about how they perceived PSG, history and land issues, we also indirectly addressed the landscape and how the respondents experienced it to have changed.
Elijah remembered, when the surroundings of Daboase were more dominated by forest, than they are today. When he was a child the forest areas were cleared for farming:

“When I was younger they cut down trees. [...] Oh, it has changed. Because it was a forest. And then people clear and grow the coconut, because it was a coconut plantation. Others were oil palm plantations. So, it has changed. Because we there were farm lands and now they are new settlements. They are settlements for residents. [...] reduce the forest and reduce the farm-land and increase the settlement.”

Elijah also explained how the cleared forest land for cultivation that he remembered from his childhood, is being transformed into residential land today, so that new forest areas have to be cleared for the people to farm. People are joining the community and come to Daboase to work and settle. This growth of the town has resulted in large changes of the town and its surroundings with deforestation as a result.

The Tufuhene explained changes in farming procedures and new opportunities. Farming, in his mind, has in some ways changed for the better due to modern pesticides, which they did not have access to in the old days. Since farming is the main occupation and basis for livelihoods, the communities are very dependent on the rain. Elijah experienced how weather patterns had been changing and explained them as due to climate change. At times, Elijah explains there would not be any rain at all when there should be, and sometimes it rains too heavily for the season. Irregular rain patterns have had their affect in and around Daboase: Farmers have had hard times with the poor crop yields. Due to these weather patterns crop yields are so low farmers cannot sell surplus at the market or feed their own families. The Tufuhene also remembered that more rain fell when he was younger. He explained it through the plantation of oil palm and rubber, the forest has been degraded and therefore creates less rainfall. The rubber was, according to the Tufuhene, the reason for the changes. Thus, the Tufuhene agree with Elijah that there were more forested areas around Daboase in the past than today, though their explanations for deforestation are different.

The Pra River has been historically important to Daboase. The first and second Daboase settlement were placed by this river and today some community members still have their farms close to the river. However, as we have learnt in the previous chapter the location by the river is risky as it has flooded many times. Also, illegal mining has caused troubles for the community. Since the illegal mining of gold is prevalent in the area, it pollutes the river and the community can no longer fish or drink its water, as they used to do. I heard stories from many villagers claiming that the government, chiefs and the Chinese manage the illegal mining in the area and pour chemicals used in the extraction processes into the river and thereby create water pollution. The repetition of these stories shows a strong concern amongst community members for the state of this vital river.

5.2. PSG and a Definition of Development

In Daboase, the respondents generally seem to regard the arrival of PSG as a positive experience. The Tufuhene described the employment opportunities PSG has brought to the community and how they can borrow machines for improvement of roads and other areas in the community. Getting many of their young men into work has helped the community and its development as explained by the Tufuhene. The Queen Mother’s Speaker agrees, remembering the
bad times of Daboase before the company’s arrival. Changes in relation to PSG was mostly viewed and communicated as a good thing by the respondents, but many pointed out there was still room for improvement. For instance, there was some dissatisfaction with PSG when it came to employment. Some interviewees pointed out that the company does not employ people from the local community for office jobs, even though the town have qualified people. This was an area where the company should improve according to several respondents.

The attitudes around PSG and related changes differed immensely from Daboase to Adansi. In Adansi the increased movement of people with the PSG had over the past brought some liveliness to Adansi, but it was felt that these movements had slowed down. In Adansi, the discussions regarding change in both the focus group and some of the interviews, were heavy and negative. Many participants felt the Adansi community is being neglected by the government, politicians and the PSG. Therefore, it was generally felt that the Adansi community has not changed or developed over the recent years. Although the consensus was that there were no recent changes, some things have changed in and around Adansi in the past, especially regarding the forests and the community’s farm lands. The Chief and his Elders spoke about the forested areas being larger before and the population of Adansi being smaller, just as in Daboase. Historically, the forest had been cleared by the forefathers, for cultivation of cocoa, or used for the timber business. The territory of the village had become smaller both for homesteads and for farms. One reason is that the population increased and therefore there are more people to share the same amounts of land. The decrease of land is also related with the plantation, as will be discussed in the coming chapters.

The most discussed change for the community was the arrival of the PSG company and their operations in 2013. Before PSG took over from SIPL, the people of Adansi went to the forests and picked snails and mushrooms and hunted for bush meat, which is not possible anymore, due to the chemicals used by PSG. The opportunities to collect or hunt in the plantation have also disappeared. To collect firewood, they have to walk longer distances than before. The further distances for hunting, collecting snails, mushrooms and firewood, have made the lives for the farmers and traders of Adansi harder. In addition, it is mostly the elders who cannot work for the plantation that have to walk the long distances to their farms or the forest to collect. This affects the Adansi people’s livelihoods and is manifested in frustration and a critical attitude towards the PSG from many villagers. The Chief on the other hand expressed less discontentment with the company and told me in our conversation that the company had done well for the community.

Another point of contention with the plantation was the placement of the head office in Daboase. Several interviewees and focus group participants argue that when SIPL first started its operations and decided on the placement of the headquarters in Daboase, it ought to have been placed in Adansi. They blame the ‘mis-location’ of the office on one man from their community and not the company directly. Many participants suggested that if the head office had been in Adansi, their community would have been better off than it is now.

Strong discontent with the recent changes in the landscape and overall development were expressed in the focus group (and Adansi meeting), but also the lack of help from the company today. One interviewee argued that when the government leased the land to PSG, the company was obliged to work for the government, whose responsibility it is to develop the community and lift the peoples’ livelihoods. That is the reason for them wanting more help for development.

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17 He spoke of prostitution in the community and according to him they have disappeared. I had not heard of this before and did not after, but he had experienced a change regarding the prostitution.
from the company itself. Even though the company has given them certain things, such as water boreholes, the interviewee argued that these investments were not enough.

Development in both communities is not just seen as the responsibility of the community leaders and the company, but also the government. The government should in theory take care of town development, but in respondents’ minds it was doing its job poorly. Due to this and other issues, I could sense a strong discontent with the government and politicians. One participant stressed that as soon as the politicians are elected, they tend to forget the rural areas and prioritise the cities or their own careers.

The government has reduced the powers of the chiefs and centralised the powers in governmental institutions. A concern about the decreased power of the chiefs in the Ghanaian political landscape and its effects was also expressed by some interviewees. The chiefs now have less power and have to learn to navigate in a new political system and renegotiate their power in their communities. This issue will be elaborated in Chapter 6.

5.3. Historical and Current Factors of Change

Larger changes and transitions were identified, which are related to the broader changes of an increasingly globalised and modernised Ghana. Historically the communities were dominated by wars. The wars were a way for chiefs and the traditional authorities to gain larger territories and increase opportunities for farming and food production. Today, such tribal wars have disappeared, which respondents regard as a positive thing, but there are other developments and changes that are difficult.

Population growth in the country has almost been exponential and is still ongoing (see Chapter 2.5.). Also, increased movement and mobility in the country over the past centuries has increased the composition of people in the communities. This situation was highlighted as negative by some interviewees and in reference to ‘outside’ people. People will move to and from Daboase and Adansi, and also marry people from outside, then either bring their spouses to their town or move elsewhere. The increased use of cars has also added change to the way in which people move and has opened up new possibilities. For example, respondents stressed that cars have given them the opportunity to drive ill people directly to a hospital if required. The internet was perceived to bring large changes as well, in education, in impacting local culture and the way the people dress, build, eat and farm. The young especially, would act and interact differently amongst themselves, and in the communities, due to the arrival of the internet.

Education and schools for children was emphasised as crucial for the development of the communities. Children are required to attend school, but unfortunately there are not enough schools and not all parents send their children to school. Even though the number of schools has increased and the overall educational system in Ghana has improved, respondents emphasised the importance of a better school education for their children. In both communities, education was expressed to be of great importance. Interviewees wished for better school education and possibilities in Adansi, since their opportunities are limited, when the children reach the age of 15. In Daboase, there are larger schools and the soon to be opened secondary school, which

18 Governmental workers would always say that there is no money for the community. I was told, that when a new political party wins the elections and takes over the government, all ministers and governmental workers are replaced with new employees from the new party in charge. This makes it hard for the community to count on continuity and if it is not the party that they support that is in power, they can forget all about getting funding or help.
PSG was part of establishing. Education of the newer generations was in general expressed to be crucial for future development.

5.4. Chapter Summary

Many changes have affected Daboase and Adansi community in the past and continue to do so. Internally and externally driven changes set their mark on the community and the surroundings. Stories on change included experiences of larger forest areas in the past and a large population increase or growing communities. Therefore, the communities required more land for farming. The company’s presence has changed both communities and their surroundings immensely. In Daboase the voices towards the company were positive, but in Adansi they were very negative. Strong feelings of lack of changes were expressed in Adansi. Discontent was not only directed towards PSG, but also the government. The responsibility for development lies with the Ghanaian government and therefore indirectly the company, since the government sold or leased the land to the company. But the politicians were expressed to forget and not fight for the rural communities. The term development is linked to changes and community members expressed strong desired for development in their communities in the future.

PSG arriving and starting operations has clearly caused positive changes, but also stirred up old and new conflicts. Negotiations of authority and landownership and what that might have to do with PSG will be investigated in the following chapter.
Negotiating Authority and Landownership

Landownership and resource rights are key to a strong community and leadership. The protection and legitimisation of community lands are crucial for maintaining the community identity and development. My main approach to land matters and conflicts were asking how landownership and resource management had changed over time and the historical roots of the land conflicts. We will now investigate land-related conflicts, systems and experiences that emerged through the conversations. For safety and privacy reasons, most quotes will be anonymous in this chapter.

6.1. Land-Related Conflicts in Daboase and Adansi

In the following, the land conflicts of both Daboase and Adansi are examined. They are to be understood as an ongoing negotiation on landownership and traditional authority in Daboase and Adansi. In both cases, old and new external actors influence these ongoing negotiations that are in many cases historical, as land conflicts between families and/or other actors are sometimes inherited. Past actions of the plantation company and government authorities leave their marks in these debates. The arrival of PSG and their operations in the past five years have also played its parts in spurring debates on landownership-related issues. These debates have in some ways emerged as new conflicts or have reinvigorated old ones. In some cases, debates have even caused a general distrust against traditional leaders that are formally the main contact link of PSG to the communities. Unbeknownst to the company, the conflicts that arose in relation to the company’s arrival, are old unresolved issues. Some conflicts may be new, but parties use the past to give legitimacy to the claimants as will be explained here. Whatever the ground for these cases are, these conflicts require careful deliberation and acknowledgement. As made clear in Chapter 3, I also found myself getting drawn into these conflicts, both while working with the communities and conducting focus groups and interviews. In this chapter I will analyse these debates and we will first consider Daboase’s land conflicts, followed by a comparison with Adansi.

6.1.1. Lack of Consultation with Daboase

In Daboase, land tenure matters were at the centre of the issues brought up in the focus group and interviews. These issues also come up continuously in negotiations with authorities and within internal negotiations in the traditional hierarchy. In general, as related in previous chapter, community leaders were pleased with PSG being located in the community. Nevertheless, even though leaders had a rather good collaboration with the company, conflicts emerged prior to the arrival and at the beginning of operations in 2013. In retrospect, leaders now say that the company should have acted differently in some aspects and there is still room for improvement today. However, it is not necessarily PSG that is seen as the root for the conflict, as the presence of the company rather stirred up old conflicts regarding land tenure. PSG took over land from the SIPL, and according to interviewees both the government and SIPL/PSG should have proceeded with better consultation, especially when the government negotiated with the company to buy the lands. When the government and Socfin handled the case of the SIPL land, the
government did not consult Daboase community, as appropriate. As explained by one respondent:

“Before it is a reserve and the government thought it’s for him. So, it’s just leasing it to the PSG without consulting the chiefs. And we, those at Daboase here, we did not disagree, with the government. Because one, we need job. Most of our members were not working. So, when the government leases the land to the PSG, we thought ‘oh’, let them come. After all, our family members will get maybe work or job to do. That is why we did not demonstrate against the government, like we should have demonstrated. […] Because you cannot just lease land without consulting with the chiefs. It’s not fair. […] So, that is one thing between Daboase and the government.

The historical sale of the land to SIPL by the government was already contested and this was not considered when land was transferred to PSG. In retrospect, the government should have consulted with the community during the negotiation process. However, community members could see the possible good if the PSG were to come to Daboase. Many respondents explained to me that even though the government did not respect the customary rights, the presence of the company was a good thing. Here we hear a description of the process from a local perspective:

“So, PSG they came first to us with the papers, that the government has sold the land to them. We asked for the price, but I don’t know the actual amount the government sold land to them. Because they did not involve us. And they mentioned an amount. And they [the government] said we should pray for them. That this PSG should come and stay. And we prayed. We poured libation over here. And before they are here. They are here working.”

As is explained in the quote, despite lack of consultation, the community wanted the company to come, since they knew it meant jobs and development for them. Therefore, they made appropriate ceremonies to ensure success of the PSG company as they wanted the community to grow and develop. According to the rules, for any project to start operations in the area, it first needs to be negotiated with the chiefs and the people. Thus, if one wants to start a company and operate in the Wassa area, one has to seek the approval of the chiefs. Otherwise, there will be trouble, as an informant told me. However, in this case the chiefs were not informed about or involved in the negotiations in Accra at the time, and hereby troubles emerged between PSG and the local community.

When I spoke to an interviewee about the community’s issue with the government, I asked why they did not take the problem up with the government. I was told the following:

“For that one, we can’t do [it], because of the change in government. NDC [the political party of the National Democratic Congress], sold the land to PSG and NDC are no more in power. […] You go there, who are you going to talk to? Because they will say that NDC sold the land and they just came into government [recently] and they don’t know much. Or that they don’t know this thing between the government and the PSG. So, we decided
not to go anywhere with this problem. […] I don’t believe politicians. So, I don’t do politics. They are liars. […] With those problems in Daboase here, we don’t go anywhere. Because we know, what PSG are doing, they are doing for the communities. So, we just accept it like that. […] It’s not worth it to put all the energy into fighting the government. […] It’s a waste of time.”

Since the negotiations and selling of the lands, the governing party has changed much of the governmental employees. There is also a general distrust against the political system which explains why Daboase is not taking the matter up with the government and seeking either compensation or other solutions. The distrust has historical roots both from colonial times, but also from the start of the plantation, when the government was more authoritarian and centralised than it is today (see Chapter 2 – Background and the previous Chapter 5 on the changes that have come to the area).

Since the informants spoke differently about the government and the land-related issues, it stands unclear how big of an issue the land conflict in Daboase exactly was and is. Some informants say they “lack the energy to fight”, but other local informants do not recognise the legal claims of the community and/or do not see it as a problem at all. Regardless of the reasons and the differences in the community, there will not be much more development or progress on the matter. On the surface the community seem to have accepted the lack of proper procedure when the Ghanaian government and Socfin negotiated and transferred the community’s land to PSG and have also accepted the current situation. But discontent is likely to flame up again if the situation changes.

6.1.2. The ‘Subri Issue’ in Adansi

In Adansi, the negotiations of land issues are different. I worked with the community at a time when they were informed that the extent of their stool land (the land that is under control and distributed by the Chief) was smaller than they thought. Until November 2018, the community members thought that their stool land bordered the Subri River. During the Adansi meeting, the community was informed by PSG representatives that legally they only owned lands up to the plantation nursery, and not to the Subri River as was assumed. In the meeting it became clear that the Chief had been aware of this situation, but the community members were not. Therefore, a conflict regarding landownership was inflamed during the meeting and when I was there. This conflict also came to dominate many of our subsequent conversations on the past, authority and land.

Throughout the conversations, I obtained several accounts on why the situation had arisen. The explanations from the interviewees were a mixture of the community’s history, what some respondents say is a “weak chief”, who could have taken a stronger part in fighting for the stool lands, and different explanations of who is to blame for the situation. It was Efua who first explained the foundation of the conflict and the expression she used, the ‘Subri issue’, gave a name to the land conflict.

Historically, the lands had once belonged to the Adansi community as stool land. To understand the history of this problem, we must now go into more detail since it is based on what has been pieced together from informants. In the early 1970’s the government had sent an official representative to Adansi community to talk to the chief. The government had plans to set up a train line to Kumasi, which was planned to go through the forest close to Adansi. The representative came to Adansi to convince the chief to give Adansi’s stool land to the government for the train line. As the chief and his elders saw the benefits of a train line close to Adansi, they agreed to transfer the lands to the government. However, no train line was ever built, and the reasons are
unclear as to why. Some community members have their own theories. One informant argued that the government used the train line simply as a ‘strategy’ to get Adansi’s land in the 70’s and there was never any intention of ever building it.

I have not pursued this story in official documents, but whatever is the case, the story and how it is told shows a general distrust against the government locally. In Adansi, many respondents are of the opinion that the government ‘tricked’ the Chief and took the land illicitly. Since the train line never came, the lands should have gone back to the Adansi community. However, the land was used by the government and Forestry Commission for different purposes afterwards. Eventually the lands were given to the company called SIPL, the predecessor of PSG. When SIPL operations failed, the Socfin group then eventually bought the lands from the Ghanaian government to establish PSG. Here we hear an informant tell us the story:

“The government, they didn’t say the truth. They said they will put a railway line there, some years later, it was not here. Other people have come to work for their own benefit in the lands. The Forestry Commission has come to work for the government. So, when the government came and handed the land over to the Ghana Forestry, Forestry handed it over to SIPL. Then when the SIPL also was not able to continue, they handed the lands to the PSG. [...] So, potentially this could have been Adansi land, but is not, because the government in the 70’s tricked Adansi to give it up.”

This topic was a sensitive one and difficult to discuss. Many informants spoke passionately and vehemently about the Subri issue, saying that the lands should belong to the community, not to the government, which is something they want to correct in the future.

It should however, also be pointed out that not all interviewees were as detailed in their story about Adansi’s land loss, and varying explanations came to the surface. Not only the government was blamed, but also a ‘certain male individual’ from the Adansi community, who remained unidentified. It is related how some man from the community without authority from traditional leaders or the community went to sell the lands in the name of the “Daboase community”. How this had happened exactly was not entirely clear, since the explanation was vague.

Even though different stories emerged on the history of land loss, it is clear that there is a common opinion that the lands between the nursery and the Subri River rightfully belongs to Adansi, as it had been acquired by the government on false pretences and should rightfully be given back to Adansi. The stool land was used by the community as farming land, which according to the Chief, has decreased since the government created the plantation. When the SIPL company still was operating, the community members were able to use the land for farming, even though SIPL owned and operated the lands as forests. The community members were not aware that the land they were cultivating belonged to SIPL. Therefore, when the government later sold the SIPL land to PSG, the former stool land was also transferred. Although, this problem was really a historical arising from earlier days, it was PSG’s presence that made the community members realise that they owned fewer lands. What had happened in the past for the lands to belong to the government and not Adansi, is still not well known.

6.1.3. Political Contention
The land conflicts discussed above also challenge the authority of the traditional leaders. In Daboase particularly, it was apparent from the focus group and interviews that there were some
contestations within and amongst representatives of the traditional authority. For me, it was not entirely clear how I should navigate in these ongoing tensions first between the community and the company, and also internally within the community. Daboase’s land issues were not only an issue between community-government but also related to the different positions of the traditional authority. These contentions were personal and political as shown in Chapter 3 (elaborated in Appendix 3), and deeply embedded in land matters. The nature of the internal conflict was hard to map out fully, but the Queen Mother and Tufuhene did not see eye to eye on the sale of certain stool land, which was one of the main issues of their internal conflict. This influenced the political environment in the community, and the matter was made more complicated as there had been no chief for about twelve years that could potentially act as an arbiter in the conflict. Thus, the absence of a formally installed chief, added to political tensions amongst the other leaders in Daboase.

By contrast, the Chief in Adansi had been reigning since 1973. He had been sitting on the throne for about 45 years when I met him and was now an elderly man. Some informants expressed their discontent with the Chief on the basis of his age saying he was less vibrant and active in his leadership role than they would wish. The contestation towards the leader as ‘weak’ is part of the explanation why people Adansi did not feel they experience the same positive changes as in Daboase and the criticism also seemed to be at the core of discontent in the Subri issue. Some individuals put explicit demands on the Chief to fight for Adansi and their lands. These matters were of course difficult to discuss with the Chief himself, especially as my interview with him included many other participants. Therefore, I have not been able to hear the Chief’s explanation on the Subri issue and will not be able to discuss this side of the story here. What I did dare to touch upon with the Chief, was the nature of the very heated argument of the Adansi meeting.

During the Adansi meeting, the individual by the name Prince had been the most vocal of the dissatisfied community members. The same person was also initially very negative towards my research. I later asked Efua during our interview, if she had an explanation for Prince’s attitude during the Adansi meeting and towards my research. She explained to me that prior to the big Adansi meeting, there had been stories about me permeating to Adansi and what my background was:

“[… ] when that incident happened, at the Chief’s palace and that controversy become, before you were to come, what they were made to understand that you were coming, or that somebody is coming to meet them, to talk about the development of the community and the welfare of the women. […] So, when we came, and you were there, they thought you were a spy, to get information from them, to be given to Socfinaf.”

This account explained a lot to me. Efua admitted, that even she had also thought I was a spy for PSG, until Mr. Halifax had explained to her otherwise prior to the focus group. How this rumour of me came about, is impossible to say and I did not ask more detailed questions about this subject but it certainly confounded matters in the beginning. In any case, if the community members had heard and told each other prior to the Adansi meeting that I was a spy, it made sense why Prince had been distrustful towards me and the research I was conducting and also for his agitation at the Adansi meeting. Prince expressed several times to me that he was a ‘concerned citizen’ and feared that the research I was doing could harm Adansi in the Subri issue. Later on, however, Prince approached me while I was interviewing, implying that he wished to become an interviewee himself. I did not exactly know how to navigate in this, since
several people had warned me not to speak to Prince as he was stated to be an instigator. However, as explained in Chapter 3, after thinking about it carefully and also informing the Chief and other leaders, I decided to interview Prince. Rather than pretending as if I was unaware of the situation I invited Prince to explain his view of things. I asked him why he thought others had advised me not to speak to him and why they saw him as a ‘troublemaker’. He explained that he only wanted the best for the community and that the others did not understand him:

“Madame, they don’t understand me, what I’m doing. But I try to do something that benefit our community and this future. But they don’t see that. The vision that I’ve got, or I’ve seen. They don’t see it, because they don’t read bible.”

Prince thus explained how his vision for the community was based in wanting to do good for Adansi, but not all agreed on what was the best way to move forward. Although, all interviewees I spoke to in Adansi wished for their community to be better off, varying ideas for directions and interests were at place.

6.2. Landownership and Resource Management

Through the conversations in both communities, and as should be clear from what we just heard, land emerged as a central theme of much that went on in Daboase and Adansi. To understand this further we need to go deeper into the understanding of how land ownership is organised. As the Tufuhene of Daboase explained it:

“Everything we do over here, we need land. We cannot do anything without this land. For example, if you want to farm, you need land. If your parents are not having a land, you have to go and see some of us, before you can work on this land. Land is expensive.”

The Tufuhene identified land to be very important to basic livelihood, especially cultivation or building. Unfortunately, land is expensive. Not everyone would have inherited land from their forefathers and high prices made it hard for those without land to access or buy it. Therefore, there is a leasing system, which will be elaborated shortly. First, we take a look at the three types of land that were described to me: Stool land, family land and individual land. The three types of land are owned, administrated and inherited in different ways.

The chief has varying degrees of influence on the three different forms of land. The most commonly mentioned type of land was stool land which is closely tied to the history of the community. The stool land legally belongs to the chief, but through him it is accessible to the community, though administration and control is in the hands of the chief. The family land is controlled through the busuapennes, and the individual land by other owners. Since land is expensive, not everyone has the resources to buy individual land and many will live on their family land together with their families. Regardless of the type of land, the chief is an important figure in upholding customary rights of land and in being a mediator in case of conflicts between families. Part of the reason seems to facilitate the chief’s awareness of what is going on in the community. The Daboase Tufuhene explained as an example, that the chief had to sign documents for land selling between a family head and a third party. One cannot lease or sell land without the knowledge and acceptance of the chief. Partly, the chief also thereby can control the community better. It is safe to say, therefore, that the chief controls the land of the entire community either directly or indirectly, since, according to the interviewees, nothing is agreed upon, without the knowledge of the chief.
Land can be sold, but it is more astute to keep the land and then lease parts of it to community members, as the ownership of land and its leasing generates more power than just possessing money. When I asked the Tufuhene in Daboase, if one had power through owning land, he replied:

“A lot of power. Because if anybody need land, that person will come to you. So, you have power. And if you lease this land out, every year they bring you something. [...] So, in our area here if you have land, you have power.”

Land usually comes with the positions in traditional hierarchy. I spoke to Mr. Halifax about how this is negotiated, and he explained that it was rather the combination of being in a traditional leadership position and owning land, that made one powerful in the community. By just owning land, but without a position in the traditional hierarchy, one would not necessarily be powerful in the community: “if you are a landowner, you have power on your own land. But not on the community.” According to Mr Halifax solely the ownership of land does not make one have influence on community-related issues, but it is the combination of being in a leadership position and owning a lot of land, that makes one powerful – both internally and externally.

Externally, the community stands stronger when owning land. Efua also explained how the community’s strength was connected to landownership: “if the community owns more land, they can say, they have more power. They can use it.” Their landownership makes them steadfast against external impacts. Land means some power and power means land, providing that the lands have not been sold off by predecessors. This explains the importance for a community and its leadership to own land and protect them.

6.2.1. Administration and Leasing of Land and Resources

As mentioned, the chief and busuapennes lease their land to community members for farming or building purposes – especially farming, since many of the community members depend on cultivation. The land gets leased for a specific time, although with a maximum of 49 years, which is a time period set by the government. I was told that this time restriction had changed, as before it could be leased for 99 years. The chief decides in collaboration with the individual or family that wants to lease the land, which time period they will agree upon. When the land area and time period is set, they will also agree on a compensation system. There are two possible systems for compensation for a land lease. When the farmer leases and works on the land, payments are made in two alternative systems, one referred to as ebonu and the other ebusa. When using the ebonu system, the produce from the farm are divided into two parts, where the chief gets one half and the farmer gets the other half for himself to sell or eat. The ebusa system divides the goods into three parts, where the chief gets one third and the farmer gets two thirds. Efua explained the system in Adansi in the following way:

“If the resources on the land are the cassava or the plantain. They don’t take money. But if you make property out of it, the coco, the plantain, other cash crops, then that’s when you give the chief something. In the local community they do this division, which is ebonu, and meaning you the farmer will divide into two, some chief will like to take the crops, some will also like the money. So, dependant on whatever agreement you are having, some will have two thirds and one third will be given to the one who has given the land.”
According to Efua and other interviewees of Adansi, the most common is the ebonu system, where the crops are divided into two parts and then shared. She also explained as we can see above how in some agreements some will prefer to pay lease in money instead of crops. When leasing of the land is paid in cash, they wait until the farmer has made money out of selling the crops, after which the money will be payed to the land leaser – usually the chief or busuapenne.

Both systems have been in place historically, but the preference of systems have changed. The Chief in Adansi said that in the past, they used the ebusa system, where they divided the crops into three, but now most prefer the ebonu system. In Daboase on the other hand, Elijah explained the compensation system to be dependent on how much one has paid for the land, which he refers to as compensation, before the leasing:

“Based on how much concentration has been taken. If the concentration fee is huge it is one third. If the concentration money is too small, then it becomes ebonu, the fifty-fifty share.”

Elijah is the busuapenne of his clan and an Elder of Daboase, and he also leases land to people. He knows about these land agreements primarily through his position as an Elder and in the above quote explains how the chief leases land to community members. Even though there are no exact corresponding responses amongst the interviewees on how these systems are used in the communities, the broad characteristics of the two systems were quite clear by all interviewees and that they are to be used in land leasing settings.

6.2.2. Definition Depending on Purpose

Asking the interviewees to define landownership was a challenge, as they often started talking about other land-related issues or systems. To me all these issues were also important, but it meant that it was not easy to have a clear definition of landownership. The Queen Mother and her Speaker would start talking about who had the right to which land and the right to administrate it. Elijah would speak about the customs and who was to administrate the land. In Adansi, the Chief and his Elders spoke about his important role as chief regarding the land and the other interviewees in Adansi spoke about the Subri issue or other land conflicts in the community. The difficulty in defining landownership reflects how complex these matters are and that they are subject to negotiations. When the Tufuhene in Daboase and I spoke about landownership, he explained to me that it depended on the purpose of the land, where different purposes would define the type of landownership. He explained in more detailed to me drawing on history and tradition, saying:

“Landownership I would say is a way of, it’s a process. [...] it depends on how you want to use the land, and the person you are going to either buy or take the land from. Are you going to buy it from the Chief or from a family head, or individual land? The definition of land is differing based on what the purpose of the land is.”

Depending on the purpose of the land then, the definition and systems for administrating and prices of the land vary. As explained above, landownership is organised around three different types, and the way the land is leased or sold depends on the purpose of the land, who is selling and who is buying. For example, the leasing of land from a chief to a community member would be different than a family head leasing land to a person that is not from the community. The characteristics and conditions of the agreement would simply differ. However, as stated in the previous section, these negotiations are all still controlled by the chief somehow as the chief oversees town matters and an agreement is not legitimate before the chief has signed it.
6.3. Custodian Rights and External Actors

In different ways, all interviewees spoke about external factors influencing and changing their lives, community and land matters. As we heard in the beginning of this chapter, two external authorities were of special importance: the government and PSG. Several confusions regarding the relationship to the government emerged with regards to who owned which land and through which process. The interviewees did not give cohesive answers regarding who owns land and in which way in relation to the government, since they also explained that the government could own land, like for instance reserves. As we learned in Chapter 2, the chieftaincy is part of the dual authority system of Ghana, where the elected government and its administrations are the counterpart. This relationship also regards the owning and handling of land. Some informants said that the government owns all of the land, rather than the chiefs or people:

“You see all the land belongs to the government. Every land in Ghana is for the government. But, the chiefs are custodians of the land. So, the reason why we say the government is for the land is that, government has the right to take any land, wherever, for development. Of which no chief can object.”

It was explained however that all of the land belonged to the government and that the chief and the people have custodian rights to the land. I spoke with most of the interviewees about custodian rights and the term was used for arguing in the communities’ favours. The custodian rights are the traditional and customary rights that were explained in Chapter 2. Although these custodian rights are in place, some interviewees acknowledge that the government have the right to take plantation land for development and the chiefs could not say anything against that. Another explanation on the relationship between the communities and the government regarding land was the following:

“You see that, land, Ghana here, land is between the chiefs and the government. But the government had the upper hand of the land. And the chiefs are the custodians of the land. […] The caretakers. The government cannot come and take a land here, without consulting the chief. […] Custodian means the lands are for them. We are the landowners. Our ancestors came to fight for the land. So, the land belongs to us, the chiefs. But whilst the government, we put the government there, so you have the overhead of all the lands.”

The custodian right is presented as the traditional and historical right to the land, inherited from the ancestors, since before the days of the current government. Some respondents also stress that the government is a representative body. As expressed by one informant: “we put the government there, so he has to work for us the people”. The government operates for the people and has the mandate from the people. The traditional and customary rights to the lands were central in the argumentation regarding external actors in both the Subri Issue and other discussions on land issues. However, the government here has the “upper hand” as pointed out by the informant above. The informant here explains that the chiefs own the land, but the government is the ‘overseer’ being set in place by the people and to have overarching control of all the lands. The idea of the government as overseer was used also by another informant who explained how when they sell land, or they want to build on the land, they have to get approval from the government and vice versa.

“Yes. All the land is owned by chief. But if you want to do anything on the land, it is been advised by the government. I will
sell the land to you. You will go and do this documentation, every-thing, with the government. So, we are all working hand-in-hand. And if the government also need a land for any project, he comes to us. Because he does not have any land. He comes to the chiefs.”

The government and the chiefs are in a joint relationship with one another, through the dual authority system that is in place in the country, (see Chapter 2.1. and 2.2.). Consultation of the other part, regarding land projects or selling of land to third parties, is therefore demanded.

The other major external authority with impact on the communities is PSG. Regarding land rights, they explained the land that the plantation had acquired to be owned by the government, because it was a forest reserve.

“The Socfinaf as it is, that is the forest, and every forest belongs to the government. So, if they want to take it, they have to go to the government to seek the approval and get it from the traditional chief. Because the traditional chief is the custodian of the whole land. No government is there, the traditional chief was there before the government. So, if they want to take the land, they have to go to the traditional council before.”

The plantation land belonged to the government, which they sold to PSG. This procedure should also involve the chiefs and their Elders as they have the custodian rights to the land and are the caretakers. As argued by the informant above, the approval of the chiefs in the area for selling land has to be in place, before the government can sell it. It is unclear what the informant meant with “every forest belonging to the government” – if that goes for just this area, the forests known to the interviewees or all of Ghana’s forests. The company, likewise, has to go through the traditional customary channels, before beginning operations or buying the lands of an area. As discussed earlier in this chapter and also before, there are frustrations in both communities that this did not happen as it should have.

Even though we meet varying explanations on who owns land and in which ways, there seems to be an understanding of multiple forms of ownership and rights on the land at the same time. The government administrates land and owns it is recognised at least some areas, and the chiefs own land through customary rights, and by being traditional custodians of the land. The nature and relationship of landownership, however, remains unclear between the community members and they do not agree to the extent of the community’s ownership.

6.4. Protection of Land

Protection and legitimisation of land and landownership are exercised on several levels. Numerous facets of land protection appeared in the conversations as already hinted above. The land needs to be protected somehow, but from whom? Although it was not necessarily clear, from whom they sought to protect their lands, it was quite clear, that the communities had a strong wish to protect them. The interviewees expressed a lack of confidence for the permanence and security of their landownership in several ways. For instance, the Tufuhene spoke about the need to lease the land, in order to protect:

“Oh, the stool land, we don’t want them to get lost. So, what we do is to lease it to other people on the land. I share boundaries with someone else. And I alone cannot work on the land. And I
don’t want my land to be taken away. So, what I have to do, is to lease someone at the stool to work on the land for me.”

The Tufuhene suggests that unprotected land will get lost. Therefore, they lease the land to community members, so there will be movement on the land and others will not start cultivating it or claim it as their own. This is especially the case for land that shares boundaries with other landowners. Overall there as a general distrust, not just towards authorities like the government or the company, but also towards other communities, and outside landowners or individuals. Mr. Halifax also explained possible conflicts between families, where others would come and claim land from landowners, if there was a lack of documentation:

“It is only, my uncle was farming this site, this is the boundary. The boundary is this coco tree. So, the lands here are not properly documented. […] Because you don’t have any document on the land, one day somebody come and can say, the land is from my uncle. My uncle gave it to my father about 20 years ago. Where are your documents? I’ve got my own documents here. Conflict. […] So, they went to court, documented the land, and took the case to the court. They fought for this over 20 years. Then they won it. Because who gave you the land. Where are your papers? No papers. It is a problem.”

Issues on landownership were explained by Mr. Halifax, to be present, or potentially could be present, in Adansi. The lack of documentation can be a large issue for such conflicts and the reason for them even emerging as explained by Mr Halifax. The Tufuhene in Daboase also spoke about such scenarios, and explained, how they protect land in Daboase community. By having legal property documents to show their land property, if some other communities or individuals try to claim the land or cultivate they can threaten them with legal action. Historically, there was no tradition of documentation, why it is solely regulated through customary rights. The community members put up buildings as they wished on land that they knew to be theirs or their family’s land. As we learned about the oldin days in Chapter 4, hearing the story from one’s parents and grandparents is traditionally a way of obtaining the ‘true history’ which is a way of legitimising claims to land. Elijah however gave one example of how difficult such claims can be if they are contested:

“And the history is that, my family, we had a lot of land, but because we were kids, some have stolen our lands. We didn’t know. Because we didn’t meet our grandfather’s and uncles. […] Then you cannot prove to the government, my ancestors had this land and now I have it, too. Lack of education and those days, they didn’t have education and documentation and money.”

In Elijah’s family history, the land was lost as the information was not remembered or documented. Instead of documentation, the communities have traditionally used specific plants to mark a line of land. Elijah explained that in the past, different trees and plants marked the boundaries of people’s lands. Lack of documentation has historically been an issue, and still is amongst the community settings. Therefore, the communities work on implementing procedures and practices for land documentation. But this takes time. Documentation is a way of legitimising the landownership for the communities and their members. For this documentation process, the landowners use the local governmental land commission. Through this, the communities legitimise their landownership towards each other, so that they can protect and keep the lands they own as a community, as a family or as an individual. The Tufuhene of Daboase
explained the relationship with the land commission to work well. Through the introduction of documentation, they can prevent future conflicts or losses regarding lands. One way to do this is by allowing the authorities, in this case the land committee or local governmental administration, to draw up documents on land, when land gets leased or sold. The Chief of Adansi described this process:

“You go to the land department, after you acquire the land from the chief, you go to land department, make documents on the land, and when you want to put up a building, the land commission will give you instructions on how you have to put up the building. [...] Formally we were putting up buildings anyhow. But this time, before you put up a building now, the committee has to go and see it.”

Not solely concerned with that the land is well documented, the Chief also explains how the land commission/department is used to form and plan the community. This is also important for planning as one has to follow future projects of community and land commissioning terms of roads and structure (see Appendix 4 for further knowledge on community planning).

6.5. Conflicts in Negotiations of Authority and Landownership

As shown here, landownership is very complex and subject to negotiations both within the community and towards other external actors. We will now return to the ongoing land conflicts in Daboase and Adansi, that were highlighted by the interviewees. Varying distrust on several levels were revealed by the interviewees. There was distrust between the leaders of the communities, between its members and the traditional authority and also towards external authorities. Plenty of stories on land conflict in the area or elsewhere in Ghana were related to me. These conflicts could emerge on different issues and levels, as one of the interviewees summarised: “Yes, many places all over Ghana there is these conflicts. [...] Some chief will sell the land to you and go and sell to me again.”. When selling family land to individuals, potential conflicts could also emerge if the land is not properly documented. An informant also had a personal land issue when his own father died. A man tried to take his father’s land, and when the informant opposed and protected his family land, the other man wanted to see the documentation. Many of these conflicts emerge during the farming season when people want to acquire and plant more land.

In the Adansi case, the stool lands between the nursery and the Subri River was leased by community members for farming, therefore it was not known that it “belonged to the government”. With PSG operations, community members effectively lost, valuable farmland (though since long they had lost this land). The Subri issue therefore is a concern that flamed up last year. When I spoke to one interviewee, I was told how some wanted to try to change the error of the past, in the interviewee’s view:

“[…] they tricked Adansi. That is it. Because if the chief is seeing the train line, he doesn’t have any concerns about the land. Maybe if his family, his ancestors did tell him the truth or not, I don’t know. And if there is a map, that showed that the land of Adansi, these people they came to the Adansi in those days, they came to the Adansi Chief, and asked, do you have a place to put down the line. No other chief of any other place sold them the land. […] Forestry people will have to work here on these lands. That’s why I said no, if sold then, then government have tricked
us to take our land. Because no train line. That is what we want to correct.”

If all in Adansi agree with this plan is not certain from the conversations. Whichever explanation is correct, that is how and if they sold or lost their land, Adansi also lost much of their power – or the potential power they could have had today. I spoke to informants in Adansi, who were attempting to fix the mistakes of the past, but they ran into a problem, which we met earlier in this chapter: documentation – or the lack thereof. An informant said the following:

“I have gone to Forestry Commission office and meet that woman. You see that this government, Ghana government, trick us to take our land. This time we don’t have place to eat. This land is the stool land, where PSG has planted this. This land is the stool land. […] they said no, we could not prove to them. We could not document.”

An attempt was made to go to the Forestry Commission to speak to them about the ‘Subri issue’, but since Adansi could not document or prove anything, their case was not very strong and not taken seriously at the office. Using the Daboase community example of not pursuing a land dispute case from five years ago due to the change in government and the accompanying administrative procedures required; the fight for Adansi will be extremely hard, as the decisions taken in the 1970’s by those in government will probably not be respected by today’s regime. The Subri issue had become symbolic in this disagreement. As discussed above, it was also used politically in the community to argue that the Chief is weak or to challenge his authority. However, agreements that were made more than 50 years ago, even if they were made based on false promises, will be very difficult to challenge even with a very strong traditional leader. PSG could therefore easily become the only scapegoat in the matter, but the matter really boils down to governmental negotiations. Fighting the government, takes time, money and energy. Time will tell if they can change this land-related conflict in Adansi’s favour.

In Daboase we witnessed a different scenario. Informants were in general content with their current state but blame the government for not tackling the land sale negotiations properly. The community leaders will not attempt to investigate Daboase’s land-related issues further, since they do not believe that it would help Daboase or be worth the time. In Daboase it is believed, that they would not stand a chance against the government, now being ruled by a new party.

Internal conflicts tend to emerge in the communities if a chief does not inform the community members about land-related issues. When the community members are not aware of changes, and a company, like PSG for example, moves in to Daboase, the conflicts emerge from the community members. The PSG-example was used to explain these potential conflicts, when community members are uninformed and get dissatisfied with either their chief or an external authority. One community member explained a personal view on this, saying that:

“Actually, most of the times the authorities are aware. There are situations, that you see that the people on the local level are not involved in those things. And then one thing, too, is that the chiefs will be aware, and give consent, without the knowledge of the town. The youth will see it and not be aware, because they information didn’t come. The chief and the Elders have to inform the people. PSG from Belgium came to establish a rubber plantation. The new things from the negotiations, they’ll put up school for us, they will do this, they will do this. Then people will be aware and see. But if they see the company is moving its
machines there, without them being aware, without the chief having said it, that one will bring conflict.”

The information and communication channels between a chief and the community members are therefore important in order to avoid misunderstandings and emerging conflicts. Other possible conflicts can emerge if the government wants to acquire land that belongs to the communities or if it is situated where a certain community lives and works. This is what we see in the case of PSG. The traditional authority must protect the lands physically and spiritually, as it was put by the Tufuhene: “We have to protect everything on the land. Physical or spiritual.”. There is also the role of overseeing the land, as its custodian. As it was explained by an informant, the role of the traditional authority and the customary right is to oversee the land, since these communities have been on the land longer than the government:

“The customary right to oversee the land. To oversee it and also the traditional way. We have been here before the government of 1957, so there is sort of a conflict also.”

With so many uncertainties and different levels of potential conflicts regarding landownership, one can only begin to understand the distrust towards each other in the communities, between the communities and external authorities or indeed, other communities. Documentation will probably help with conflicts in the future, but the distrust that was present for some of the interviewees is in many ways comprehensible.

6.6. Chapter Summary

Land is closely linked to the traditional authorities and key to a strong community and secure future. Therefore, chief’s that administrate and own the community lands, will usually hold on to the land, rather than selling it. The difficulty for the interviewees to define landownership reflects the complexities of these land matters. The government owns the land, but the chiefs are the custodians of the land, which means the government has to consult the chiefs regarding planning and selling land in their area. Increased documentation of land is part of legitimising landownership. The documentation thus acts as both protection of land, but also as a form of legitimisation the landownerships. External factors and powers are numerous and a reoccurring determinant in the conversations. Especially two external actors were introduced: the PSG and the government. In Daboase and Adansi, inflamed land-related conflicts have emerged due to the introduction of PSG to the area. The land conflicts are both old and new but defined by getting stirred up by the arrival of the company. In Daboase, the lack of consultation during the negotiations of the land selling causes some contention. If the government omits the consultation of the local structure, it is acting illegally – or at least not rightfully. Until now, many years after the negotiations are over, it is hard for the community to accept. In Adansi, the land conflict emerged during the formation of this thesis, when the community members came to discover that they owned smaller land areas than they thought they did. Although the exact reasons for the community land loss remain indistinct, it became clear that the community thought it to be extremely important to own large land areas. Political contestation linked to the traditional hierarchy emerged on several levels in both communities and towards the company. These contestations were part of the ongoing negotiations of power and land-issues in the communities. Strong feelings of landownership and land rights are present through the traditional customary rights. Distrust toward the government, the company and other communities or individuals was present in both communities. Lack of consultation with the communities, occurs or at least stimulates conflicts and distrust amongst the communities.
Discussion

The negotiations of authority and land-matters within these communities that we have met throughout this thesis, are ongoing. They were rooted in historical events and will continue. Therefore, many of the analysed conflicts and themes of this thesis cannot be summarised in a final and polished conclusion. Rather we end up with a deeper understanding of the complexities and an understanding of the underlying structures that dominate the community settings. Hermeneutic phenomenology that guided the framework and methodology throughout this thesis allowed us to investigate these structures and complexities. We have seen old and new conflicts that have been stirred up due to several reasons – in some cases even I also became part of those disputes. Acknowledging my own role as an actor in this setting, was part of the overall framework that has guided this thesis. Therefore, I have tried to represent the contexts and situations of how conversations and interviews were conducted. The themes that are presented throughout this thesis are interconnected in the reasoning of the local residents. It has become clear that a narrowly themed study would have given different results, without the capability to encapsulate the informants’ way of arguing and how they view many of the themes as interrelated. By designing the text as a thematic narrative, I also wanted to show this interconnectedness of what goes on in these community settings.

Overall, the interviews gave a better understanding of the different layers in the community settings. Compared to the history of the communities, where not all interviewees could or wanted to speak about the topic, all of the interviewees had plenty to say about their beliefs, customs and culture much of which is now in the Appendix. Compared to the conversations about history, when speaking about the customs, the participants spoke clearly and decisively. Overall people had strong positions towards the traditional customs and the newer beliefs, and they also felt comfortable telling me about them. Although the interrelation of themes in the communities showed itself strongly through the conversations with local residents, some themes were easier for them to talk to me about than others. The lack of clarity – or muddiness – of the conversations, I believe to reflect not only the interviewees lack of full understanding on landownership issues, but rather that landownership in itself is a muddy and complex subject. As some respondents suggested, the complexity is not only a local thing, but embedded in the collision between the state laws and customary laws, and the negotiations on the local level.

As stated, the concepts were hard to define, which points towards a main difficulty in navigating within the communities and as an outsider to interact with the local residents. I believe this lesson can also be transferred to other outsiders, such as companies, NGO’s or governmental representatives, who begin to work in such settings: it takes time to build mutual understanding – depending on one’s own background of course. If simple definitions are potential pitfalls, there are surely many more where misunderstandings could emerge. The same lesson about time counted for overcoming language and cultural barriers, where we were not free from confusions. Through time and several meetings, these barriers became less restrictive. It showed the importance of the longer period of conversations, both for my understanding and learning, and their understanding of me, so that our interactions became easier. This could perhaps also be a lesson to take from this study: it takes time to understand these communities and their interlinked settings.
7.1. Interconnectedness

The interconnectedness of varying themes and areas of the lives in Adansi and Daboase has been highlighted and mentioned several times throughout this thesis. Two of the three broad research questions have shown to be linked through many themes. The question of how history is recorded and applied in terms of land and resource rights, traditional authority, and landscape changes, was mainly explored in Chapter 4 – In the Oldin Days. The second question regarding how selected local residents explain internal and external influences of change in and around their communities, was presented in Chapter 5 – The Landscape Changes. I will now discuss these two questions more deeply in relation to the interviews presented in the previous chapters.

The meaning and use of history we learnt is tightly connected to traditional authority and ongoing negotiations in the communities. History is as much about the present life and its negotiations, as it is about what happened in or around the community in the past. Traditional leaders we met have shown us to apply the history of the communities as an instrument in their leadership. Additionally, we also met with the reluctance from other residents who are not part of the leadership in terms of taking ownership of the community’s history: history is not for everyone. We can only speculate on the reasons for the latter may be due to fear, feelings of inadequacy, or perhaps a broad wish for authenticity. We can assume the past to be very connected to the present in both communities’ top hierarchical layers and the negotiations that come with their positions.

Themes of the community members’ lives are very interrelated and cannot be viewed, nor studied separately if one seeks to understand it from their own point of view. The hermeneutic phenomenological framework allowed for bringing forward some of the voices, and also allow for letting the local residents form the research as well. Therefore, the action-oriented research was useful, especially through the focus groups. Participants deeply influenced the direction of this study. They showed that issues regarding landownership and change were at the core of their concerns at the moment and that to understand these concerns I would also have to look at traditional authority, customs, history and heritage.

The ongoing negotiations that are the core tool in understanding the underlying structures in Adansi and Daboase, have shown the communities to be heterogeneous in their range of opinions, interests and negotiations. The traditional leader is under pressure from within the community (and of course also outside of, which will be discussed further on). A chief or the traditional leader will always be under ongoing negotiation and scrutiny from the community members and/or other leaders.

Conversations with local residents about history or the past, often turned into conversations on changes that they observed today or how their traditions and customs worked and its entanglements. Many interviewees are strongly dependent on nature, as the main source of income and livelihood is rainfed farming. The changes that interviewees had observed in nature affected their own lives and those of their fellow community members. Changing weather patterns (and some interviewees were here referring to climate change), illegal mining causing river pollution, deforestation and increased numbers of inhabitants change the landscape and base for their livelihoods. Externally driven changes have also influenced the communities: changes in government and administrations have been numerous in the past, and the interviewees have a general distrust towards the government. Additionally, the new actor PSG has changed the landscape and social negotiation within communities immensely. These externally-driven changes are interlinked with internal changes that are mostly driven by the ongoing negotiations of authority. Changes come in various forms in these communities – some are welcomed,
and some are seen as disruptions. The way these changes are discussed locally gives us a snapshot of the problems and concerns of the residents. Even if I here only have captured very few voices (and for the most part) from people who are relatively privileged in their positions, the discussions I think, give us a glimpse of the everyday concerns of residents.

7.2. Chieftaincy and the Importance of Land

Understanding the land matters of Daboase and Adansi is related to many of the other issues in the communities and is covered by the third and final research question, how selected local residents explain land conflicts, in terms of changes over time and negotiations of authority, landownership and resource rights in the present. Land matters especially relate to the traditional authority and leadership and these matters are continuously negotiated as I have explained in Chapter 6.

The chief is the key person in a community and controls many aspects of that community, including land. All land-related matters go through the chief, who oversees all land leasing or selling, by signing the agreements between parties, regardless whether it is the Chief’s land or not. I addressed land conflicts and ongoing negotiations in various forms. The questioning of the Chief’s authority or the establishment was witnessed in Adansi, which I deliberated in my chapter regarding land conflicts.

I have addressed different layers where land conflicts emerge due to communication problems from the traditional authority to community members and vice versa. These problems may also be due to relations between the company and community or issues between the government and the community. Different layers can be seen in the Daboase and Adansi land conflicts, and there could be many more that I have not captured here. Some residents are trying to correct the error of the past and get their land back, but this is a very long and difficult process. What is clear is that the interviewees feel a loss for their community and see potential for a better life linked to the regaining of lost land areas.

When navigating these continuous negotiations on landownership and traditional authority, it was hard to get a clear picture of the legal aspects and the different forms of ownership rights and customary rights. The varying statements and discussions often contradicted each other, which is an important lesson from this study. The ongoing negotiations within the communities and their relationship to external authorities are complex and very hard to examine and map. Land is owned in several ways and there is a strong feeling of historical attachment, and custodian rights. The land belongs to the communities either directly by a chief or through the chiefs’ actions – here the interviewees were not entirely clear if they meant solely the chief or the entire community, when they said: “the land belongs to the chief.” In any case, it is the chief, that represents the community before the government.

The relationship with the government regarding the administration and owning of land, has been described as a hand-in-hand-relationship. Misunderstandings easily emerge with multi-levelled ownership and rights to land. The government oversees all land activities, but the chiefs own it and are the caretakers. The hand-in-hand relationship between the government and the chiefs, is prone to inflame old and to create new conflicts and misunderstandings, as we have seen in the communities of Adansi and Daboase. The customary/custodian right to land is extremely important amongst interviewees and for the focus group participants, and they hold on to it dearly. The role of land and landownership is crucial for chieftaincy, which connects to a strong will – perhaps also need – to protect the land. The enemy can vary as we saw in Chapter 6. Land and the ownership thereof are the main source of power against the authorities, companies, and other communities. Internally, chiefs and the communities they
represent, also hold more power with larger land areas, but this is still signified by the ongoing negotiations of power within the community itself. From the Oldin Days Chapter we have heard that land and power was regarded in a similar way in the past. The chief’s duty was to protect the lands and territories against enemies, which has not changed, but what exactly land needs protection from has changed: from protecting territories in wars, so that one had larger farming areas and numbers of warriors, to having ownership of natural resources and a strong bargaining power in negotiations with government or other parties.

Land is also crucial for individuals. It is either inherited or bought. For all activities, whether to have a place to live on or to farm, one needs to either buy or lease land, if one does not own land already. One informant explains that the lack of inhered land is seen as having ‘lazy forefathers’, and this will also affect one’s own opportunities in life. Equal opportunities are therefore, not the case for all. Since land is the key to a secured livelihood and future for families, landownership is an inflamed topic. It means much for people, as their livelihoods and possibilities in life depend on it. I believe there is still much work to be done regarding mutual understanding and finding common ground in collaboration and negotiation. This thesis has hopefully closed the gap of understanding to some degree. Much more work should be made from external parties to explore and understand the complexities – especially in early stages of projects, that potentially could affect such communities either directly or indirectly. How such a consultation process could go about I will elaborate in Chapter 7.4.

7.3. A Transitioning Ghana and Varying Interests

Since this study solely investigates the two communities of Adansi and Daboase, it is difficult to generalise these local contexts for what is relevant for the Western Region, and rural areas in Ghana. The interviewees here only bring forward their perceptions and do not speak for larger groups or their entire community. Although this being the case, the outcomes of this thesis do still point to larger generic issues.

At the end of a conversation about traditional authority, an interviewee and I touched upon the strengths and potential weaknesses of the traditional system and chieftaincy. When land-related conflicts emerge, and when negotiating with external actors, the chieftaincy system, in several ways find it hard to balance the consultation process. The interviewee pinpointed the following:

“These conflicts can be hard. Because it is a mix between the traditional authorities, the traditional way of structuring a town, which is here. It is a rural area, it’s out in the country side, it’s been a small town and now it’s growing. And there’s things going on, that this chief system is not equipped enough to work with these problems. It is not always strong enough.”

When the chieftaincy is confronted by newer challenges and changes, typically due to land conflicts, they may be inept in tackling the challenge appropriately. Obviously, there are numerous unknown scenarios and speculation in the interviewee’s statement, but I think a strong argument is pointed out in the quote above. It points to a traditional system that faces new challenges, which the chieftaincy system was not necessarily designed for: the interaction with

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19 Much of this opens up for many more questions to understand these communities fully and not just from a perspective of land-related matters. Especially the traditional authority in the communities could use further investigations and which forms of leadership in chieftaincy cause which conflicts in the negotiations. Here we are probably only presented with the tip of the iceberg and there is much more to learn on how these ongoing negotiations on varying levels work and emerge and get solved.
democracy, bureaucracy, and globalisation. The chiefs have to balance various interests in these newer settings.

Collaboration with external parties, actors or authorities is inevitable, but in many cases also desirable for the community leaders. Through collaboration they can “bring development to the community”, as it was expressed by an interviewee. It showed with PSG, their presence was desirable for many in the community, since it brought jobs for many community members and through social responsibility agreements also development20. In general, the presence of PSG is seen as positive by most interviewees, despite the feelings of discontent in Adansi. However, I find it important to discuss the relationships that are at work in such a case, where external companies or the authorities negotiate on the choice of an area for exploitation.

We have in this thesis, seen two examples of negotiations of land between communities and the government (or PSG), where the outcome for the communities has left them with feelings of frustration. As stated, they are glad the company has come to the area, but the land-related matters are complex and still unresolved. Adansi representatives will continue to investigate the possibilities to resolve the land conflict politically, but Daboase residents have decided not to invest their time and energy. According to the customary rights of the chief or (and the land law), chiefs have in theory the power to decline the introduction of a company or developmental work on their lands or in their area, where they could be affected. The cases of Adansi and Daboase, point towards loopholes in the incorporation of chieftaincy in governmental administration – or perhaps just some gaps or insufficiencies. The negotiations of land for the communities could perhaps be seen as uneven power relations, when the chiefs face the government or other actors on their community’s behalf. The bargaining positions of the chief vis-à-vis the government and/or external actors are in my opinion far from balanced and the community chief and his representatives are in a difficult position. Either the chiefs could say no to the negotiations and thereby not lease or sell their lands, but by that they also say no to potential development of their communities, which is also in their main interest (or should be at least). When the government or external actors go through the chiefs, as we learnt in Chapter 2 that they are lawfully forced to do, and they only consult the chief, they pre-assume that the chief represents the entire community. We have in this thesis discovered that these communities are highly heterogeneous and marked by ongoing negotiations. Therefore, by consulting in a broader democratic process and representation in the communities, some conflicts can be avoided. Solely negotiating with a chief (which is somehow a shortcut through the complexities) takes less time than trying to work with the complexities. By investing the time in a broad democratic consultation process, possibly less conflicts could emerge in the future. By that I do not suggest going around the established authority of a chief, but rather to find a balance between respecting traditions, by using appropriate channels, and creating a democratic consultation process, by opening up to the communities’ complexities (see more on this in the following Chapter 7.4.).

As discussed earlier, land is one of their main sources of power and selling it for money does not make up for power in the future. Another problem I believe we see here is the possibility to act – or the feeling of being able to change the outcomes of negotiations of the past. It seems there is no ‘going back’, when negotiations of land have been conducted and one might find what happened not to be fair or correct. Therefore, I question to what extent customary rights is acknowledged, though it is included in Ghanaian legislation to what extent is it included in

20 The term ‘development’ has not been defined through this project. Interviewees used it in a positive manner and explained that it meant that the community changed for the better.
administrative procedure. Where can the chiefs or community members appeal if their customary rights do not get respected by their government or others? What precautions can they take? In Chapter 2 – Background, we learned about the chieftaincy and Ghana’s land law that combines chieftaincy with governmental administration. Amanor (1999) pointed towards issues with commodification of land for these communities. Selling land is far from as profitable in the long run than keeping it (and to perhaps lease it instead). The strength of traditional authority, history and customary rights somehow gets lost when commodification and a free market dominate.

Strong feelings of distrust became clear throughout this thesis. Distrust within the communities, which are also related to the ongoing negotiations between community members and the traditional authority. Distrust towards other communities, and the authorities or external actors, such as the PSG. The distrust towards the political establishment and the politicians that represent the government, was particularly strong. We saw it with the land conflicts in both communities – they do not trust politicians or the government and that it works for their best interests and even feel that they have been ‘tricked’: Politicians were expressed to be liars and corrupt. As we learnt in the beginning of this thesis, Ghana is in some ways still under transition to democracy (Ninsin, 1998). It is only since the early 1990’s that there has been some stability in the political scene of Ghana and the country is still finding its balance and footing within the democratic system. The distrust towards the establishment in relation to continuing changes for the communities, land matters and the respect of the chieftaincy system, could be linked. In the communities they have still to feel the stability of their government and country’s political system – the elders of the communities probably even still remember military regimes from before 1993. One interviewee told me that the politicians all stay in Accra, once they have been elected after making promises to the contrary. In the eyes of some interviewees the government is not for everyone, but only for selected groups (i.e. political elite, politicians, ethnic groups, supporters of a specific party, etc.). We have also heard from interviewees that when a new party comes to power in Ghana, the composition of the governmental employees change, which means continuity can be lost. Additionally, many interviewees feel that the government y will not represent the interests of the communities that did not support their party. One can imagine a scenery of distrust to be a perfect setting for conflicts to emerge. Therefore, this could point towards a democratic challenge that Ghana still faces: To establish (local) trustful relationships.

In the democratic transition process, I believe the traditional chieftaincy system is also required to redefine its role. Re-adjustment and transitions continue to influence the chieftaincy of Ghana as global and national politics and economies change. The changing relationship between the government and the chiefs affects the social dynamics in the communities (decreasing powers for the chiefs, results in their need for repositioning themselves in relation to community members as an ongoing negotiation of power). Documentation in this case is of paramount importance. Increased documentation in the communities regarding land helps with reducing potential land conflicts. This is a positive development, however some interviewees expressed that documentation would not be fully sufficient, since it is hard to go back and resolve all the old conflicts. In my opinion, we encounter here an important essence of land conflicts. Documentation is not part of these traditional communities and not entirely transferable to ‘modern documentation’ of land. The modern documentation I also see as a part of the commodification of land and customary rights, which also is a potential threat to the customary ownership rights, since only those with resources can document their land. There are great advantages with documentation, as it can easily resolve many land-related conflicts that could emerge, but how does one document retroactively and encapsulate all ownership and leasing agreements that are memory-based? Here we possibly also meet an area where the traditional authority and customs are not as easily adaptable nor as manageable as some perhaps would
like them to be. Or rather the other way around: The democratic system is not as adaptable and inclusive as some believe or desire it to be.

7.4. Sustainability and Future Consultation Processes

The current political climate, where environmental crisis and sustainability are high on the agenda and the context in which I started this research, working as an intern in the social sustainability department at PSG, compel me to place the outcomes of this thesis in relation to lessons for sustainability and applicability. The term sustainability and how it is understood (by myself or the academic discourse) has not been discussed in this project nor has it been a concept that I let the interviewees define. Certainly, interviewees do mention development and see it as a positive thing, but this is not necessarily equitable with sustainability, a term that has increased in popularity in recent years (now separated from the somewhat problematic term of development). The Socfin group as well, which PSG is a member of, uses the term responsible management (Socfin, 2016) and strives towards being a sustainable business (Socfin, 2018a). Socfin’s responsible management commitments entail; ‘best management practices’, responsible development of its operations, to respect human rights, and develop full transparency (Socfin, 2016). Here I question the term sustainability and/or responsible management and uses of them in the setting I came to know at PSG. Rather than attempting to be the judge of what sustainability is and if PSG or the Socfin group’s sustainability commitment is adequate, I point towards a possible enhancement of the concept. A lesson from this thesis are the gaps of understanding between the communities and external parties, in this case also PSG. By being attentive to these gaps of understanding, learning from the experience to create better procedures for local consultation processes, I reason that the company could be an active part and even better example of the incorporation of long-termism and collaboration into the field of corporate social responsibility and sustainability.

This thesis has investigated the land conflicts that affect Adansi and Daboase community, where PSG plays a role in both. Even though these conflicts where not fully known or realised by the company as they started operations in the area, the company could have become aware of some of the conflicts through a careful consultation process from the beginning. With proper procedures for consultation, these (potential) conflicts would have been known at much earlier stages. Such proper consultation procedures could, based on the outcomes of this thesis, look like this:

Angles for Consultation Process

- Thorough consultation process is the beginning of strong community relations and a healthy collaboration setting for the future project.
  - Early stages of trust building begin in the consultation process.
- Aim to facilitate a consultation process and environment that seeks to understand the complexities and heterogeneity of the community.
  - Themes that might not be directly linked to your project, could be valuable to understand in the long run, such as the history, customs, land-matters, nature-uses, livelihoods, occurring changes, etc.
  - Let the experts be the experts.
- Be open to letting the community take ownership of the process and that communities can have both similarities, but also differ. Therefore, the consultation processes might not look exactly alike in each community.
Tools

- Traditional authority: work through the traditional authorities as both national law and customary rules require. Establish several meetings and consultation of their wishes, expertise and knowledge that might be relevant for your project.
- Focus group discussions: call focus group discussions and try to ensure a broad representation from different parts of the community (including women, youth and landless). During the focus groups;
  - Introduce the project.
  - Aim for open ended conversations.
  - Let the participants define topic and problems to discuss.
  - Include questions of history, traditions and landownership, if the participants do not address these topics on their own initiative.
  - Have participants assess benefits and potential risks with the activities of the project – discuss how risks can be mitigated and benefits promoted. Jointly write a plan for the identified risks and eventual mitigation.
- Mobilise a process of community voting, based on representation or direct democracy.
- Open process: be open about aims of the meetings, focus groups, the project and about the consultation process.
- Summarise findings from all meetings and focus groups and store as knowledge within the project. Perhaps even bring the summaries to some of the participants (or others from the community) and let them comment.

Many of the above points are expressed in for instance the World Bank’s recommendations for project frameworks they support (see their environmental and social framework (ESF), World Bank, 2016). Even though the World Bank mostly operates on a larger level than such small communities, these points are still valid for small projects. The ‘Subri issue’ might have been simpler if there had been a consultation process with the local residents prior to the PSG’s operations in 2013. PSG might have known about the historical land issue from the beginning and could have been made a mitigation plan in collaboration with the broad community, rather than stirring up the issue. Early and comprehensive consultation processes can save projects a lot of time and money in the long run, if they establish a healthy collaboration that is built on mutual understanding and trust.

When actively working with sustainable approaches, the company collaborates with the communities and luckily through some work tools and approaches, acknowledged that the communities are not a homogenous mass, where the chief represents all that goes on in the community. The methodologies and/or lessons of this research could be helpful for PSG or other companies in order to close the gap of understanding and avoid future misunderstandings and conflicts. Other companies could also learn from this study, by investigating the local area and surroundings one might consider operating more thoroughly, prior to settling in the location. The methods and lessons of this thesis are obviously not a solution that can fit to all areas and local communities, but I believe the approaches of openness and allowing the locals to be the experts on the surroundings and their needs, could become helpful for sustainability projects in the future. This is also where I encourage to incorporate long-termism into the sustainability approaches. By understanding the communities’ history, traditional values and their multi-levelled governance structures and many points of distrust, the company could perhaps have

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21 From the time at PSG I learned that they have begun to collaborate more broadly with the community and to include even the youth. The FPIC-approach that was introduced in Chapter 3 – Building the Study, was also part of a more inclusive and ‘sustainable’ community approach.
avoided some of the conflicts that have emerged and are presented in this thesis. Deep understanding can also establish stronger collaboration and common ground, which I believe is more long-term and more sustainable than the status quo. The long-term interest for everybody is to develop the best conditions for collaborations between stakeholders. Can we really name a practice sustainable when the locals feel bypassed or if they are not included fully in a process and that their interests are not represented? Has the company truly completed appropriate social responsibility work, if local residents from the political top layers (who have been consulted to a much higher degree) express such insights and feelings that are presented in this thesis and what would other community members say? And what is the Ghanaian government’s role in such a case? How does a government ensure their local communities’ long-term interests in a changing globalised world, where the markets demand the resources this area has to offer and when at first glance there seem to be no alternative to such development?

Despite the feelings of immutability, I think I have captured how the ever-changing outside influences are combined with internally driven factors of change and ongoing negotiations. The knowledge presented in this thesis works as a glimpse into the lives and perceptions of local residents. As a local resident and I spoke about changes, he was mutually optimistic and pessimistic about the future. He spoke of many good changes of the past, but also bad ones, and how responsibility lies with government. He said:

“The government shall be in charge of all this development. But he [the government] is not doing this. Because of politics, things are not going the way, they should be. For now, if you don’t belong to a particular party that is in government and you are in need of anything, they will not help you, because you don’t belong to their party. You have to wait until your party comes to power, before you can get anything. And because of this government, like I said in the oldin days, we were not having this politics, so everything was relying on chiefs. Today, some powers that should rely on the chiefs, have been reduced. But in the oldin days they were not having this court in Wassa, so everything was done by the chiefs and his elders.”

He concluded our talk on this topic with the following: “We are now in a computer era. Things are changing. It will get better, but things have to change. It cannot stand still.”
References


Appendix

As has come to be shown in the thesis, the themes, argumentation and stories from the interviews, were all strongly interlinked. Filtering the themes of changes, landownership and traditional authority from the rest of the collected data and knowledge, was not without sacrifices of other themes. In the following this data and knowledge will be presented. It will work as additional background material for the thesis, where the interested soul can dig even deeper into the knowledge the conversations brought me in Daboase and Adansi. It can work as both knowledge standing on its own, or to support and establish further background knowledge to understand the continuing negotiations and communities in transformation that are presented in the thesis. Lastly, it could point towards other possible research angles of new directions one could go in in the future.

1. Describing and Mapping

The communities of Adansi and Daboase were described with the help of interviewees’ descriptions of the towns and their surroundings (see Chapter 5). The descriptions opened up the opportunity for questions regarding understanding of their surroundings, which there was no time to dig deeper into. In the following we hear a local resident from Daboase community, who described the surroundings while we drew a map of the area in collaboration:

“So, this is the main road from Takoradi maybe to Accra. Ok so this road leads to Daboase. So, this is Daboase junction. And this is where we have Beposo bridge. And this is river Pra. Daboase is here. And this is Echikrom. They are very close to the river. And at the back somewhere here you can search for Tekiman. For them, they are at the back of the River Pra. If you want to go to Tekiman you have to go to Beposo, and there’s a road over there. This is where Echikrom is. […] People they are moving in and then out. We have a lot of firms over here. We have PSG, we have NGO’s that work. Daboase is a district head quarter. That’s Wassa East. At first it was in Mpohor Wassa East. And then it was in 2012 it we were been account from Daboase. So, we have now Wassa East.”

In the above quote, we also are shown a glimpse of how surroundings are described from a certain standpoint, which is probably where one is sitting or standing at that moment. By pointing in different directions, names of communities, forests, roads, rivers or likewise were mentioned. The exact direction did not always seem to matter, and also distances were almost never mentioned, but expressions like “at the back of the river”, or “this road leads to”. I came to realise that when I describe or got to know an area, I have been trained in creating and working with an inner map to orientate and navigate. This does not necessarily seem to be the case with the local residents I worked with, rather they used a different way of describing their surroundings and personal orientation was the key.
2. Traditional Authority

The power and control of communities in Ghana, is organised through the chieftaincy, which we have addressed in Chapter 2. Prior to colonization of the land that today forms the country of Ghana, the land was organised in community based or tribal structures, led by chiefs, who controlled larger areas. This knowledge the tufuhene of Daboase also shared with me, in relation to the question about their traditional leadership and how it is confirmed and challenged:

“Before the white man came into Ghana and Africa, if was being controlled by the chiefs. Before we have this a president and vice president. But chiefs, we still had control.”

He elaborated on how a chief can be ‘de-stooled’, if he misbehaves or for instance sells off land that belongs to the community. The decision to depose a chief is taken by the elders, who will also be responsible for taking appropriate measures. In the same conversation with the tufuhene of Daboase we also discussed the old political structures and how they interacted with the new ones.

The chiefs are at the core of chieftaincy and in the following, we hear from local residents, how they describe their traditional authority and the roles of the different leadership positions.

2.1. The Positions

The leadership positions and the roles they play, are a large theme in the communities. Not many conversations were held without several references to the leadership positions and what
they could or should do. Throughout the thesis, this is presented and interpreted as continuing negotiations of traditional authority but here I go deeper into how they were described to me.

One informant explained: “Here the hierarchy, we start from the chief. He controls the town.” Traditionally the tufuhene was the keeper of the weapons for wars, but this tradition has faded away, since there are no longer local wars. A chief is also supported by the council of elders, who will advise the chief. These elders can be few in number, in Adansi there were four, or many, like in Daboase around 20. Around the chief there are other positions, such as the queen mother, the busuapenne and the safohenne. The queen mother is the only female with a formal political role in this local hierarchy, all other formal positions are reserved for men. As the chief, the queen mother comes from the royal family. She can be either an aunt or the mother of the chief and functions as the female family head. The queen mother’s role is to represent the female fraction of a community and to present a new candidate for the chieftaincy if the old chief dies. After the presentation and investiture of a new chief, she loses her direct powers, but she usually retains a strong political and symbolic figure of power in the community.

In this area of Ghana, they use the maternal inheritance lineage, and therefore all the people who are related through the mother, belong to the clan. The clans can be very large: for instance, the Ntwea II clan, has around 70 people, counting children from the age of eight and above. The clans are headed by the busuapenne of which there are several in the town, whose point of view needs to be taken into consideration if there are any affairs involving the clan area.

Since direct interaction or conversation with the chief is not allowed, another important position in the community is the so-called linguist. The linguist is the person whom one speaks through when liaising with the chief, as explained by one informant:

“In our tradition we cannot talk to a chief face to face. We have someone called a linguist. If you want to talk to the chief, you have to see the linguist first. We talk to this linguist. You cannot talk to the chief.”

In both communities there was no linguist in place, which could possibly be a sign that this position is fading away. Neither the Tufuhene of Daboase or the Chief of Adansi expanded on the linguist’s role and when I asked about the linguist, they told me that he works as a communication channel only; in my interpretation the linguist manages the relationship between the chief and the community members.

In both communities I was also introduced to the youth leader position. In Daboase I spoke to the Youth Leader several times, but in Adansi a youth leader is yet to be appointed. The youth leader organises the youth and is a communication to the traditional authority leaders. The youth leader is or can be crucial for such traditional communities as Daboase and Adansi. During my time at PSG, there were several situations, where the youth of more northern communities rebelled either against the established chief or leaders, or against the company. Once, they set fire to one of the plantation’s guard houses in the north-eastern part of the plantation. Apparently, the reason was discontent with the plantation’s plans to acquire new lands without consulting them first. The company had met with the chief of the community; however, the youth felt the decision was taken without full agreement internally in the community. This shows again (as also stressed in the discussions) that consultation processes limited to the establishment channel of the chief or highest-ranking individuals are not enough as a ground for collaboration.
2.2. Selections and Installations

For the leadership positions, one has to be selected, rather than elected. I listened to several explanations on how leaders are instated, who confirms them, and what sort of community member one should be to be considered for a position. To be selected as the chief, the person has first and foremost to be a male member of the royal family. The chief candidate is chosen and presented by the queen mother or the busuapenne of the royal family. As the queen mother presents a candidate, the tufuhene and the elders will debate her choice accepting or rejecting the given candidate as the new chief. Once a chief candidate is accepted, he is locked into a room for one week, and the elders will tell him the history of the community and their forefathers, a practice which again shows the importance given to history.

To become tufuhene, one has to be a respected man in the community (I was told the tufuhene cannot be unemployed, a drunk or disabled) and from one of the community clans. The importance of being a respected community member led back to earning the respect of others: it was explained to me that if one is not respected, it was not possible to be a strong leader. The Speaker of the Queen Mother elaborated on the role of the tufuhene like this:

“Tufuhene in the parliament is the opposition. Because he’s there’s for the people. Because the chief’s from the same clan from the queen mother. So, when they two come, you have to get somebody to defend them, defend the community. That’s why you have the tufuhene.”

The tufuhene therefore is the defender of the town if the chief and the queen mother, being from the same family, act unwisely on the community’s behalf. The tufuhene should also represent the community members, who cannot speak up through the established channels.

The queen mother is the only female position in the traditional authority structure. To install a queen mother, the chief, the elders and the busuapennes, will meet and forward a candidate. The Speaker of the Queen Mother of Daboase explained the processes of instalment:

“This Nana a mother and a senior of the family”. As soon as the older queen mother is not there anymore, she will have to come into position. If then all agree, you take her to the community and say: “the family have met, and they have to resolved that, they want to succeed to be the queen mother from the clan, is Nana Emina.”

When the queen mother is aging, a successor will be chosen, so she will be ready to take over, when the queen mother dies. The successor will either be a sister, daughter or niece.

But there are also other powerful community members that are not part of the traditional authority. Elijah described how one gets a leadership position in the town saying: “So, they look at you and see, this guy can be very powerful, he can lead us in this area.”. If a person shows leadership potential and has a strong character, then one has the possibility to be put forward as a successor of a position. The busuapenne gets chosen within the clan. As for the elders and the linguist, they are appointed by the chief directly, but it is unclear if they are also accepted by the elders.
3. Political Contentions Within the Communities

In Daboase and Adansi, distinct disagreements dominated local politics. We will now take a closer look at some of these contentions.

3.1. Hierarchy and Leadership Contentions in Daboase

During the interviews, we often came to talk about the traditional hierarchy and the systems that are in place: Who rules which area and who has the power in which situation? Although, explanations were similar as to which appointees had which role within the hierarchy, I received different explanations from the interviewees when discussing some of the positions, especially in Daboase. According to all of the Daboase interviewees, there is a lack of stability without the presence of a chief, which affects the community. In the focus groups many also identified other concerns and did not talk much about the lack of a chief. The Speaker of the Queen Mother described the lack of a chief with the following:

“You see the community they feel very bad. Yes. Because a society without the head, is very bad. [...] Because if you don’t have a chief, the situation will be chaos. All the time problem. You see somebody who will say, I’m a man, I’m this, I’m this. But if you have a chief, the chief he will say, you go to the parliament chief, he will swear there, he will have a document, the chief there will gazette him. So, have a certificate, you call him the chief.”

A community needs a leader, according to the Speaker. If the community lacks a leader, there will be several individuals who try to claim some sort of power or dominance, as he described it in the quote above. Another problem is that, only the chief has the authority to take people to court. If there is no chief in position or if a chief does not act, some cases will not be taken to court and there will be neither justice, nor punishment. Elijah, who functions both as an Alder and a Busuapenne, described how, according to their traditional system, the Tufuhene takes over the duties of the chief, in their absence: “[...] the tufuhene who was by our tradition, if the chief is not there, he is the head who is to take care of the leader of the time.” However, not all agree that tufuhene is the acting chief and this is where the conflict emerges in Daboase. According to the Queen Mother, all communication from the company should be channelled through her (see Chapter 3). During the conversations I came closer to understanding this disagreement which built up after the Queen Mother fell sick in 2016. During her illness, the Tufuhene and elders of the community held their meetings at the community palace. When the Queen Mother regained strength, she wanted the meetings to be held at her house as she was still weak, but the Tufuhene and Elders did not grant her this request. The Tufuhene now accuses the Queen Mother for wanting to sell off community land, while the Queen Mother accuses the Tufuhene and Elders having fiddled with community money (and also claims that as the Tufuhene has not been installed by a chief he does not have authority). The Queen Mother took the matter of embezzlement to the traditional court where, according to the Tufuhene at least, he and the Elders were cleared of the allegations. The Tufuhene however acknowledges that they should have visited the Queen Mother during her illness and informed her more frequently about the happenings in the community.

Still I did not understand them fully. To rightfully become Tufuhene, the chief has to appoint the Tufuhene, which had not happened, according to the Queen Mother and her Speaker, since there has not been a chief in Daboase for about twelve to thirteen years. I spoke to the Tufuhene about the Queen Mother’s accusations. He told me about the political contentions they were
having, which, according to him, started with her wanting to sell off land belonging to the chieftaincy, and him opposing.

“I will not allow her, so sell the land. That is why she said all these things. […] According to our tradition, if you go to Wassa Phiasi, when you read the clans, in the absence of the chief, it’s the tufuhene who takes over, in whole Ghana.”

While trying to navigate in these contradictory accusations and statements, I asked about what the general acceptance of the Tufuhene and in town the Queen Mother was and on informant said: “Some of the people accept him [the tufuhene]. The youth accepts him.” But the Queen Mother also has followers. Therefore, the town is divided between the two leadership positions.

3.2. Leadership Distance and Communication Channels

From the established leadership, there is a sense of distance or reserve in relation to town people. I asked the Tufuhene in Daboase in our follow up interview, why he thought there was this distance upon which he answered:

“It’s a tradition. We came and met it. […] They want the chiefs to be superior. Yes, you cannot just talk to a chief. You have to speak through somebody to the chief, meaning that somebody is a big man or superiors. That is why we always speak to the chief through the linguist.”

This situation I find crucial for understanding the position of the linguist and the rest of the established structures. One cannot just speak freely any time to the chief, without permission. Issues with communication channels were addressed in both communities. In Daboase and Adansi, there are issues regarding the communication to and from the positions of traditional leadership. Daboase’s youth is rebelling against the establishment and wants increased influence. Kate explained this to me:

“Because nowadays the youth, they want to be higher than the elders. Where they are not supposed to be there, they want to be there. That one is friction between the youth and the leaders in Daboase community.”

The youth confronts the leaders and wants to have more influence. Additionally, they will not follow the decisions of the leaders, and there’s no way of making them as there is no appointed chief. It is only the chief or the queen mother (who’s authority is weakened) that can take community matters to the police. The Queen Mother’s Speaker also complained about what he saw as a decreased respect for the establishment: “Oldin days, the respect is there. Compared to the oldin days, the respect is not there anymore.”. I believe that this “loss of respect” can be seen as part of the ongoing negotiations of authority in the community, if youth are not involved in the decision-making processes it appears to them as the leaders are holding money or power for themselves. The Tufuhene and I also spoke about these communication difficulties:

“They say, I believe since we are the leaders of the town, at times community moneys comes into us. […] So, the youth and a lot of people in the town, always presume, that we are chopping the money, which should have gone to the community.”

Gossip can emerge and affect the town and develop distrust between the community members and the traditional hierarchy, especially when money is involved.
In Adansi, challenges with the communication channels between the community people and the established hierarchy structures were also apparent, but rather than caused by money-related or transparency issues, discontent seems to be caused by a lack of leadership. Several interviewees expressed worry about what they saw to be the passiveness of their chief, as shown in Chapter 3 and 6. Over time, this has made the community members actively avoid using the communication channels and now they just do whatever they want to do, due to the lack of consequences to their actions. In both communities, I sense a strong will for involvement from the community members and youth groups, and it also shows the importance of trust building, clear and functioning communication channels, and transparency within a community and in the interactions with other actors.

4. Nature in Culture and Culture in Nature

Culture is an abstract concept that can be defined in many different ways. It can also get lost in translation. Therefore, I wanted the interviewees to define the concept themselves and explain how they understood and saw culture. The Tufuhene of Daboase put it in his own words like this: “Let’s say culture is a way. A manner of belief in a community. [...] A way of life between people.” A way of life between people I find a fitting definition for Daboase and Adansi. When we spoke about their culture, I often heard that they were ‘Wassas’: Thus, being from the Wassa tribe is part of the culture. Culture is defined by both their location and the way of life.

Customs, beliefs and religion came up during the focus groups and interviews as a central focus point in the local communities and their culture. Both Daboase and Adansi show emphasis on reinforcing customs and traditions. All the interviewees spoke much on culture and traditional customs. Our conversations on these topics often ended up in conversing about what the interviewees believed in and how the customs mix with newer religions and their natural surroundings. In both Daboase and Adansi, the majority of the people are committed to Christian beliefs. Islam has also paved its way to the communities but makes up a small minority of about 5-10%. There are also some ‘traditionalists’ that have maintained the old traditional beliefs and customs. Even though the traditionalists are few, only a few in Daboase and none in Adansi, many of the traditional customs are still important and frequently practiced in both communities, one example is the yams festival. Taboo days are also practiced, which are specific weekdays on which all or some of the community members are not allowed to work, and there is strong belief that something bad will happen if one does not respect the taboo. Another custom that is frequently exercised in both communities is the pouring of libation. It is done by the chief, either yearly in relation to a festival or when there are other special occasions, on which they have to mark an event to appease the ancestors to help them. By killing sheep or foals, they use the poured blood to ‘call the ancestors’.

4.1. Importance of Nature

Nature, which can also be defined in many ways, seems to have been easier to define for many interviewees. During the conversations I asked a few of the interviewees if they saw a separation between the town and the forest or bush, and they all answered negatively. They experienced the surroundings of the town and the town to be the same. Here is an example of this question I asked Mr. Halifax:

I asked him: “Do you separate between Adansi community and the forest? Or the bush? Is there separation or is it the same?

To what he answered: "It’s the same.”
The example of Mr. Halifax is quite representative of how others answered this question. I believe that this question seemed strange to some of them, because I had to ask and rephrase it a few times in the first couple of interviews. Therefore, the question I asked ended up with being quite direct, which also gave a short and direct answer several times: ‘It’s the same’. Mr. Halifax elaborated on differences he saw between the forest and the bush.

“The forest has been taken over by the government. So, we don’t go over to farm there. The bush we go there to farm. That is where my family has the family land. I go to my family land to do farming. Or to set up a trap. But the forest, you cannot go there. Forest is where we have these animals. Although they are also in the bush, they are not in the bush as it is in the forest. In the forest, when you go there you can see this gorilla, giraffes, so on, you can see that in the forest. People tell more, you can get them in the forest. But you cannot get them in the bush. In the bush you can only get these grasscutters and this.”

The separation between town and bush does not exist for several interviewees, but here Mr. Halifax explained how the forest differs from the bush in what animals one can hunt or encounter. The bush is their farm lands, where they cultivate and hunt smaller animals, like grasscutters. One does not go to the forest too often, as it is far away and today, as elaborated earlier, the forest does not offer as many hunting and collecting possibilities as before.

To the culture and the livelihoods of the communities, nature seems to be very important. In Adansi, I had several conversations about the importance of the nature. The Chief of Adansi explained to me why he thought the nature was important:

“Nature is very important to Adansi people, because nature has come to farm here. You know then at first, we were having a God’s land, we were not farming on it. But since the nature, people has come from all over places to farm here. Meaning the nature is very important to the people of Adansi, because our forefathers, they were here before. People came from outside.”

The Adansi Chief emphasised how the nature changed their lives, since before they were only on God’s lands. Their forefathers came to the area where Adansi is located now, due to its nature so they could settle and farm. In the following, Efua explained other ways in which Adansi people are dependent on nature is through rainfall and sun:

“So, they are dependent on the rain for instance. If there are some crops that need rainfall. If for a season it doesn’t rain, it means they have lost a lot on it. But they can’t say it should rain throughout the year or a month at least […]. That will help for their crops to grow, that they will make money out of it. If in one particular season the water changes and it goes the other way around, they might lose what they have done.”

If the rain becomes too irregular, it affects their livelihoods negatively, because many crops are lost. The awareness of the surroundings and the representation of nature in the culture is strong in both communities. Nature, in terms of the forest and bush, the weather and soil for cultivation, are crucial to the culture, beliefs and livelihoods of the people of the communities.
4.2. Taking Care of the Communities and Their Surroundings

In both communities, a strong concern and sense of care for the towns and surroundings was expressed. For instance, respondents spoke about town planning and labour days, where they monthly worked jointly on an area in their community for a whole day. Several interviewees also explained how they had begun to structure their communities better. Through the documentation processes and the need for a chief or the local governmental administration (the Land Commission) to accept plans for building constructions, they plan their communities better than before:

“People were also building anyhow. Wherever you get, you see them building. But now, we’ve been able to educate them. Before you can build, you have to go to the assembly. You do your sand plan, you do your property drawings. Before you can sign the building plan. So, people were also building on the streets, but now they’ve all stopped. […] That we shall have a nice town. We shall have an accessible town.”

The Chief in Adansi expressed similar concerns about town planning. Formerly the community members built as they pleased, but today they have to build according to town planning rules. Regarding the communal labour, Mr. Halifax explained how they clean up or clear a bushy area in the town each month:

“We take care of Adansi by doing communal labour by the first week of every month. We do clean up exercise. We go to the town, we go within the town and clear up on the road, clear the bush part, or the bushes within or around the town, there’s still the upper side.”

There are set rules and structures to follow in their communities and to keep the communities clean and organised. This urge to take care of Daboase and Adansi and to plan their communities better, was demonstrated in all interviews I had in the communities.
5. Structure of the Focus Groups

The following was handed out to all participants, when we began the focus group. This is the example of Adansi. In the focus group in Daboase, the name of Daboase stood in Adansi’s place.

Focus Group
Background Research for Master Thesis at Uppsala University
by student
Josephine Laursen

Contents and aims
This focus group’s aims are to discover the views of the Adansi community’s leaders and members, to understand their opinions on certain topics regarding the community and its surroundings.
The focus group is voluntary and unbinding and is for research purposes only. Therefore, it is to be understood as untied to PSG.
The talk will be recorded for the purpose of assisting memory for the moderator (in this case the student) and will be transcribed afterwards for background knowledge for the research.

Programme
1. Introduction of the research field
2. Introduction of the focus group
   - What is a focus group and what is it good for?
   - What will this focus group be about?
   - What will this focus group be used for?
3. Focus group, moderated by student
   - Remember: You are the experts and you only represent yourself.
   - Themes:
     • Adansi people
     • Adansi culture
     • Adansi nature
     • Adansi history
     • Adansi power
     • Additional themes or topics?
   - Main question: what is important to know and understand, to truly comprehend Adansi, its people and the surroundings?
4. Conclusion and discussion
5. Questions
6. Questions for Semi-Structures Interviews

The following questions were the basis of the semi-structured interviews. Although not all were asked or asked exactly how they were written, the structure and themes were set and discussed with all interviewees.

**Interview Questions**

**Introduction**
- Name, age. Where are you from?
- Tell me about where you live and what you do for a living?
- Tell me about the history of your family.
  - How many people are in the community?
  - What are the occupations and how do they make a living?
  - Are people from here or do they move here? What is the mobility of people today?
- Tell me about the different forms of leadership you have in the community? Are there different forms of leadership? How/why?
- How is the leadership given authority? Are there different forms of authority? How and why?
- What is your role in the community and tell me how you came to this position?

**Biocultural heritage (that is not covered through the other topics)**
- What is the history of this community?
  - When was this community founded/started?
  - How do you think the place of the community was chosen? Why is your town here and not somewhere else?
- How does one know the history of the community and land?
- Tell me about the traditions in your community? Religion/culture/customs?
- Do you have special places in your town and/or surroundings/landscape? What do they mean and to whom?
- How are these places used/guarded and why are they special?

**For the traditional leaders**
- How is a traditional leader confirmed and challenged?
- What is the role of traditional leader how has it changed over time?
- What is your role in traditional ceremonies and communication with ancestors?
- What is the role of traditional ceremonies for the community and the landscape?
- How inclusive are traditional ceremonies can all join or is it only for the Elders, how can they be made more inclusive?
- What is the role of traditional leader in protecting resource rights and customary rights for the community?
- How do you see the role of the traditional leader in the future?
- How do you see yourself in the role of traditional leader, were there other things/dream that you had to compromise on when given this role?
- How do you balance your role as traditional leader in relation to be a mother/father, a wife/husband, a friend etc.?

Landscape history
- Describe Adansi/Daboase’s land and nature today?
  - Tell me about the history of this land? Has the landscape always looked like this?
- Since you were young or from your grandfathers’ stories has the landscape changes and if so, how? What was vegetation like before, was there more or less water, more or less rain? Were there more or less people?
- How do you and the community use the land around and within the community? (Farming, Pasture, Fishing, Firewood, etc.)
- What species (plants and animals) are present?
- How has the land been used in the past? What has changed?
- How and why has the landscape changed do you think?
- How are you dependant on nature?
- Do you separate between your community/town and what is in the bush/forest?
- How do people affect the natural surroundings?

Landownership and management
- How is landownership and resource rights defined in this community?
- How is landownership your town and surroundings regulated? Are there several owners?
- How do you know who owns it? (Documents i.e., customary rights, who guarantees these rights).
- How are customary rights balanced against authorities?
- Who owns the resources on the land? What happens if the owner goes away or dies?
- Who has granted the ownership? How are newcomers given access to land?
- Historically: how did one own land and has the system of landownership and resource rights changed?
- Which power do you have over the land you own?
- Do you have power in the community if you own land?
- Who can work on land and how is permission granted?

Changes and Transformation
- What is change? Can you try to define change?
- How is your community changing today? And why? (External)
- Has the company being here affected your community?
- How could the company interact better with your community?
- How is your community changing internally? Can you identify things that right now are influencing the community?
- Historical internal changes/transformations?
- How do the community’s people cope with the changes?
- Are changes good or bad? Why?
- How do you take care of your surroundings?
- Has the community in the past had plans for how to change the way it used/interacted with the surroundings?
- Do you have a wish for how it should change in the future? Does the community have a plan?
7. Note on Semi-Structures Interviews

The data obtained from the interviews is deliberately not presented in the Appendix for security reasons of the interviewees. All interviewees signed a consent form and agreed not to be anonymous. Although they did not mind me using their names, in collaboration with the supervisor of this thesis, the decision was made to not include the transcriptions of the interviews. If anyone wishes to read through the interview transcriptions, the author of the thesis can be contacted.