

African Heroes



Tech entrepreneurs and the production of the tech space in Accra

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Assignment: Thesis | Master: Research Master Social Sciences

*It's exciting to see something emerge out of Africa.
Even though they're supposed to be fictional, they give us hope.
They are African superheroes, so we can be superheroes too.*

- Akosua Asamoah –

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Acknowledgements

This research is dedicated to all the tech entrepreneurs in Accra who worked hard every day to fulfill their dreams and change the image of Africa in the world. I am grateful for countless contributions, large and small, from many people during the research process. In Accra, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Efram. This research would not have been possible without his achievements and efforts. I want to thank Kobby, Sammy, Edem, Francis, Nehemiah, Eugene, Roland, Kevin, Rudolf, Adel, Alma, Uche, all the students, fellows and other members of the 'family' for workdays full of optimism, clever insights, discussions, jokes and opportunities to learn. I also need to thank Fiifi, Ato, Paul, Aaron, Augustine, and all the gamers and aspiring tech entrepreneurs I met at events for their contributions. I am grateful to Kwadwo and Maame Yaa, for their kindness, and to Anna for her support and insights as a fellow researcher in the field and comments on earlier drafts. In Amsterdam, I need to thank the University of Amsterdam for their help financing this research. I am also grateful for the excellent supervision of Dr. R. Spronk, and Naomi and the students of the Globalizations, Flows and Localities track for their insights and comments on earlier drafts and support in the field. Of course, this research could not have been possible without the support of my family and friends. A special thanks to Thomas, Sanne, Marianne, Jasper, Iris and Piet for giving me the confidence, and Annette, for inspiring me to follow in her footsteps.

Introduction

Ideas about Africa are constantly changing. While The Economist published an article about Africa as a hopeless continent in 2000, in 2011 it published the now famous article called ‘Africa rising. The hopeful continent’. In this article, it was emphasized that Africa was increasingly becoming a continent full of potential, because of the rise of ‘new’ middle classes, hopeful entrepreneurs, a better-educated young workforce and increasing access to mobile phone communication and internet. Quickly, this article became an example for Afro-optimist pointing at Africa’s socioeconomic progress, and illustrative for the current trend in global media to focus on the ‘rising’ or ‘new’ middle classes in Africa. However, these so-called rising middle classes have hardly been researched in the last decades. According to Spronk, this is partially due to the consequences of (neo) liberal policies, which forced policy-oriented research about poverty and social insecurity onto the research agenda. This research often used pre-determined, historically rooted ideas about Africa, which caused researchers to make little distinction between different socio-economic groups (The Economist 2000; The Economist 2011; Spronk 2014a: 504 – 508; Spronk 2014b: 96 and 97; Spronk forthcoming: 1 and 29).

This research aims to contribute to debates about Africanness and the middle classes in Africa in the media and academia through an ethnographic study of the production and formation of the tech space in Accra, Ghana. The African Heroes app and the Kekeli Creations enterprise will form a methodological entry point into this space and the aspirations of its producers. The African Heroes app contains two digital comics and a game about ‘African’ superheroes, and was developed by the Ghanaian game development company Kekeli Creations in Accra in 2012. During my fieldwork from September 2014 until January 2015, I did a five month internship at Kekeli Creations. As an intern, I attended events in the tech space at which Selorm, the CEO of Kekeli Creations, and his colleague Kofi, presented the African Heroes app as a means to educate ‘young local Africans’ and a ‘global audience’ about ‘local African’ history and folklore to an audience of fellow Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs and representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations. [two sentences deleted] In this research, the tech space will be explored through a variety of theoretical frameworks, such as aesthetic formation, middle-classness, Africanness, the global and local, as a space that is brought into existence as the result of the activities, aspirations, interpretations and (re)presentations of actors with different backgrounds in a challenging business environment in a post-colonial African capital city like Accra [sentence rewritten]. By analyzing how the African Heroes app (re)presents the global, local and Africanness, this research aims to gain insight into how Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs enact their aspirations within this space.

Accra since the 90s

Accra, Ghana's capital city, has historically been a city of trade, connecting West African rural life to global trade and the metropolises in Europe and the US. Historical developments in Ghana have influenced present day Accra. In 1992, Ghana became a democracy. Pressured by the neoliberal adjustment policies from the IMF, in 1994 the government attempted to participate more in the global economy through the deregulation of domestic activity, the liberalization of international trade, and the privatization of previously state controlled sectors like post, telephone and television. From 1996 onwards, the increased market competition led to an increase in the access of Ghanaians to internet. In 2010, Ghana gained the Middle Income Country status, and was deemed in the international press to be one of the 'lion economies'. Due to these developments, Accra became a city accommodating many local privatized radio and television stations and transnational corporations. In present day Accra, the offices of these corporations are built in a fast pace, rapidly changing the skyline. (Avle 2014: 10 and 11; Osiakwan 2007: 17 – 19, 34; Sakyi 2011; Shipley 2013a: 6 and 9. Spronk forthcoming: 29).

Since 1992 new groups of Ghanaians have entered Accra. With rising business opportunities, Ghanaians returned from Europe and the US. Due to liberalization, youths invested their hopes for prosperity in market-based practices, instead of the state and collective progress. Young adults from the villages and the young urban middle-classes from other Ghanaians cities like Kumasi, came to Accra to look for job opportunities in Accra's growing private sector, as these jobs were deemed more prestigious. This development led to Accra becoming a city where a growing group of (aspiring) new middle-classes is present. These people visited Accra's newest malls, and often lived and worked in Accra's newest middle-class neighborhoods, such as Adenta and Ashaley Botwe (Shipley 2013a: 6 and 11. Spronk forthcoming: 18).

Moreover, Ghana's financial and political stability, combined with a well-educated young middle-class work force, led Accra to become a city where many Embassies and (transnational) NGOs were located. Some have even established their headquarters for West Africa in this city. These circumstances also made Accra a suitable place for the establishment of Hubs and Accelerators; programs shaped along a new kind of development model developed in the early 2000s, named social entrepreneurship. Nicholls has defined social entrepreneurship as an umbrella term for individuals and institutions which attempted to develop skills, create employment, generate a community, provide goods and/or services which the market and/or public sector was unable to or unwilling to provide, and used business techniques to do so. Hubs and Accelerators set out to provide well-educated young middle-classes with the networks, resources and skills necessary to

develop (tech) companies, which were not as easily provided for by the market or the state (Nicholls 2006: 4 – 22). Inspired by ideologies about entrepreneurship present in Silicon Valley, these kind of Hubs and Accelerators have emerged and are emerging in many African cities, and are also increasingly being developed in other cities in the world.

Actors and institutions in the tech space

The tech space in Accra is a community revolving around the stimulation of tech entrepreneurship, the establishment of tech companies and the development of software products, of which mostly apps. The first tech companies started to emerge around 2010, and are therefore at the time of writing this research usually maximum five years old, and consist of Ghanaians developing software products. Tech entrepreneurs are young middle-class Ghanaians who (aspire) to own their own tech company and/or work for one. The tech space has been and is formed by different tech entrepreneurs interacting with representatives of transnational corporations and NGOs on social media, during meetings and at events. During my fieldwork, many of the more experienced tech entrepreneurs told me that different Accelerators and Hubs helped develop the tech space. Accelerators and Hubs are places where transnational NGOs with close connections to the corporate world provide (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs office space, and the opportunities for skill, network, and resource development, with the aim of improving company and community development. It are often the places where meetings and events are held. Transnational NGOs and corporations are institutions that, while being centered in one home nation, operate in one or more other nation-states (Kearney 1995: 548).

According to tech entrepreneurs, the tech space started to develop with the establishment of the Luvion School of Technology and Entrepreneurship (LSET) in 2008 and the Luvion Accelerator in 2010. These two programs were established by the Luvion Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Luvion Group, which is a Software as a Service (SaaS) company founded in 2001 in Germany, that has grown into a San Francisco based multimillion dollar corporation (Luvion 2015; Edelman 2014). LSET provided what the Luvion Foundation considered to be the most talented young Ghanaian university graduates with two years of training in business, marketing and coding to make them into tech entrepreneurs.¹ Next to this free education, the students also received free laptops, breakfast, lunch and dinner, housing, and a small monthly stipend. At the end of the program, every team of students (usually two to four people) had the opportunity to pitch their final business ideas to the Foundation. When the Foundation deemed ideas profitable enough, they could decide to invest from 50.000 up

¹ This was the case until June 2015. From September 2015 onwards the Foundation will only sponsor a one year program.

to 200,000 dollars in the business idea. In some cases, the Foundation offered this opportunity also to fellows working for the foundation, such as Selorm. The Luvion Accelerator is the building next to LSET. As part of the requirements for investment, every company funded by the Luvion Foundation had to stay there for at least two years, although many companies stayed longer, to let the Foundation help the tech entrepreneurs develop their companies.

In 2013, two Hubs targeting tech entrepreneurs, the AHub and Silicon Accra, opened their doors. The AHub was established by the West African Online College (WAOC). Silicon Accra was founded by two young Ghanaians, of whom one a former Google Ghana employee and another a business man in the UK (Evans 2014). Compared to LSET and the Luvion Accelerator, tech entrepreneurs deemed AHub and Silicon Accra to be less prestigious, since both Hubs had less access to transnational resources, skills, and networks. However, both AHub and Silicon Accra were relatively more well known amongst local Ghanaians, and more accessible for (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs with lower middle-class backgrounds, less prestigious skillsets and diplomas.

During my fieldwork I followed the network of Selorm. Since his company was one of the first companies to receive funding from the Luvion Foundation in 2010, one group I interacted with was a quite close knit group of tech entrepreneurs who had been part of the tech space from its start. I mainly interacted with Selorm, his colleague Kofi, and ten others of their almost exclusively male friends. This group often visited the Kekeli Creations office, and participated in events Selorm, Kofi and I attended too. With few exceptions, this group had higher middle-class backgrounds. Their parents were the first in their families to attend university, used scholarships to study outside of Ghana, and secured well-paying and/or high-status corporate or government jobs that allowed them to travel and build a transnational network. Middle-class status was thus reached by the parents of these tech entrepreneurs, and in some cases, by grandparents who worked for the colonial administration and/or were pastors and/or teachers. These tech entrepreneurs all attended university, went to some of the best high schools in Ghana, and were in their end 20s and early 30s. Some of them also studied abroad (UK, US mostly) and decided to return to Ghana. All of them have or had their own tech companies, and in the latter case, were working for (tech) corporations. While all of them had great ambitions to become a successful tech entrepreneur in their early twenties, some have become more successful than others. In this research this group will be called experienced tech entrepreneurs.

Another group present in the tech space that I interacted with, was a broad group of what I call aspiring tech entrepreneurs. Since Kekeli Creations' office was located in the Luvion Accelerator, I interacted with students from LSET: a group of fifty students, of whom a quarter female, from Ghana and Nigeria. Also, I met aspiring tech entrepreneurs in the Luvion Accelerator, at events, and in other Hubs in Accra. With five of the latter group I interacted on a regular basis, especially with Daniel and

Isaac, since they owned companies organizing gaming events. While the majority of this group had similar backgrounds as the experienced tech entrepreneurs, many of them also came from lower middle-class backgrounds. This meant that they were the first in their families to attend university, and had parents who often were successful petty traders, owned small businesses, or had received some kind of vocational education. All aspiring tech entrepreneurs entered the tech space after 2011, when there was already some kind of community formation. They were often in their mid-twenties, and looked up to the older, more experienced tech entrepreneurs. Contrary to the latter group, the aspiring tech entrepreneurs were still actively developing their skills, building a network, looking for resources and/or struggling with figuring out their often maximum two to three year old company.

All tech entrepreneurs had in common that they saw tech entrepreneurship as a career that would allow them to climb the social ladder. While many of them made use of the resources provided by NGOs, all of them also used the access they had to wealth through family and friends to fund their companies. Higher middle-class tech entrepreneurs told me that the wealth acquired by their parents allowed them to take the risk that being a tech entrepreneur is. After graduation from university, these tech entrepreneurs had about two years in which their parents and/or extended family would support them. This allowed them to either do national service, start a company, or do a program like LSET. Moreover, as is unusual in Ghana, their parents did not require them to help pay for their siblings education, or to help their parents when reaching old age, giving them less pressure and more freedom. Tech entrepreneurs from lower middle-class backgrounds had less support from their families due to a difference in resources and kinship expectations. Their parents often felt that tech entrepreneurship was a too insecure career path, and a (potential) waste of their investment in a college education. Also, they expected especially their eldest male children to contribute to the costs of the education of younger children. A failure of tech entrepreneurs to meet these expectations sometimes lead to whole families giving up on the tech entrepreneur.

In the tech space the tech entrepreneurs interacted with representatives of transnational corporations and NGOs. For example, many of Ghana's telecom providers, like MTN, Vodafone and Tigo, organized competitions for tech entrepreneurs, at which high-positioned Ghanaian representatives and/or representatives of these companies from other countries were present. Tech entrepreneurs also engaged with representatives of transnational NGOs with a strong international orientation such as USAID, the British Council and the Luvion Foundation. Moreover, they interacted with transnational NGOs which, while they had strong connections with the Ghanaian diaspora, were often more locally oriented, such as the previously mentioned SiliconAccra. Many of these representatives I only got to know superficially, because I only met them at events, or because they only visited Accra occasionally. For example, LSET and the Accelerator were only visited by the San

Francisco based Managing Director of the Luvion Accelerator named Mark, the CEO of the Luvion Group and the Luvion Foundation named Olaf, and his team four times a year, to check the developments of the tech entrepreneurs.

However, as an intern, I got to interact with the staff working for the Luvion Foundation in LSET and the Accelerator on a daily basis. This group consisted of ten fellows; males and females in their late 20s, early 30s, often with a bachelor's degree from a prestigious university and a couple of years of work experience. One half of the fellows was recruited by the Foundation to teach the students at LSET, the other half was recruited to help the companies in the Accelerator with business, marketing or programming. All fellows were hired for a year, although some stayed longer, and came from all over the world. In exceptional cases, such as with Selorm, the fellows were Ghanaian. I noticed that similar groups of employees were also present at the other Hubs in the tech space.

The different actors and institutions present in the tech space make clear that the emergence of this space should be placed in the context of historical developments in Ghana and Accra outlined earlier, such as middle-class formation and the influence of neoliberal policies, democratization and globalization. These historical developments explain why the young middle-classes interpreted tech entrepreneurship as a means for social mobility, and explain the presence of transnational corporations and NGOs in the tech space.

Theorizing the tech space

In this research the tech space will be approached as an aesthetic formation. Meyer developed this concept to think beyond Anderson's imagined communities, and to conceptualize that communities are constantly being (per)formed, mediated, produced and materialized by subjects sharing a sensory mode of perceiving and experiencing the world (Meyer 2009: 3, 5-7, 9 and 12). In Meyer's conceptualization of aesthetic formations style was an important concept, defined as 'the essential characteristic of a collective sentiment (...) a forming form that gives birth to whole manners of being, to customs, representations and the various fashions by which life in society is expressed (Ibidem: 9).' These forms had the capacity to induce in the actors engaging with them a particular common aesthetic and style, and thus contributed to the development of aesthetic formations by producing a certain subjectivity and habitus, and shaping subjects and lending them a shared, recognizable identity (Ibidem: 9-11).

Different scholars have argued for a more actor-based approach to aesthetics, style and community formation. Appadurai has argued that while objects have an indefinite multiplicity of possible contexts, humans limit these contexts through design. Appadurai has defined design as the development of categories, sets and sequences. Through design, objects are thus linked to other

objects and brought into the social life of humans (Appadurai 2013: 258 – 265). Fabian and Barber have argued that objects should not just be approached as mirroring social, economic and political conditions, but also as having the capacity to mediate between disparate social realities and provide symbolic spaces in which disjointed social relations are constructed (Fabian 1997: 19, 20, 24-26; Barber 1997: 4.). In line with this, Larkin has argued that objects are not just representations of consumer culture, but also exchanged, circulated and integrated into (new) social contexts to provide spaces to negotiate social, cultural and economic developments (Larkin 1997: 407 - 410 and 434 Larkin 1998: 11.) Shipley has shown that circulating objects and styles are constantly appropriated by different actors to different contexts, and that in this way objects can be connected to community formation, moral qualities and economic value production. Aesthetics have been defined by him as a set of changing principles and contexts through which actors structure affect and taste (Shipley 2013a: 5 and 6; Shipley 2013b: 362, 363 and 377).

Meyer's definition of aesthetic formations allows me to approach the tech space as a community that is constantly being (per)formed and mediated by different actors and objects, such as the African Heroes App. However, her definition does not allow me to conceptualize that the tech space is created by different actors with different backgrounds and interests, actively negotiating with each other in a post-colonial setting, nor does it allow me to conceptualize that the African Heroes App is interpreted and presented differently by different actors and in different settings. Therefore, I will use a more actor-centered approach to aesthetic formations, approaching objects, style and aesthetics as being constantly changed and (re)appropriated by different actors in different settings.

This research approaches middle classness as an aspirational category that Ghanaians try to achieve by working hard, struggling and keeping one's eyes on the future. First, middle class formation in Ghana is approached as being made possible by conditions of possibility such as access to resources, education and networks. Second, ambitions, skills and opportunities, thus the power to enact, is necessary. Third, the capacity to aspire is crucial. Appadurai stated that this is the capacity of the actor to strive with ever more confidence and competence for certain collective understandings of the good and valuable life. The capacity to aspire is thus not an individual means to an end, but relational. Moreover, it is unequally distributed, being more readily available for the wealthy than for the poor (Spronk forthcoming: 1-9; Appadurai 2013: 126, 188 and 290 – 293). Spronk has defined the capacity to aspire as 'the dense transfer point of personal agency and cultural mediation that enables the successful pursuit of social mobility (Spronk forthcoming: 1).' Her definition thus implies the capacity to enact aspirations. Spronk has used this conceptualization of middle classness to show that the current middle-class formation in Ghana is part of longer term processes of social differentiation and middle-class formation in this country (Ibidem: 1 and 11).

Moreover, she has argued that middle classness and the pursuit of social mobility, should be connected to cultural practices, certain professional careers, lifestyles and aesthetic preferences (Spronk 2014b: 95 and 99) Based on these insights, this research will link middle classness as an aspirational category to the conceptualization of the tech space as an aesthetic formation. I will thus approach aspirations not only as (collectively) imagined, but also as mediated and (per)formed through specifically styled and contextualized resources, networks, skills, objects and actors. Tech entrepreneurship will be approached as an actively styled, (per)formed and mediated historically specific aspirational category to pursue social mobility and middle classness. Also, the tech space is thus not only approached as an aesthetic formation, but also as a place where tech entrepreneurs pursue success and social mobility.

Furthermore, in this research middle classness as an aspirational category and the tech space as aesthetic formation will be connected to cosmopolitanism. First, cosmopolitanism will be defined as an active engagement with processes of cosmopolitanism, which is the result of a combination of access to conditions of possibility such as certain resources, education and networks, and particular aspirational values and perceptual abilities, leading to a process of self-confident interweaving of global and local perspectives (Spronk 2014c: 212, 213 and 230). Second, cosmopolitanism will be connected to style. Shipley has argued that the identity of young middle-class Ghanaians in Ghana and the diaspora should be approached as a style of mobility (Shipley 2013b: 368). Mobility has 'become a way of living in which desires for place-based cultural affiliations are (...) never fully realized (Ibidem: 277).' While Ghanaians in the diaspora consume Ghanaian cultural expressions because they remind them of home, youth in Ghana consume these products because to them this transnational consumption transforms local cultural expressions into signs of much desired global mobility and success. According to Shipley, this style of mobility should be approached as a cosmopolitan style, that dissolves theoretical dichotomies of local, global and home (Ibidem: 368 and 377).

Based on these insights, tech entrepreneurship will be approached as a historically situated, class and generation specific aspirational category, that due to a combination of these aspirations and conditions of possibility, is cosmopolitan in outlook. Moreover, the tech space and tech entrepreneurship will be approached as (re)presenting and mediating a class and generation specific style of mobility, that is the result of global and local developments. Tech entrepreneurship is thus considered a specific form of cosmopolitanism amongst locally situated young middle classes in African cities (Spronk 2014c: 213). The local and the global are thus used as reified aspirational categories, that are styled, (re)presented and mediated differently in different contexts. Also, this research will use the local to refer to national developments, and the global to refer to processes and

circulations that both take place within nations, and are decentered from them (global)(Kearney 1995: 548).

In this research Africanness will also play a central role. In discussions in the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, researchers have approached Africa as an idea, or a construction that does not exist out of the discourses that continue to produce it (De Witte and Spronk 2014: 168). For example, Mudimbe (in Spronk 2014a:508) has argued that for centuries, Europeans have othered Africa and Africans, viewed them as the embodiment of all that was foreign, savage and irrational, and as the antithesis of Europe. Africa thus came to serve as a 'paradigm of difference'. Mbembe has described that this paradigm of difference gained momentum during the colonial period. During this time the British colonial administration used the concept of custom and tradition to differentiate between Africans and non-Africans, while overlooking the plurality of customs. Customs were connected to the moral judgement that Africans need to be civilized by the colonial state and converted to Christianity (Ibidem; Mbembe 2002: 246 and 246).

Mbembe has argued that in the 20th century African intellectuals reproduced colonial premises in their search for Pan-Africanism, *négritude* and other definitions of Africanness. Influenced by Marxism, African nationalists advocated progress and development, and invented a narrative of liberation revolving around a glorious fallen past (tradition) and a redeemed future (nationalism). According to Mbembe, progress was synonymous with the concept of civilization, and a sign that these intellectuals accepted basic categories of Western discourse. Moreover, these African intellectuals formed two narratives to justify self-determination: that of the African as victimized subject, and that of the African as culturally unique, based on his/her membership of the black race. Mbembe claimed that the denial of humanity, or the attribution of inferiority by colonial discourse forced African intellectuals in this position of defending the self-determination and humanity of Africans. However, in doing so, African intellectuals have reproduced presumptions they aimed to deconstruct, and have been crucial to the construction of the idea of Africans as one race and one people (in Spronk 2014a: 508. Mbembe 2002: 240, 241, 249 – 256).

Despite the arguments of scholars like Mudimbe and Mbembe, colonial premises still have influence in the present day. In much scholarly literature Africa is still portrayed as a category of difference, disease and disorder, while ignoring geographical, economic and cultural variety. Different types of development have also reproduced colonial images by treating people in Africa as lacking historical agency, and waiting to be helped along. Also people living in Africa, or that are part of the diaspora, are still influenced by the idea that Africans belong to one race, one Africanity, in their experience as Africans. While Spronk has argued that this use of Africa in the scholarly debate is objectionable, she has stressed that in Africa itself, ideas about Africa can both have negative and positive meanings. Therefore, Spronk and De Witte have argued that it is important to move beyond

the abstract level of intellectual discourse, and to approach Africa and Africanness not only as an idea, but also as notions that have come to matter in different and ambiguous ways to concrete actors in specific social contexts. They thus proposed research to focus on how Africa and Africanness become very real to actors, and how Africanness is made, remade, unmade, negotiated, materialized and stylized (Spronk 2014a: 508 and 509. Escobar 1995: 4,9,26 and 43. De Witte and Spronk 2014: 168 and 170). In this research Africa and Africaness will be approach in the latter way, because this allows me to analyze how and why the African Heroes app (re)presents Africanness in different ways in different contexts to different actors.

Methodology

I collected my data for this research by conducting five months of ethnographic fieldwork from September 2014 until January 2015. Since Meyer stated that aesthetic formations are formed by style influencing a certain subjectivity and habitus (Meyer 2009: 10 and 11), I choose to do a specific type of participant observation, the apprenticeship, where the researcher sets out to use habitus both as topic and tool (Wacquant 2011 81):

The apprenticeship of the sociologist is a methodological mirror of the apprenticeship undergone by the empirical subjects of the study; the former is mined to dig deeper into the latter and unearth its inner logic and subterranean properties; and both in turn test the robustness and fruitfulness of habitus as guide for probing the springs of social conduct (Ibidem).

So during my fieldwork, I did a five month internship at Kekeli Creations. For four months, I worked over forty hours a week, the last month I had more flexible working hours. Originally, I intended to use my internship to get to understand the motivations and lifeworlds of the artists working for the company as much as possible, by them teaching me the skills necessary to make games and comics myself, and working closely with them on a full-time basis. I also knew from online interviews (Innovation Ghana 2013) that Kekeli Creations was familiar with internships. It thus also seemed like a good way to get access to my field.

However, for several reasons my internship developed in a different way. Due to the combination of my lack of skills, and a heavy workload for the artists, it was very difficult for them to teach me [part sentence deleted]. Moreover [four sentences deleted] since I was introduced to the office by Selorm and Kofi, I got access to the marketing side of the company and the experienced tech entrepreneurs. In this way, my internship came to revolve around gaining insight in the habitus and lifeworld of tech entrepreneurs instead of the artist [sentence rewritten].

In the course of five months of ethnographic fieldwork, I met Selorm's family, Kofi and Selorm's friends, and attended business meetings and events. Halfway through my internship, I was sometimes asked to represent Kekeli Creations at events, since Selorm and Kofi felt I had learned enough about the company. Also, we worked, ate and discussed together, during which Selorm and Kofi sometimes told me I was 'African', when I ate with my hands or did not bother the heat, or that I was 'one of them' when I agreed with their visions on the dynamics in the tech space. Gradually, I also started to feel and share the optimism that is so omnipresent in the tech space. I especially felt this when, at the end of my internship, I attended an event at which I helped my team develop a game using everything I learned during my internship.

My status as an intern at Kekeli Creations influenced my access to the tech space. Since Selorm and his company are connected to the Luvion Foundation, I got insider access to the Accelerator and LSET. I became part of what was called the 'Luvion Family', had breakfast, lunch and dinner with them every workday, attended classes, meetings and events. In this way, I developed intimate bonds with many of them. Moreover, since Selorm was an experienced and successful tech entrepreneur, his network and reputation gave me access to whoever of the tech entrepreneurs in the tech space I wanted to speak to. I thus combined my internship with the snowball method.

The intimate relations that I developed were influenced by how my physical features and country of origin were interpreted by tech entrepreneurs and representatives of NGOs in the context of the tech space. For example, within the Kekeli office and by the LSET students, I was often treated as one of the fellows working for the Luvion Foundation, even though they knew I was not. Many aspiring tech entrepreneurs were eager to meet me because they hoped this would give them increased access to what they considered global networks and resources. At the same time, fellows confided their misunderstandings of the Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs in me. While gaining insight into the habitus and lifeworld of tech entrepreneurs, I thus also always remained a partial outsider. While I often felt as an anomaly, this position did allow me to get insight into the dynamics between the different groups in the tech space.

During my fieldwork, I combined participant observation with other methods of data collection. First, I did forty life history interviews with aspiring and experienced tech entrepreneurs, friends and family of Selorm, and employees working for the Luvion Foundation. In most cases, I had known these persons for some time before doing the interview. With aspiring tech entrepreneurs, I often became closer friends after the interview. [two sentences deleted] Second, I also did a very loose form of photo-elicitation. I asked the artists and artist-interns both during interviews and during participant observation about the sketches and designs they were making. Whenever I got the opportunity, I asked tech entrepreneurs and other young middle-class Ghanaians I met at events about the African Heroes games and comics, showing them the app on my phone and occasionally

letting them play for a bit. Third, I collected more than three hundred images [part sentence deleted]. I thus hoped to gain insight in the aspirations of tech entrepreneurs, and the (re)interpretation of style and Africanness in different contexts, by using constant triangulation in the collection and analysis of my data.

In the field, I tried to be as open about my research as possible. During conversations, I introduced myself as a researcher, and in broad lines told my conversation partner what my research was about. Also, I was often introduced as a researcher by Selorm and Kofi. While many tech entrepreneurs expressed they did not feel the need to be anonymized because of their desire for what they called global recognition, all of them have been anonymized to protect their privacy. Also, the names of Accelerators and Hubs, the Foundations that support them, the names of the tech companies and the products they produce have been fictionalized. When I felt the names of events attended by certain tech entrepreneurs could possibly harm their privacy, these have been changed as well. In the bibliography names and links to websites have been changed accordingly.

Chapter outlines

This research analyzes how the African Heroes app (re)presents Africanness, the global and the local in order to get insight into how Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs in the tech space in Accra enact their aspirations. According to the tech entrepreneurs themselves, the African Heroes app was developed as a compromise between their desire to create ‘fantasy’ and the feeling of being ‘forced into education’. In the first chapter of this research, I will therefore analyze the discussions in the office about the creation of ‘fantasy’. I will argue that the creation of ‘fantasy’ narratives and looks for the

African Heroes, is a generation and class specific way for the tech entrepreneurs to negotiate with, appropriate and distinguish the African Heroes from different visions of African heritage that have been present in the Ghanaian media scape since the colonial period. Based on Manheim (in Spronk 2014c: 208), Spronk and De Witte, I will thus approach cultural heritage and notions of ‘African’, ‘modern’, ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’ as being used and stylized differently by each generation and class based on historical location (Ibidem: 205 and 208; De Witte and Spronk 2014: 168). The tech entrepreneurs created the narrative structure and style of ‘fantasy’ through the combination of ‘authentic’ ‘African’ elements with influences from global media culture, which they had access to since their childhood. They felt that in this way they created ‘quality’ and a ‘new African’ style ‘from Africa, for the world’. They thus used global media standards and influences, and combined these with ‘African’ elements, to distinguish their products from other media in the Ghanaian media scape and assert their (global) agency. Moreover, ‘fantasy’ was a way to create a Pan-African style connected to fashion and entertainment, to address a growing group of young middle-class urbanites

in Africa and the diaspora with global consumer lifestyles and a growing appreciation for ‘African’ products.

In the second chapter of this research, I will analyze the structure of, and actors and technology present at events in the tech space in Accra. I will argue that Selorm has become one of the successful tech entrepreneurs in the tech space, by smartly positioning himself and the African Heroes app as (re)presenting and articulating a certain vision on success based on the style of tech entrepreneurship at events in the tech space. In this way, he has managed to acquire access to more resources, networks and prestige that based on this style were deemed signs of success. Based on Spronk and Shipley, I will thus approach success as the result of conditions of possibility, the power to enact and aspirations that are dependent on class, generation, and local and global developments, and are specifically styled (Spronk forthcoming: 1 – 11; Shipley 2013b: 365 – 367 and 371). While the Luvion Foundation introduced visions on the aspirations of tech entrepreneurs and supporting programs in 2008, these aspirations were developed into a style present at events in the tech space, because these programs and aspirations fitted within the skills, ambitions and visions on success experienced tech entrepreneurs had obtained growing up in higher middle-class environments in

Ghana in the 80s and 90s . The style of tech entrepreneurship was based on the idea that ‘local African’ tech entrepreneurs had to strive for ‘global success’, ‘financial success’ and ‘inspirational success’, by being ‘passionate’, focusing a business plan, and acquiring access to ‘global networks’, ‘global resources’ and ‘global recognition’. By presenting the African Heroes app in a ‘passionate’ way as ‘local African’ content for a ‘global’ and ‘local African audience’ at events in Accra and outside of

Ghana Selorm managed to gain access to ‘global networks’, ‘global resources’ and ‘global recognition’. In this way events did not only provide Selorm an alternative means for ‘financial success’, but also made him into a ‘global’ and thus ‘inspirational’ success for (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs in Accra. Events thus played an important role in community formation and social mobility in the tech space.

[paragraph about the third chapter deleted]

Each chapter in this research gives insight into a different element of the connection between the enactment of the aspirations of tech entrepreneurs like Selorm and Kofi, and how the African Heroes (re)present Africanness, the global and the local. The first chapter shows that ‘fantasy’ was a class and generation specific way for Kofi and Selorm to combine influences from global media culture with ‘African’ elements into a ‘new African’ style meant to be of ‘quality’ and to assert their (global) agency. [two sentences deleted] In chapter two it becomes clear that the African Heroes were presented at events according to the style of tech entrepreneurship; aspirations developed in Silicon Valley that have been appropriated to circumstances in Ghana [sentence rewritten]. By presenting the African Heroes and himself as ‘local African’, and the app as addressing

‘local African’ and ‘global audiences’, Selorm could acquire ‘global’, ‘financial’ and ‘inspirational’ success and become an expert on ‘global success’ in Accra. The ‘global’, ‘local’ and ‘African’ were thus not clear-cut notions, but constantly (re)appropriated and (re)styled in order to achieve success.

The approach taken in this research, not only gives insight into how the tech space is produced in a challenging business environment in a post-colonial African city like Accra, but also can be related to discussions in academia and the media about the African middle classes and Africanness and broader developments. It shows that the African middle-classes are not ‘rising’ but part of longer historical developments. Moreover, it makes clear that while in Africa, and increasingly in other countries, transnational NGOs and corporations try to set up structures for the support of tech entrepreneurship based on ideas developed in Silicon Valley, tech entrepreneurs make clever use of these structures and appropriate ideas about the global, local, and Africa to achieve their own goals. This research thus aims to critique ideas about Africa as either ‘hopeful’ or ‘hopeless’, by showing the nuances, tensions and careful strategies of tech entrepreneurs in everyday life.

1. 'New' African Heroes

During my internship, my colleagues gradually became more familiar with my presence at the office. We worked long days together, and had many debates about subjects ranging from intimate relationships, to (inter)national politics, economy, religion and culture. One afternoon, the office was quite empty, with the few present working in silence. Suddenly, Kofi started to become frustrated and complain about the poor quality of a comic, ranting at the screen of his laptop that Kekeli Creations should consider contacting the company that ordered this comic, since Kekeli Creations could deliver better quality. Curious, I walked over to Kofi and asked him to explain to me what he was talking about. While we both looked at the image of a comic made in Kenya visible on his screen, he told me: 'Look Tessa! This is African! The African Heroes are not African!' In this way impulsively referring to other conversations we had had about the supposedly African looks of the superheroes. This instance illustrated that the Africanness of the African Heroes was contested by the developers of these heroes themselves.

In their research, Comaroff and Comaroff have argued to approach cultural heritage as 'culture projected into the past, and simultaneously, the past rendered into culture (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011: 5).' Corresponding with this argument, Manheim (in Spronk 2014c: 208) has noted that that while cultural heritage is continuously being transmitted, each generation and class makes new contact with cultural heritage based on its historical location. He defined generation as people born in the same period of time, thus sharing common experiences, potentials and thought styles. Spronk used Manheim's insights to argue that the notions of African, modern, traditional and Western should be approached as reified concepts that comprise a field of discursive practices, that are used differently by different generations and classes (Ibidem: 205 and 208). De Witte and Spronk have argued that these notions are also stylized by different generations and classes in different ways (De Witte and Spronk 2014: 168).

In this chapter, I will argue that the creation of 'fantasy' narratives and looks for the African Heroes, is a generation and class specific way for the tech entrepreneurs to negotiate with, appropriate and distinguish the African Heroes from different visions on African heritage that have been present in the Ghanaian media scape since the colonial period. To support this argument the first three parts of this chapter will describe the history of the different visions of African heritage the tech entrepreneurs grew up with in the 80s and 90s: from the (colonial) state using African heritage to support progress and nation building, to the introduction of new actors addressing globalized middle-class Africans as consumers in the Ghanaian media scape in the 1990s, and the experiences of higher middle-class tech entrepreneurs with these developments. Thereafter, an analysis of the

discussions in the Kekeli Creations' office about the creation of 'fantasy' narratives and looks for the African Heroes games and comics, will show that the creation of 'fantasy' is a way to position the African Heroes as 'fun', 'modern', 'not political', entertainment and as having a 'new African' style. In this way, it will become clear that the creation of 'fantasy' is a class and generation specific way to appropriate, negotiate with and distinguish the African Heroes from (older) visions on African heritage and Africanness in the Ghanaian media scape.

1.1. The legacy of colonialism and Sankofaism

From the reign of Kwame Nkrumah after Ghana's independence in 1957 until the end of the 1980s, official culture and national heritage were controlled by the state through a cultural policy that revolved around an ideology called 'Sankofaism'. Sankofaism originally referred to the Akan symbol of a bird looking backward while walking forward, and a Twi proverb 'one can always undo past mistakes'. However, in the discussion of post-colonial identity politics, Sankofa was translated to 'go back and take it' and came to revolve around the recovery of a so-called authentic African selfhood lost in alienation by returning to the cultural heritage that colonialism instilled in Africans to forget. On the one hand, this was seen as a precondition for the development, self-definition and cultural authenticity of the modern nation-state. On the other hand, since Nkrumah saw Ghana, as the first independent country in Africa, as an example for the continent, this vision also came to be seen as necessary for the creation of a Pan-African identity. 'Tradition' thus became a way to find synthesis between the 'African' and the 'modern' (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 46 and 47. Shipley 2009: 644 and 645). The National Commission of Culture in Ghana in 1990 described Sankofaism like this:

Sankofa affirms the co-existence of the past and the future *in the present* [italics original, T.P] and embodies, therefore, the attitude of our people to the confrontation between traditional values and the demands of modern technology which is an essential factor of development and progress (cited in Heath 1997: 267).

Sankofaism was thus a way to situate both the past, consisting of 'traditions', and the future, consisting of 'modern' technology and progress, in the present.

While Sankofaism was presented as a rupture with colonial legacy, the way Sankofaism connected the past to progress, modernity and the nation-state, showed continuity with the cultural politics of the colonial government. During 19th and 20th century colonialism, the British Administration promoted the search for African heritage, for customs, because they believed that progress in the Gold Coast could only be realized if it built on African traditions and if people took pride in this past (Meyer and de Witte 2012: 47 and 48).

Moreover, while Sankofaism officially was meant to focus on cultural diversity in Ghana, in practice Sankofaism mainly focused on the promotion of the traditions and symbols of the majority ethnic group Ghana which Nkrumah belonged to too, the Akan. Nkrumah adopted royal insignia of Akan chieftaincy, like stools, swords and kente cloth. In this way, chieftaincy became part of a national heritage style, disconnecting chiefs from their historical connection to political and spiritual power, and legitimizing and Africanizing the Ghanaian state (Meyer and de Witte 2012: 47).

Since tech entrepreneurs like Selorm and Kofi grew up in the 80s and 90s, they grew up with the influence of Sankofaism, as can be recognized in their use of 'fantasy'. Moreover, they were influenced by developments in the media scape after the 1990s.

1.2. Heritage from the 1990s onwards

From the 1990s onwards, due to democratization, neo-liberalization and globalization, the state-controlled public sphere in Ghana changed into a liberalized commercial arena, in which there was more space for alternative visions on culture that challenged Sankofaism and articulated alternative forms of identity and belonging (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 48 – 50; Woets 2012: 153 – 160).

Before the 1990s there was only one state-controlled television broadcasting channel in Ghana, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Television (GBC-TV), on which only the Traditional Afrikan Religion was allowed to appear. Pentecostalism was one of the alternative visions that seized the opportunity of commercialization and liberalization. By working for and developing new media channels, Pentecostal churches managed to grow in popularity and influence in the public sphere in Ghana. They promoted the idea that rituals from 'African traditional' religion, like libation, invoked the presence of 'evil spirits' and demonic powers supported by the devil in the public domain, and considered past indigenous culture as part of heathendom. Moreover, they feared objects, images, sounds and performances legitimized and nationalized through Sankofaism as potentially containing demonic spirits. Pentecostal Churches therefore promoted a complete break with this spiritually loaded past, and wanted to develop the nation through Christianization and exorcism. The dominance of Pentecostal views in the public domain has both lead to a widespread fear of, and fascination with 'dangerous evil', leading to popular media developing all kinds of sensational stories about 'juju priests' and their 'traditional shrines' and 'occult practices'. Also, since Pentecostalism actively opposed Sankofa ideology and gained so much influence, Sankofaism, but also other media had to respond (Nuviadenu 2004: 54. De Witte and Meyer 2012: 48 – 52. De Witte: 278, 279 and 282).

Meyer and de Witte mention two examples of the latter two: the genre of the 'epic video film' and TV Africa. Inspired by Nigerian movies, the genre of the epic video films was developed in

2002 by the Ghanaian director of Miracle Films, Samuel Nyamekye. In these films, African cultural heritage objects such as pots and shrines, were situated in green villages set in times immemorial, before the emergence of figures like Mohammed and Jesus. This framework both offered an alternative to the moralizing discursive framework of Christianity versus traditional religion introduced by Pentecostals, and at the same time, did not disrupt this framework because the 'epic' was set in a pre-Christian time. Because of this, Christian audiences could watch these movies without fear of 'evil spirits' or being influenced by heathendom. The timeframe of the 'epic' was thus a way to circumvent Pentecostal critique (Meyer and de Witte 2012: 52 – 54). TV Africa was founded in 1995 by Kwah Ansah. In line with Sankofaism, this station aimed to restore the confidence of what they considered the African, by turning around to see what had gone right and wrong in the times of the ancestors, 'to uplift the image of the African in a world media environment that is generally hostile to the African image (Ibidem: 56).' They created programs using popular formats that focused on pleasure, excitement, competition and audience participation, and contained strong stylistic references to global commercial media culture (Ibidem: 57).

Moreover, TV Africa used an explicit branding strategy to make the brand look indigenous. It created an 'African' style through the combination of all kinds of dresses, objects and bright colors. In the epic video films something similar was done. As one of the set designers of epic video films described, 'unexisting traditions' were represented through the use of dress, colors, symbols, and distinctive behavior of characters, thus making it easy for the audience to distinguish priests, chiefs and commoners. The styles of TV Africa and epic video films were both pan-African, since they combined objects, dresses, colors and symbols from different ethnic groups and/or cultural settings, thus appealing to and creating a sense of Africanness as a singularity connected to the continent. Moreover, both combined these different elements to restyle them as fashionable, and to highlight their beauty and design. In this way, these cultural elements were disconnected from their capacity to contain the power of evil spirits. Focusing on a strong visual style was thus a way to deal with Pentecostal critique (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 53 – 60).

Meyer and de Witte argued that the way TV Africa and the epic video films dealt with heritage, could also be linked to a growing market of members of the young middle classes in Africa and the diaspora. While a couple of years ago, this group was mainly interested in products they perceived to be Western, and did not show much interest in products they perceived to be African, in recent years they have shown an increased interest in the latter. In the neo-liberal era, mediatized forms of heritage did not address this group as national citizens who must not forget their heritage lest they become alienated (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 56 and 60), but 'seduce them to buy into attractive identities designed to fit globalized consumer lifestyles that make them feel good and on top of the world as Africans (Ibidem: 60).' The political moralism of Sankofaism, meaning to create a

‘modern’ nation through the remembrance of heritage, has thus been replaced by the idea of ‘African’ authenticity and pride through style and fashion. According to Meyer and de Witte, TV Africa and the epic video films are thus good examples of commodified culture that circulates easily through the circuits of the global market and is easily embodied (Ibidem; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 18 and 28).

1.3. Growing up higher middle-class

Selorm, Kofi and their tech-entrepreneur friends all grew up during the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, and have thus experienced the developments sketched above. All of them grew up in higher middle-class environments, which were the result of the hard fought pursuit of social mobility of their parents (Spronk forthcoming). Selorm, Kofi and their childhood friends, specifically grew up in the protected environment of the university campus of KNUST in Kumasi. Their parents were teachers at the university, primary or junior high school at the campus, and were provided with on campus housing. Their jobs often allowed them to travel and/or spend extensive periods of time outside of Ghana, for example to pursue a PhD in the US. Heath has described that these parents were likely to own materials they considered to be symbols of modernity (Heath 1997: 271). This was confirmed by the tech-entrepreneurs. When I was visiting their former houses at KNUST campus with some of them, they told me that their parents were some of the first in Ghana to own computers, and that this was a sign of prestige. Their parents also owned televisions, and were some of the first in the country to get access to internet, for example because this was arranged by the university or necessary for work. In the office, the tech entrepreneurs sometimes mentioned that they considered their parents to be un-African. While they found it difficult to explain this to me, they mentioned that they for example ate their meals with knife and fork, instead of with their hands. The latter was considered ‘African’ by the tech entrepreneurs. Due to this background, the tech entrepreneurs had the possibility to get access to and consume certain modern technology and (global) media products, which played an important role in their identity formation.

In the office (the remembrance of) these technologies and (global) media products played a significant role. Every tech-entrepreneur vividly remembered that in the early 90s, he used to watch *By the Fireside*. This was a program on the state-owned GBC-TV and the brainchild of the First Lady at the time, Ms. Rawlings. In line with Sankofaism, the aim of the program was to reclaim from the past that which had significance today. Using Ghanaian schoolchildren as participants, it narrated and enacted the Anansenem. These are a collection of centuries old folktales about Kwaku Ananse, a god that was cast down from the heaven and turned into a cunning, trickster spider that could take human form. Traditionally these stories were told in the villages by grandmothers by the fireside, or so it was (re)presented. The program tried to adapt the style and formal elements as well as the messages of the Anansenem to the as modern perceived medium of television. In line with what was perceived as traditional 'African' storytelling, the stories were explicitly educational, started with greetings, jokes and



Figure 1.1. Still from *By the Fireside*.

riddles between storytellers, and were recorded in a studio set that was made to represent a rural village. The stories were connected to contemporary issues such as corruption and adolescent delinquency to educate children how to fit well into society. (Heath 1997: 271 and 272).

Moreover, the memories of the tech-entrepreneurs show that from the 90s onwards the young urban middle-class children in Ghana were in touch with cultural influences that stretched beyond Sankofaism. For Selorm, Kofi and their friends, some of these influences stood out. One example of this is *Journey to the West*. From the 1990s onwards GTV (former GBC-TV) broadcasted this Chinese series developed by CCTV in 1986 every Sunday morning (Nuviadenu 2004: 102). Selorm, Kofi and their friends used to try to skip church so they could watch the program. Also, they used to watch Chinese and American fighting movies, like 'Showdown in

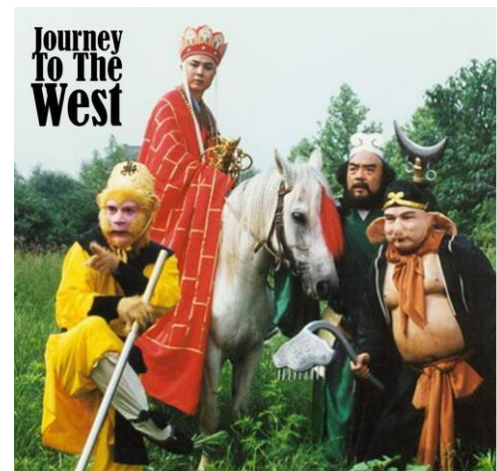


Figure 1.2. *Journey to the West*.



Figure 1.3. *Captain Planet*.

Little Tokyo' and Captain Planet. The latter was an American animated series developed in the 1990s, that was broadcasted by GTV from 1992 onwards (Nuviadenu: 59).

Most importantly, through the international travels of their parents and other family members, Selorm, Kofi and their friends got access to all kinds of international media that less privileged children did not have access to. For example, Selorm's father would bring back DC and Marvel comics and fighting games like Streetfighter from his travels to Kenya. These comics and games used to be actively exchanged between the youngsters, or they would go to each other's houses to play together. By sharing, also their friends whose parents did not buy them games and comics, had access.

In many ways, this culture of exchange between the tech entrepreneurs continued from their adolescence onwards. Up until the present day, in Ghana the internet, and thus downloading games, software and movies, has remained expensive. The tech entrepreneurs have found a solution for this problem through the exchange of downloaded files. At the Kekeli office, I noticed that most tech entrepreneurs owned several external hard disks and/or flash drives, on which they had a huge collection of all their work, software, movies and games. When one of the tech entrepreneurs wanted a certain movie, series, software program or game, he would first ask his friends if they maybe had the download somewhere on their hard disk or flash drive. All of the movies that were exchanged in this way, could be considered part of the global media, like the new DC and Marvel superhero movies, Japanese anime (animated series), all types of American series, and fighting games and fighting movies from all across the world. However, this culture of exchange still required the capital to buy hardware, the knowledge and skills to use it and some access to the internet, making it only affordable to the more privileged in society, like the urban middle classes.

In the office, the abovementioned media were not only exchanged, but also, if possible, watched during little breaks to get inspiration for the development of games and comics. Especially the comics and games of Marvel and DC were perceived by the tech entrepreneurs as the 'quality' they aspired for their own games and comics. Moreover, Kekeli Creations actively shared the influences from childhood on Facebook during #Throwbackthursdays, a global weekly social media trend, that was used by Kekeli Creations to expand their audience to people in and outside of Ghana searching social media with this hashtag (Moreau 2015). The memories of the tech entrepreneurs were thus included in the company's marketing strategy to connect with the (global) audience.

During the workdays in the office, there were many conversations about the present day and childhood media influences of the tech entrepreneurs, to get ideas for future Facebook posts and the development of games and comics. There were also many informal talks and jokes made about these subjects, that the tech entrepreneurs interpreted as an expression of their 'geekiness'. Moreover, the tech entrepreneurs told me that they did not watch Ghanaian and Nigerian movies, or TV Africa,

since they deemed the 'quality' to be too low. For example, they considered the plots and special effects of Ghanaian movies not to be as good as Hollywood movies. While De Witte and Meyer have stated that in recent years, the young urban middle classes increasingly started to be interested in products they deemed to be African, next to products they deemed to be Western, the higher middle-class tech entrepreneurs seemed to have more of a taste for globally inspired products, and less for 'African' ones (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 56). The next paragraphs show how the African Heroes are inspired by and an expression of the abovementioned (global) media influences.

1.4. The Creation of 'Fantasy'

1.4.1. 'Fantasy' as 'fun' and 'modern'

During the discussions at the Kekeli Creations office, Selorm and Kofi told me they wanted to create 'fun' African Heroes by letting these heroes be inspired by their childhood memories, and based very loosely on history, thus creating what they called fantasy. For example, one early morning at the office, Kofi explained that as young children, he and his friends all had fun watching *By the Fireside*, reading superhero comics, playing games, and making comics and games themselves. Inspired by these fond memories, the Kekeli Creations team had decided to develop a superhero called Ananse, that was based on Kweku Ananse, the god turned spider featuring in *By the Fireside*. Selorm added to this that they had also made this decision because they were aware that Kweku Ananse was very popular, because of the influence of *By the Fireside* and the Anansenem stories in the public sphere in Ghana. By developing an Ananse superhero, they had thus hoped to get the attention of a large audience.

Moreover, what Selorm and Kofi meant when they told me they wanted to base the heroes very loosely on history became clear when one afternoon, when all the other colleagues were away, Kofi took a break from work and decided to explain to me the vision on history behind what the team had called 'The Real Ananse', one of Kekeli Creations' digital comics, available on the African Heroes app. To explain this vision, Kofi made a comparison with Thor, a superhero from the Marvel Universe inspired by the legends about a Scandinavian god. He told me that when people think about Thor the superhero, nobody thinks about Thor the god. He and his colleagues had developed the superhero Ananse with a similar idea in mind. Just as with Thor, they had only based him very loosely on the cast down god turned trickster spider from the Anansenem stories. They developed a story in which a schoolboy dreams about his past as Ananse, as he is being possessed by Ananse's spirit. Through this possession, the schoolboy gets his superpowers. This story was not only developed in this way to give Kekeli Creations the opportunity to develop new stories from here on, but also to situate the story clearly in the present. According to Kofi, the structure of the story emphasized that their story

about Ananse was a ‘modern’ story. Moreover, the name of the comic, ‘The Real Ananse’, was a way to distinguish the story from other more conventional stories about Kweku Ananse as the ‘modern’ and the ‘true’ one. This name was thus meant assert the legitimacy of the changes they made to the story in case of possible critique.

Kofi also told me a similar story about Shaka the Zulu – another superhero, inspired by the famous South-African warrior. In the African Heroes game available on the African Heroes app, this superhero fights with other African Heroes created by Kekeli Creations that originate from all times and places on the African continent, like the abovementioned Ananse from Ghana, Pharaoh from Egypt, and Wuzu the Massai warrior from Kenya. The personal background story of the Shaka character has been well thought through by the Kekeli Creations team. Kofi explained to me that about three years ago, when the Shaka character was developed, he, Selorm and the rest of the team decided that they wanted to develop a character with powers similar to the Hulk – another Marvel superhero known for his rage and strength. They wanted to develop a superhero that, just like the Hulk, was almost indestructible. At the time, Kofi was watching a lot of Naruto, a Japanese anime (animated series) in which the main character had a spirit inside of him that prevented him from dying. Inspired by this, Kofi suggested to the team that instead of the obvious choice – a very big muscular African superhero called the Beast – they could make Shaka the Zulu into a Hulk-like superhero. They developed a story in which Shaka the Zulu was a policeman in present day life, who remembered that as a boy, he miraculously survived an attack by a lion when he was one day wandering around outside the village. He only remembered being attacked, and being woken up by members of his village. However, as the reader, one got to know that the boy could survive the attack because he was possessed by the spirit of Shaka the Zulu. Because Shaka did not want to die again, he took over the boy every time he was in danger, causing the boy to lose his consciousness and not remembering anything, while Shaka summoned his Ghost Army. In this way, the stage was set to develop new stories about Shaka the Zulu as a ‘modern day’ cop.

Based on the explanations above, it became clear that what Selorm and Kofi called ‘fantasy’ was created through the creative combination of all kinds of elements: on the one hand as ‘African’ perceived historical and folklore characters, and what the tech entrepreneurs knew about their background stories, on the other hand influences from global media culture, from anime and fighting games, to DC and Marvel comics. Both the features of the characters and the structures of the narratives were shaped to fit the characteristics of the comic-genre: complex background stories of superheroes that can be connected to ever continuing storylines. These elements were combined with the structure of apps and games. For example, in the African Heroes game a comic story and a fighting game are alternated. That this ‘fantasy’ was perceived as ‘fun’, can be connected to Selorm, Kofi and their friends personal experience with games and comics. They wanted to create comics and

games about 'African' superheroes, because to them games and comics about superheroes were 'quality' entertainment. Moreover, Kofi and Selorm told me that they used games and comics to tell stories, because they felt these were the right 'fun' and 'modern' formats to appeal to contemporary young middle-class audiences in Africa and the rest of the world. To them, the creation of 'fantasy' games and comics was thus a way to address present day audiences and present day problems.

The creation of 'fun' and 'modern' 'fantasy' fits into the Ghanaian media scape in several ways. By creating 'fun' games and comics through the combination of elements of 'African' history and folklore with formats inspired by global media culture, Kekeli Creations, in a similar fashion as TV Africa, appealed to the trend in Ghana to connect 'African' heritage to fashion, consumerism and entertainment (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 57 and 60). Also, Selorm mentioned that he choose to develop Ananse as a superhero because Kweku Ananse was well-known in Ghana, and he desired to develop the African Heroes into a global brand able to compete with DC and Marvel games, movies and comics. With the African Legends Kekeli Creations thus, just as TV Africa, wanted to appeal to young urban middle-class Africans from all over the world, who according to De Witte and Meyer had 'globalized consumer lifestyles that make them feel good and on top of the world as Africans (Ibidem: 60)', and connect African authenticity and pride to style and fashion.

Moreover, through their combination of all kinds of 'African' characters from different times and places on the African continent, without paying much attention to the accuracy of their background stories, Kekeli Creations connected Africanness to Pan-Africanness in a way similar to TV Africa and the epic video films. This construction of a Pan-African style can be connected to Nkrumah's vision that cultural heritage was both needed to support the creation of nations and of a Pan-African identity (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 46, 47 and 53. Shipley 2009: 644 and 645).

Furthermore, just as television programs inspired by Sankofaism like *By the Fireside*, Kekeli Creations connected 'African' heritage to 'modern' technology and formats to address contemporary issues, thus placing the past and future in the present (Heath 1997: 267). However, while Sankofaism intended to address citizens and promote the development of the Ghanaian nation, TV Africa, epic video films and Mewulor Creations address young middle-class Africans as globalized consumers (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 56 and 60).

1.4.2. 'Fantasy' as a way of dealing with the influence of Pentecostalism

One day after a long day of work, Selorm, Kofi and I had a conversation about why they decided to explain the super powers of their superheroes through possession, instead of, for example, through transformation and/or scientific developments as in the Marvel and DC comics. Selorm mentioned that in the case of Ananse, when they were developing him, they at first were afraid that possession would be 'too demonic'. However, they eventually settled on this explanation, because they figured

that explaining Ananse's superpowers through an event that caused a transformation, would be too similar to Spiderman's story. The latter had obtained his superpowers through bodily changes caused by the bite of a radioactive spider. Kofi added that he felt they also settled on possession because letting the superpowers originate from science, like in stories about Europe from Marvel, would be 'too unauthentic' for their African Heroes, since 'African' folktales usually were about divine powers. Kofi emphasized that despite these differences, he thought that the Marvel and DC comics superheroes could still be connected to the superheroes from Mewulor Creations. In fact, he had already thought out a whole story line that connected the origin story of Hellboy, a Marvel superhero, to the origin stories of the African Heroes. He told me that Hellboy had gotten his superpowers during the Second World War, through a scientific experiment that went wrong. Shaka the Zulu and other African superheroes could just as well have gotten their powers during the same war, through a connected event in Africa that caused spirits of demons to get unleashed, and to possess children. This connection could form the basis for all kinds of collaborations with, and investigation of the connection between, Hellboy and the African Heroes in future stories.

Kofi's expression of the fear that possession might have been 'too demonic', showed that Kekeli Creations actively negotiated with the influence of Pentecostalism in the Ghanaian public sphere during the development of their 'African' superheroes, since Pentecostal Churches stated that objects, images, sounds and performances that are part of cultural heritage could potentially contain 'demonic spirits' (Meyer and de Witte 2012: 50 and 51). The way Selorm and Kofi dealt with potential Pentecostal critiques on their heroes, is similar to the strategies of epic video films and TV Africa. Just like them, Selorm and Kofi combined different elements to create an 'African' style, and connected this style to entertainment with the purpose of disconnecting the different elements from the potential power of spirits.

First, this similarity in strategy became clear in the meaning that was given by Selorm and Kofi to the narrative structure of the comics. In another conversation I had with Kofi, he, in line with Pentecostal points of view, stressed that ‘traditional African’ religion was part of culture and not of religion. Kofi and Selorm thus considered possession to be a ‘cultural’ element contributing to the creation of ‘authentic’ ‘African’ superheroes. Since Kekeli Creation was creating ‘fantasy’, they combined this so-called authentic element with elements like the Hellboy story. ‘Fantasy’ was thus used to firmly restyle possession as entertainment and to downplay its potential power Pentecostals warn for. Moreover, in this way authenticity was re-styled as entertainment for African middle-class consumers, instead of as something to be ‘recovered’ to construct the selfhood of ‘modern’ Ghanaian citizens, as was underscored by Sankofaism (Meyer and de Witte: 47 and 60).



Figure 1.4. Shaka the Zulu



Figure 1.5. Ananse

Second, this narrative structure was combined with a focus on the looks of the African Heroes, as became clear during the production and marketing of the games and comics. In the office, I observed that the majority of the time spend on the development of games and comics, was dedicated to the design of the right looks for the Heroes. Moreover, Selorm and Kofi carefully prepared interviews and presentations about the Heroes, in which the audience was presented with the similar attractive, colorful images, and fast moving video clips of the African Heroes guided by what the team called ‘epic’ music. Also, after passing through the Luvion gate, one immediately saw two huge banners advertising the African Heroes. Inside the office, one was welcomed by a boost of color, since all the office walls were covered by posters in all shapes and sizes of the African Heroes. In this way, every visitor, from local business men to Silicon Valley investors and Al-Jazeera, was also presented with the looks of the Heroes.

In these looks, Kekeli Creations actively combined all kinds of 'African' elements with a comic-like style that was inspired by and compared to Marvel and DC comics. Selorm was the person in the office who gave the artists and artist-interns directions on the design of the games and comics. One day going through his old hard disk, Selorm decided to show me old images of the African Heroes and the several versions of Ananse they had developed. He commented on these versions that they did not settle on those because they looked too much like Spiderman. In some Ananse was bald (like Spiderman in his suit) or had webs as a superpower (like Spiderman). Therefore, they eventually settled on an Ananse with grey hair, to underscore his wisdom, and with gloomy eyes to signifying his ability to create webs of illusion, thus distinguishing him from Spiderman in two ways. Moreover, they also added other 'African' elements to the superheroes, such as the dark skin color, the wide pants of Ananse, the bare feet of Ananse and Shaka, and the dress of Shaka the Zulu, except for his mask.

Moreover, by observing the interactions between Selorm and the artist and artist-interns, I also discovered that Selorm wanted the artists and artist-interns to develop superheroes that looked very muscular, that had 'clean lines', and 'bright colors' and were preferably made with the use of vector graphics in Adobe Illustrator. In the car to a meeting, Kofi casually told me that he thought these elements were important to achieve 'quality'; to make them able to compete with Marvel and DC Comics. This comparison with Marvel and DC on the one hand seemed to be connected to Kekeli Creations desire to create a 'global brand'. On the other hand, it also seemed to be connected to Kofi's and his friends personal taste, since they watched both *By the Fireside* and read Marvel and DC comics when they were younger. By combining 'fantasy' with images that combined 'African' and comic elements, the African Heroes were even more firmly positioned as entertainment.

1.4.3. 'Fantasy' as a way of making things 'not-political'

During my internship, Selorm and Kofi gave me the assignment to develop a background story for Ruddy. The only thing they had made up for her before was that she was a superhero coming from Nigeria. During the brainstorm session about Ruddy's background story, Selorm and Kofi suggested to base her story loosely on the kidnapping of the girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria a couple of months earlier.² However, they stressed that in the story, Kekeli Creations should change the name of the Nigerian president and of Boko Haram. Moreover, it should somehow become clear that the company did not see Boko Haram as 'real Islam', to not offend the Islamic audience (the African

² In April 2014, 276 young female students were kidnapped in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram. Shortly after this event, the First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama started the social media campaign #BringBackOurGirls, to raise global awareness for the situation of the students. For this reason the students are referred to as girls in the text above.

Heroes have been downloaded relatively much in Egypt). Also they suggested that I would develop the story in the following way: Ruddy is the secret runaway daughter of the Nigerian president, who she despises, because he let people perform tests on her as a child. These tests caused her to get her powers. When Ruddy learns about the kidnapping of the girls, she immediately thinks her father is behind this, and goes on a mission to save them. On her mission, she finds out that the Nigerian president let Boko Haram kidnap the girls, and transformed them into soldiers through witchcraft and possession. Selorm and Kofi repeatedly stressed that I should combine all these elements in my story about Ruddy, because Kekeli Creations did not want to be 'political'.

As the example above shows, the desire to not be political could be related to marketing concerns: it was perceived as a way to keep good relationships with a broad audience. Also, it could be connected to the personal background of Selorm, Kofi and their tech entrepreneur friends. In the everyday discussions at the office, this group expressed a general disappointment of, and dissatisfaction with, the Ghanaian government. The tech entrepreneurs stated that the Ghanaian government caused Ghana to develop 'backwards' since Kwame Nkrumah, due to corruption and mismanagement. The continuing electricity problems in Ghana, and the general problems with infrastructure development, were considered good examples of this. In this way, the tech entrepreneurs voiced an opinion also present amongst the young urban middle classes in other African countries, like Kenya (Spronk 2014: 215). While the Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs thought Ghana was going 'backward', they saw it going 'forward' in different ways at the same time. According to them, projects such as malls and fast internet connections, could be and were developed well, because they were executed by corporations and private enterprises.

Moreover, Selorm, Kofi and their friends stated that they thought that their parents, who had worked for the government their whole lives, had not been rewarded enough by the state for their efforts. Some tech entrepreneurs even told me that their parents agreed with this. These opinions also pointed to some of the reasons why the tech entrepreneurs choose this career path: to distance oneself from corruption, to acquire more wealth than their parents, and help the country move 'forward'. The desire to not be political can thus also be interpreted as a way to distance oneself from the corruption and regression tech entrepreneurs associated with politics.

Kekeli Creations way of dealing with 'African' heritage can thus be interpreted as a contemporary adjustment to Sankofaism, articulating developments amongst the young urban middle classes since the 90s. While Sankofaism connected 'African' heritage to progress and development as a nation, Kekeli Creations connected 'African' heritage to the progress of Ghana through private enterprises, entrepreneurship and consumerism.

1.5. 'The African Heroes are not African!'

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the Africanness of the African Heroes was contested by the tech entrepreneurs themselves. The image below on the left is the one Kofi referred to when he impulsively told me 'Look Tessa! This is African! The African Heroes are not African!'

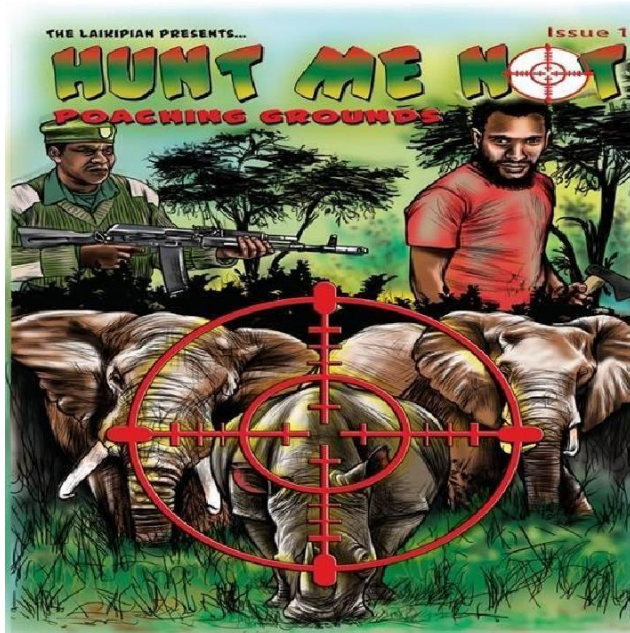


Figure 1.7. Hunt me not.

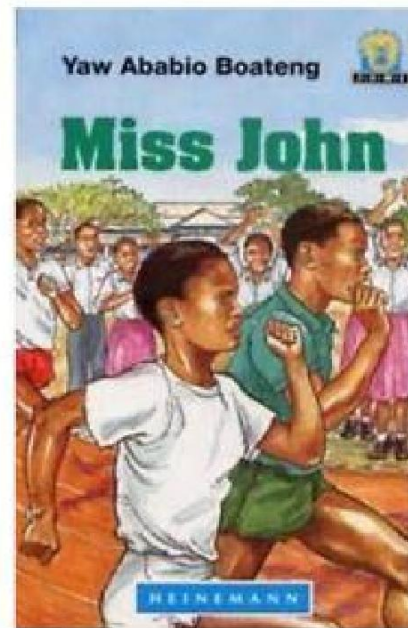


Figure 1.8. Miss John.

When I asked Kofi what he meant, I noticed that he slowly started to realize that what he had just said was quite different from everything the team had told me before about creating 'African' superheroes. Consequentially, he found it really difficult to explain to me what exactly he had meant.

He started by telling me that the image looked quite similar to the typical 'African' schoolbooks he had grown up with, which he illustrated by googling and showing me the picture above on the right. He told me that he thought these images looked 'African' because he was so used to that this was what 'African' looked like. Upon further consideration, he also told me that these images looked 'African' because of the 'more sketchy' lining and color use. Since he was aware of the paradox between the African Heroes being 'African' and 'not African' at the same time, he added that these images were not necessarily 'African', but that it was probably 'someone at Macmillan or something' who hired someone to develop the images in this way. Kofi thus referred to the influence of foreign corporations on his own idea of 'African' looks.

Eventually, Kofi decided that while the African Heroes in the spur of the moment were 'not African', they were 'new African'. A couple of weeks earlier, Selorm has said something similar. He

told me that ‘by making the African Heroes into contemporary superheroes, we want to develop Africa into a new Africa.’ Selorm had added to this that they wanted to emphasize that he and his tech entrepreneur friends were the ones creating an ‘image of Africa, from Africa, for the world’. Selorm and Kofi’s explanations thus referred to what they considered a generational difference between the creation of Africanness. While when growing up, Africanness was influenced by the image foreigners had of African looks, Selorm and Kofi intended to reverse these roles and make games and comics that were globally competitive.

Fellow high middle class children of university lectures I spoke about their consumption of the African Heroes app, articulated a similar opinion. They told me that while their fitness and not-everyday costumes distinguished the Heroes as superheroes, their ‘vibrant colors’, talismans, bracelets and names made them ‘uniquely African’. Specifically, they liked that these designs were ‘emerging out of Africa’, instead of being one of the many things imposed on Africa. This interpretation of the ‘new African’ style was thus not only generation, but also class specific.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it has become clear that the creation of ‘fantasy’ narratives and looks for the African Heroes is a class and generation specific way of appropriating, negotiating and distinguishing the African Heroes from other visions on African heritage and Africanness in the Ghanaian media scape.

The creation of ‘fantasy’ can be connected to the higher middle-class environment the tech entrepreneurs grew up in in the 80s and 90s. They were raised by parents they considered to be ‘un-African’, and who granted them access to global media less privileged children did not have access to, such as DC and Marvel comics and games. Also, they grew up with media influenced by Sankofaism, such as *By the Fireside*, and the consequences of neoliberalism, democracy and globalization for the Ghanaian media scape, such as access to Chinese, American and Japanese series, TV Africa and the increased influence of Pentecostalism. Moreover, they had access to schoolbooks which according to the tech entrepreneurs, portrayed an ‘African’ style that was influenced by the ideas foreign corporations had about what African should look like.

The tech entrepreneurs created the narrative structure and style of ‘fantasy’ through the combination of ‘authentic’ ‘African’ elements such as possession, with influences from global media culture, such as DC and Marvel comics and anime (Japanese animated series). According to the tech entrepreneurs, this was a way to make the African Heroes games and comics ‘not political’, fun, entertaining and ‘modern’. ‘Fantasy’ was a way to circumvent Pentecostal critique about the potential ‘evil spirits’ in African heritage objects, because it, similarly to TV Africa and epic video films, positioned African heritage as entertainment. Furthermore, just like TV Africa and Sankofaism,

through the use of 'fantasy' the tech entrepreneurs firmly located African heritage in the present. However, while Sankofaism connected African heritage to the construction of a 'modern' nation and a Pan-African identity, TV Africa, epic video films and Kekeli Creations created a Pan-African style connected to fashion and entertainment, to address a growing group of young middle-class urbanites in Africa and the diaspora, with global consumer lifestyles and a growing appreciation for 'African' products. The tech entrepreneurs thus developed 'modern' stories to address Africans as consumers, while Sankofaism connected 'tradition' to the development of Africans as 'modern' citizens. That the tech entrepreneurs choose to address Africans as consumers, can be connected to their, and other young middle-classes in Africa, disappointment in the state, and their hopes on 'progress' through private corporations (De Witte and Meyer 2012: 48 – 60).

The creation of 'fantasy' was also a way for tech entrepreneurs to distinguish their African Heroes games and comics from other media in the Ghanaian media scape. The tech entrepreneurs considered Ghanaian and Nigerian movies and TV Africa to be of too low 'quality' compared to for example Hollywood movies. To them, the combination of 'African' elements with influences from global media culture, lead to 'quality' products that were globally competitive. Also, 'fantasy' was connected to the creation of a 'new African' style. While in the case of older school books the 'African' style was influenced by what foreign corporations considered to be 'African', the tech entrepreneurs emphasized that this new style was developed by them, 'from Africa, for the world'. The tech entrepreneurs thus both used what they perceived to be global media standards and global media influences, and combined these with 'African' elements, to create a 'African' style that they felt asserted their (global) agency. In this way, 'fantasy' confirms that every generation and class relates oneself to cultural heritage and what 'modern' and 'African' means in new ways.

2. Becoming a successful tech entrepreneur

It is an early Friday morning in the Luvion Accelerator, all the tech entrepreneurs working in the building are gathered in the main hall because Olaf, the CEO of the Luvion Foundation, has just arrived from San Francisco and is giving them a speech and some feedback about their company's progression. At one point in his speech, Olaf mentions that Kekeli Creations is doing a great job at being invited to all kinds of events, such as the Game Developers Conference in the US, to present the African Heroes app. However, Kekeli Creations could still improve upon finding ways to make money from the app. According to Olaf, this makes Kekeli Creations most of all an inspirational success [paragraph rewritten].

In her research, Spronk has stated that while probably all people aspire to have a good life, not everyone has the abilities, opportunities and aspirations to enact on them. She has argued that in Ghana, success was first the result of historically specific conditions of possibility, such as access to resources, education and networks. Second, success was dependent on ambition, skills, opportunity and strategy, thus the power to enact. Third, the work of imagination, hope and aspiration was crucial. Success was the result of creating the everyday as a way of creating the future. What this future was imagined to be was dependent on certain collective, historically specific, understandings of the good and valuable life. The future was thus not a neutral space, but culturally dependent. The capacity to aspire is the capacity of actors to strive with ever more confidence and competence for these collective understandings of the good life, and was thus crucial in achieving what was considered to be success (Spronk forthcoming: 1 – 11; Appadurai 2013: 286 and 287). Shipley has added to this that success could also depend on actor's abilities to restyle both objects and themselves within collective understandings of success. Also, he has argued that success is something that can be achieved, by acting upon performed success. For example, for Ghanaian musicians success came from cultivating their celebrity status (Shipley 2013a: 365 – 367 and 371).

This chapter revolves around the question why Selorm [part sentence deleted] was considered by many tech entrepreneurs as one of the successful tech entrepreneurs in the tech space. I will argue that this was the result of Selorm and Kofi smartly positioning themselves and the African Heroes app as (re)presenting and articulating a certain vision of success that was based on the style of tech entrepreneurship at events in the tech space, thus acquiring access to more resources, networks and prestige that based on this style were deemed signs of success. I will start this chapter by showing that the emergence of this style of tech entrepreneurship was the result of both class, generation and location specific developments in Ghana and global influences which encouraged Selorm, Kofi and their friends to become tech entrepreneurs. Thereafter, I will argue that

at events in the tech space, technology, resources, networks and actors (re)presented the style of tech entrepreneurship. The structure and styling of these events, allowed for social mobility and success for tech entrepreneurs like Selorm, provided tech entrepreneurs with alternative ways to 'financial success' and contributed to community formation in the tech space.

2.1. The emergence of the style of tech entrepreneurship

2.1.1. The role of the higher middle-class background of tech entrepreneurs

Because Selorm, Kofi and their tech entrepreneur friends grew up in middle class environments in Ghana in the 80s and 90s, they were raised with generation, class and location specific access to certain resources, skills, education, aspirations, and the power to enact, which encouraged them to become tech entrepreneurs and articulate and (re)present the style of tech entrepreneurship. First of all, they were exposed to what Spronk has called a particular local narrative of achievement, that revolved around what it meant to 'accomplish'. This narrative articulated that one had accomplished when one had gained prestige. This accomplishment was the result of hard work, endurance and skillfulness. Moreover, material wealth and the ability to use one's resources played a central role.

The redistribution of wealth, the ability to assist others, and in this way being able to create a network of acquaintances, was not only interpreted as a way to express the value and appreciation relationships, but was also seen as source of pride, a sign of success and a way to engender respect and acquire prestige. 'Accomplishment' was thus linked to wealth functioning as social glue, and expressed in lifestyle practices, values and ideals. Spronk has argued that these values typically were present in middle-class subjectivities (Spronk forthcoming: 9 and 10).

Furthermore, the Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs grew up with a specific educational policy of the Ghanaian government. In the 80s and 90s 'modern African education' was supposed to 'undergird national unity, be related to African conditions, and meet the needs of an independent African state in a technological age (Heath 1997: 266).' This education was also supposed to encourage creativity, prepare students for self-sufficiency, enable them to solve local problems and teach them to use the resources available around them for the communities benefit (Ibidem).

This educational philosophy was supported by children's programs aired by GBC-TV, like DOS Computer Byte, the Brilliant Science and Maths Quiz, and Kyekyekule. The latter show was developed in 1985, and ran well into the 1990s. It was a forty-five minute show in which each week the pupils of a different elementary or junior high school were invited to share their talents and ambitions with the nation via TV. Most weeks there also was a special guest, for example a young computer whiz or someone else perceived to be successful in the 'modern' world, to encourage viewers to emulate their hard work and dedication. Other times, groups of children went to places symbolizing Ghana as

a ‘modern developing nation’, like the Akasombo Dam, to teach viewers that ‘modern’ technology carries responsibilities with it (Heath 1997: 273 and 274). Through this format, Kyekyekule aimed to:

‘pull children forward into the modern world’ by helping participants and viewers understand and become comfortable with modern technology and by encouraging them to adopt attitudes and behaviors that will enable them to be confident, self-reliant, and morally upright citizens of a modern African nation (George Laing, host of Kyekyekule. Quoted in: Ibidem: 273).

In line with the educational philosophy, Kyekyekule thus encouraged Ghanaians to become self-reliant in a technological age, by stimulating them to acquire technical skills, understanding scientific principles and one’s environment, creative problem solving and individual initiative (Ibidem).

Moreover, all the tech entrepreneurs experienced the benefits of growing up middle-class. They grew up with education, and the prospect of more education, playing a central role in their lives. For example, when growing up Selorm, Kofi and other children living on the KNUST campus with their parents, had access to a children’s library that was located near their houses – a luxury in Ghana at the time. Also, their parents prioritized education, and forced their children to make homework every day. The children were made aware that, if they had good enough grades, they were guaranteed a place at university, since they were the university lecturers’ children.

Also, Selorm, Kofi and their friends admitted to me that their upbringing installed in them a certain ambition and aspiration that stimulated them to get where they are today. They all remembered that they grew up in an environment in which being the best, developing one’s talents and competition was positively valued. They were surrounded by hard working smart and talented adults who through their work and/or families had access to transnational networks, and had ambitious role models, like peers who went to Ivy-League schools in the US, or had developed their own software programs.

During their childhood, the tech entrepreneurs had the opportunity to enact the aspirations they were exposed to. They used to compete with each other both in and out of school, for example through different competing groups of friends making software. Through (the network of) their parents, they had access to the technologies Kyekyekule promoted. Their parents allowed them to experiment with their home computers, paid for extracurricular computer courses, and/or allowed their children to do internships that helped them develop their IT skills. In this way many of the tech entrepreneurs were able and allowed to start their own IT-companies as teenagers. They developed comics, made games, and sometimes also build software for local companies. Selorm for example provided local radio stations with software. The (networks of) their parents thus allowed the tech

entrepreneurs to take an interest in 'modern' technologies, acquire the skills to use them, and bring the ideology articulated in Kyekyekule into practice.

Furthermore, as teenagers and adolescents Selorm, Kofi and their friends, were some of the first in Ghana to get access to internet. KNUST was one of the first places in Ghana with computers with internet connection. Internet provided the tech entrepreneurs with a different means of skill development. While some of the tech entrepreneurs, like Kofi, had access to software development books as kids, most of the tech entrepreneurs told me that they learned the most by experimenting and looking things up online. Especially access to YouTube tutorials was important. The experienced tech entrepreneurs, who were some of the first to study computer science in university, told me that these ways of skill development remained important during university, because the level and quality of their classes was too low. For example, during tests, they had to write code on paper, instead of working with a computer. Sometimes lecturers also did not understand the students' projects, since the knowledge of the lecturers lagged behind the knowledge they had acquired by themselves. Even during my fieldwork, all tech entrepreneurs still used online tutorials to learn or improve their skills, also when they were enrolled in prestigious programs such as LSET. Just as with video-games and movies, many of these tutorials were also spread through the networks of friends, who copied tutorials from each other's hard disks and flash drives. Also, many tech-entrepreneurs actively taught and learned from each other.

Moreover, the internet gave tech entrepreneurs access to new global role models and new ideas about possible career paths. For example, through the internet the tech entrepreneurs learned about global icons of tech entrepreneurship such as Steve Jobs (Apple) and Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook). As teenagers and adolescents, many tech entrepreneurs felt that these role models were very relatable, since they were being portrayed as being (largely) autodidact and self-made men, who starting with nothing from their own homes, and became very successful and rich through perseverance and creativity. These stories fitted well with the personal circumstances of the tech entrepreneurs and the messages send by programs like Kyekyekule and the government. Also, these role models were so attractive because they gave the tech entrepreneurs concrete examples of the success and wealth that could be achieved through this career path. The internet thus provided the tech-entrepreneurs with not only the means to enact aspirations (coding skills), but also with new ideas about success and the good life, that fitted very well into local visions. Up until today, these role models still are a huge inspiration for many tech entrepreneurs.

2.1.2. The role of the Luvion Foundation

Next to the upbringing of the tech entrepreneurs, both the establishment of LSET and the Luvion Accelerator in Accra were important for the development of the tech space and the style of tech entrepreneurship. LSET was established in 2008, when most experienced tech entrepreneurs like Selorm and Kofi, had just finished college. During one of his visits to LSET and the Accelerator, Olaf told the tech entrepreneurs that he had made the decision to establish a school in Africa a year earlier, in 2007, while at the time, he had never been to Africa before. In online interviews, he also articulated that he wanted to start a school for tech entrepreneurs in Africa, instead of for example donating money, because he was convinced that talent was equally distributed throughout the world, and with the right support and guidance, could achieve great things. Moreover, he considered nurturing and developing talent the core expertise of the Luvion Group, and transferring this expertise through a foundation more valuable than giving money (Brown 2013; Luvion 2015).

With their two programs, the Foundation aimed to create 'globally successful companies that create wealth and jobs locally in Africa (Luvion 2015)', thus creating a so-called 'ecosystem'. Connected to this aim, the Luvion Foundation introduced two additional visions on success. First, Olaf and his team articulated that they aspired what they called 'financial success' for the companies they funded. With this they meant that they hoped to sell the companies for a fair amount of money, such as ten or twenty million dollars, and/or to fund companies that made a lot of money from the apps they developed. Second, Olaf and his team wanted 'inspirational success' for the tech companies. During one of his speeches in the Accelerator, Olaf told the tech entrepreneurs:

I want you to inspire a whole generation of African people on the African continent. And, more than anything, I want you to realize that you can create something phenomenal, with impact, for both yourself and others. I would like to see that the Luvion Accelerator steps up in the community, as a place where everybody is inspiring you.

As the quote from an interview with Olaf below shows, Olaf thought that this kind of success could not only be achieved by 'creating something phenomenal, with impact', but also by media coverage about achievements such as 'financial success':

We want to develop successful entrepreneurs. But more than that, we want to create role models. (...) We don't need a huge success like Facebook. But a \$10 million to \$20 million exit would be huge. We are hoping that if this happens, they will be on the front page of newspapers, magazines, and on TV, and they will be rockstars across the African continent. We hope that this can contribute to inspire the upcoming generation across Africa and generate jobs and wealth locally (Brown 2013).

Later on in the interview Olaf added that this kind of success could also be achieved by getting 'global recognition and exposure', by participating in events in the transnational tech space, such as TechCrunch Disrupt Battlefield in San Francisco or DEMO Africa (Ibidem). Many tech companies in the Accelerator, such as Kekeli Creations, had participated in these events, and where thus considered to be 'inspirational successes'. 'Inspirational success' was thus defined as success contributing to community formation, the creation of local jobs in Africa and an 'ecosystem', by being inspiring to 'the community', Africa and 'the global' through 'financial success' and/or 'global recognition'.

The Luvion Foundation also formulated and provided concrete ways to achieve these kind of successes. Their programs offered resources, networks and skill development that were framed according to their vision on success. They provided the 'right' skill development presented to be of 'global quality', access to capital (investment) and access to what they considered to be a 'global network'. They organized events where 'globally successful' tech entrepreneurs and investors gave 'inspirational' talks to promote community development and encourage tech entrepreneurs to be 'inspiring' too. Moreover, at these events the Luvion Foundation started to make clear what it meant to choose the career path of the tech entrepreneur, and what success should be like.

For example, during Olaf's speech mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, he articulated his vision on the career path of the tech entrepreneur. First, he made the connection between passion, struggle, dreams and impact. He stated that the life of the entrepreneur is a life in which one has the luxury to follow one's passion. However, the consequence of this lifestyle, is that one has no guarantees, will face setbacks, will struggle. Following one's passion, was presented by

Olaf as a way of dealing with these struggles, and reaching the goals of 'making impact' and 'living the dream': 'if you want to live the dream, you need to stand for something. You should not let consequences get you. That is how you make impact.' Moreover, Olaf also formulated being passionate as something a tech entrepreneur owed to himself, his investor and the community, and stated that it was a way to gain pride: 'On a daily basis, I want you to put your heart into this [your company, T.P.] as respect to the Luvion Foundation, your investor, yourself, and your peers. So that if the company fails, you know that you worked hard, poured your heart in, and can still be proud of yourself.' Passion was thus not only presented as a way for the individual tech entrepreneur to reach his aspirations, but is also presented as important to the community.

Second, Olaf connected financial success to dreams and focus. He emphasized that is was important to stick to one business model and product, and making sure that this product would generate more money than was spend. He considered this financial success 'a validation of your dreams and imaginations, since software is the product of your imagination and your dreams.' He

told the tech entrepreneurs that by taking this approach they could become just like Microsoft, since this company had started out the same way. Moreover, he told the tech entrepreneurs that it was more important to 'get something out there', than to have a fully finished, perfect product. Updated and improved versions could always be uploaded later on.

Many of the tech entrepreneurs in the Accelerator underscored that LSET and the Accelerator became so popular amongst many (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs because these programs happened to fit well within local developments, such as the skills, ambitions, education and the power to enact acquired by the tech entrepreneurs in the 80s and 90s. [paragraph rewritten, three sentences deleted]

Many Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs (re)presented and articulated the aspirations about tech entrepreneurship introduced by the Luvion Foundation [sentence rewritten]. These aspirations were inspired by visions on tech entrepreneurship that were present in Silicon Valley, and have since then spread to different hubs, accelerators and tech and social entrepreneurs all over the world.

[sentence deleted] Tech entrepreneurs started to use these aspirations because they were compatible with the local circumstances and aspirations the tech entrepreneurs grew up with. The tech entrepreneurs had grown up with parents who had access to transnational networks. They were thus already familiar with the importance of what the Luvion Foundation presented as 'global networks'. Moreover, the tech entrepreneurs were already aware of the global role models of tech entrepreneurship presented by the Luvion Foundation. Furthermore, these aspirations also fitted well within local narratives about 'accomplishment'. Just as this narrative, the Foundation articulated that success was the result of hard work, struggle, skillfulness and endurance – the latter reformulated as 'passion'. Since the Foundation connected 'inspirational success' to community formation, this success could be interpreted as a way of sharing one's experiences, advice, knowledge and success and thus one's resources. In this way, it fitted well within the idea that prestige could be acquired through the redistribution of wealth and resources, which was present in the local narrative of 'accomplishment'. The idea that technology should be used for the community's benefit and to solve local problems, was also already articulated by the Ghanaian state and promoted in programs like Kyekyekule (Heath 1997: 266). Last, the tech entrepreneurs had grown up in environment in which the development of coding skills, ambition and the enactment of aspirations was supported. The aspirations formulated by the Luvion Foundation thus came to be articulated and (re)presented by tech entrepreneurs because they could be interpreted by them as a reformulation of older local narratives, that fitted well within earlier developments.

Since the emergence of LSET and the Luvion Accelerator, many events started to be held in the tech space in Accra. Kofi told me that some of the first events in the tech space were not only organized by the Luvion Foundation, but also by the GhanaThink Foundation, a foundation of (higher) middle-

class Ghanaians in and outside of Ghana, which Selorm, Kofi and many of their friends were affiliated with. Since Ghanaians considered networks from kinship, to high school and professional networks to be important, this initiative from the GhanaThink Foundation could be explained as emerging from the desire to create these networks for tech entrepreneurs too. During my fieldwork, these events were also organized by other Hubs in Accra, transnational corporations such as the telecommunication companies MTN, Vodafone and Tigo and transnational NGOs and often connected to 'global' events taking place outside of Ghana. At these events, the aspirations and means to acquire these aspirations introduced by the Luvion Foundation were not only articulated by tech entrepreneurs and representatives of transnational corporations and NGOs, but also (re)presented by them, the technology present, and the specific structure of these events. These events thus made clear that in the tech space the aspirations mentioned above had been developed into a style of tech entrepreneurship. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will show how and why this style was articulated and (re)presented at events.

2.2. Events in the tech space

2.2.1. Access to the 'global'

Although there were different types of events in the tech space, all events shared some common features, for example in how the 'global' was (re)presented. At all events in the tech space representatives of transnational NGOs and/or corporations were present to give advice to (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs about their (future) careers. They often did this during speeches and/or by staging opportunities for (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs to ask them questions. For example four times a year Olaf, his team and all kinds of guests from the corporate world visited LSET for one weekend. On Saturday mornings all of the guests gave speeches to the students using a similar format. They spoke about some sort of personal struggle and how they were able to overcome this by some form of passion. Also they connected their own success, or the success of the company they represented, to things like having a clear business model, and/or the desire to make impact. After their speech, students always had the opportunity to ask questions.

Moreover, at events representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations often judged the work of (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs. At LSET, after finishing the speeches on Saturday morning, the rest of the day guests from the corporate world judged the pitches of aspiring tech entrepreneurs about their business ideas. Often they asked questions about, or did suggestions for the presented business models. In the tech space MTN, Tigo and Vodafone organized so-called app challenges. To participate in these kind of events, Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs had to submit their apps online months before the actual one-day event. Only the selected few were given the

opportunity to present their app to a set of judges consisting of representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations, and an audience full of (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs. Selorm told me that in one case, while the judges thought his app still needed some improvement, they had awarded him the first place anyway because he had spoken with so much passion about the African Heroes app. Also in other cases, the African Heroes app had won because the judges considered it to have much potential, even though they recognized Kekeli Creations had to work on the monetization of the app. While giving speeches, or judging tech entrepreneurs, the representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations thus articulated the style of tech entrepreneurship: a focus on business models, passion and potential, and not so much on if the apps were fully finished. Moreover, through their actions and position at events, they represented to be experts on what within this style was considered to be 'global success'.

Furthermore, representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations (re)presented access to 'global networks', 'global resources' and 'global recognition' necessary for 'global' and 'inspirational' success. At the end of their two year program, aspiring tech entrepreneurs had the opportunity to pitch their final business idea to the members of the Luvion Foundation during one of the four weekends. It were these members who decided if the aspiring tech entrepreneurs would receive investment or not. At app challenges, it were the judges who decided who would win the competition. The winners often received a monetary prize, such as 10.000 cedi (3000 dollar) or more. For comparison, the salary of a successful senior middle class employee was often around 1000 dollar a month. The monthly stipend of LSET students was 250 cedi. Furthermore, they could win the opportunity to attend an international event and to feature in the online store of the transnational corporation. The winner also often received some news coverage.

My attendance at events made clear to me that representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations not only presented themselves as giving access to the means necessary for 'global' and 'inspirational' success, but that (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs also interpreted representatives this way. In the tech space the GhanaThink Foundation organized Barcamps. This was the name for an international format for a so-called 'unconference', a very informal conference where attendees could propose panels and decide to give lectures themselves. At first, these events were organized every year at LSET for (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs. In recent years, Barcamp has come to be organized all over Ghana, and is not specifically targeting tech entrepreneurs anymore. Moreover, part of the program has come to revolve around all kinds of so-called mentors, whom often, although not exclusively, were representatives of transnational corporations and NGOs, giving advice to the audience. When I attended these events, I was often approached by aspiring tech entrepreneurs, who asked me how to get access to European scholarships or European markets. Sometimes, they expressed that they had locally operating companies and were looking for ways to get access to

capital outside of Ghana, or leave the country. Most of the time, these entrepreneurs were not specific about their wishes, did not seem to have a concrete plan or to be very informed. Some mentors at Barcamps expressed similar experiences. I interpreted this as a sign that access to 'global' resources and networks was probably more an aspirational category to them, that I mediated through my bodily presence. Aspiring tech entrepreneurs interacted with me in this way at many other events in the tech space too.

Furthermore, at all the events I attended, social media mediated the style of tech entrepreneurship. At all the events I attended, the organization tried to stimulate the audience to twitter about the event. They promoted the use of the Twitter hashtag that was created to refer to the event in posts. At Barcamps, the organizers called 'Twitter, twitter, twitter!' every so often. Moreover, almost all the events I attended, had a screen positioned in the room, often next to the stage, on which the Twitter messages using the hashtag of the event, the Twitter feed, was projected. These Twitter feeds were sometimes not readable, or showed similar tweets the whole time. Also, this Twitter feed could just as well be looked up by individual participants on their phone or computer. When I asked the participants and organizers of events why the screen was there, they told me that it was present to give the audience at the event the idea that they were part of a global community, and capable of getting global attention and recognition.

In January 2015 I attended the Global Game Contest in Accra, a global hackathon for the development of games. In the tech space, hackathons were three day events (usually Friday until Saturday) during which tech entrepreneurs developed and pitched an app based on a certain theme. The local organizer of this event had set up a Twitch stream (Twitch is a streaming channel for gamers). While me and the rest of the team were working, a camera was pointed at us the whole time, so people could watch us. Moreover, the global organizers of the event had developed an interactive website, on which teams could watch the progress of teams all over the world. Our team did this enthusiastically. The Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs told me that seeing that they were part of an event with so many good people and projects, inspired them. Twitter, projection screens, Twitch, cameras and this interactive website were thus used to give the entrepreneurs at events a sense presence in what they imagined to be a global space and global attention. At events, social media were thus stylized to mediate the aspirations of tech entrepreneurs.

2.2.2. The presentation of apps and tech entrepreneurs

At different events in the tech space, Selorm and Kofi always presented the African Heroes app and themselves in a similar way. For the presentation they used a clear format. They often either started or ended their presentation with showing the audience a video clip with 'epic' music and stills from the African Heroes app. They explained that they used 'Africa's rich culture and history', 'content

from Africa', and combined this with comics and games to market content to a younger generation, thus positioning their app as containing 'local African content' for a 'local African audience'.

Furthermore, as the quote from Kofi at the Tigo App challenge shows, they also connected their app to 'the global':

Our aim is to take the African Heroes and make it a global brand, so that when we mention Marvel's Avengers, DC Comic's Justice League, the next one you hear is the African Heroes from Kekeli Creations. So we are looking to turn this into a global brand that Africans can identify with, and finally, an African kid can tell somebody from another country like the US: 'Hey, Ananse is from my country, and isn't he cool?!'

After introducing their app in this way, Kofi and Selorm often gave their audience some information about how many people were using mobile phones and/or internet in Africa, and that they targeted this market to make money with their app. They also often mentioned that the app was already downloaded in countries like Ghana, Kenya and Egypt. Furthermore, Selorm told me that at events, he dressed similar to how tech entrepreneurs dressed at the international events he attended: in a suit with either a shirt or a t-shirt. Also, Selorm and Kofi spoke clear English, and especially Selorm aimed to (re)present 'passion'. He did this not only articulating that he was passionate, but also by standing firm, speaking with an enthusiastic and optimistic voice, and having a sparkle in his eyes.

The way Selorm and Kofi presented the African Heroes app and themselves showed similarities with how many other (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs in the tech space (attempted to) present(ed) their apps at events. Every tech entrepreneur connected data about the amount of people using mobile phones and/or internet in Africa, to the possibility to make profit from their app. At events, Africa was thus presented as a continent that, through access of Africans to mobile phones and internet, was transformed into a profitable market full of (potential) consumers, ready to be penetrated by apps. At events Africa and apps were thus presented as the key to 'financial success' of tech entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, aspiring tech entrepreneurs not connected to LSET told me that they were well aware of the importance of presentation skills in the tech space. They felt that at events, they were always beaten by tech entrepreneurs connected to the Luvion Accelerator or LSET, because they had excellent presentation skills. As an intern at Kekeli Creations, I experienced that while the LSET students themselves considered their coding skills to be the most important, they had to practice their presentation skills extensively in a way the school considered to be contributing to 'global success'. Just like Selorm and Kofi, they learned that they had to present in suits or formal dresses,

clearly structure their presentations, articulate their English slowly and clearly, have a confident and positive attitude, and use keywords from the style of tech entrepreneurship such as ‘making impact’.

That tech entrepreneurs presented themselves and their apps in this specific way, or aspired to do so, can be connected to the structure of events and the styling of events according to the style of tech entrepreneurship. Since hackathons were only three days, at these events apps were not expected to be fully finished. Many app challenges were explicitly open for tech entrepreneurs whose work was still in progress. As a consequence, at these events the pitches of tech entrepreneurs about their app, and the app and tech entrepreneur’s potential for ‘financial’, ‘global’ and/or ‘inspirational’ success became more important. Furthermore, organizers presented their events as connecting the ‘local’ and ‘African’ to the ‘global’. For example the organizers of the Tigo app challenge stated that this event was meant to ‘empower local app developers to showcase their apps on a global scale (Acquaye 2014). The CMO of Vodafone urged tech entrepreneurs to present ‘locally relevant and user-friendly apps to suit local taste’ at their app challenge because ‘as the smartphone market grows rapidly in Ghana (...) it is imperative that we have apps developed locally and tailored to our market (Linington 2014).’ Just as the tech entrepreneurs, the CMO of Vodafone thus approached Africa as a market to be penetrated. Also they positioned both the apps and tech entrepreneurs as (re)presenting the ‘local’.

Mohammed, a game developer who had participated in app challenges, told me that the structure and styling of these events had influenced the content and looks of his game. Originally, he had wanted to develop a game similar to Angry Birds, addictive and really well-made. However, since the Vodafone app challenge wanted developers to present ‘locally relevant’ apps, he had decided to adjust his game, and let it revolve around Ananse. He added one of the stories about Ananse to the game, and adjusted the looks of the game. The spider on the left, was first just a ball. He thus adjusted the content and looks of his game to fit the style of tech entrepreneurship. At the Global Game Contest, I discovered that not every game developer felt required to adjust their game to this style. While the organization of the Global Game Contest did not require tech entrepreneurs to develop ‘locally relevant’ games, the team still choose to develop a game inspired by the local

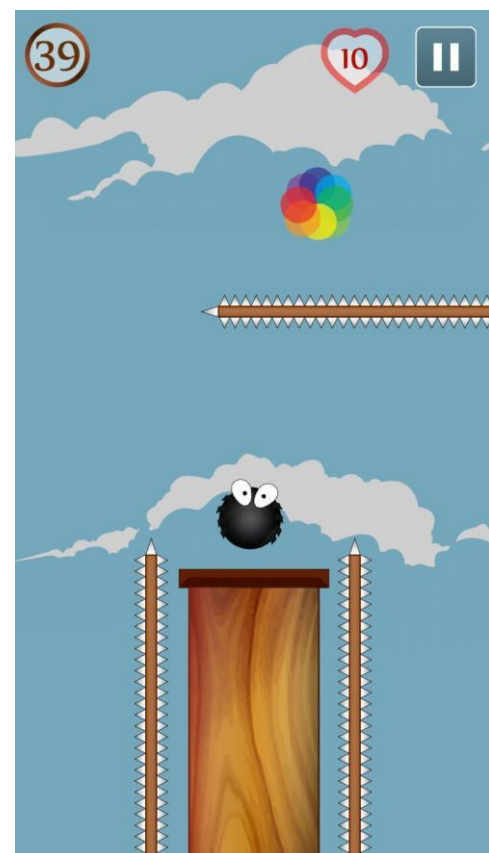


Figure 2.1. The Ananse Tales

fruit ladies in Accra. In similar fashion Selorm emphasized that while to some extent the African Heroes app was made to have something to present to Olaf, African superheroes were his own idea based on his own experiences.

That many tech entrepreneurs considered Selorm to be one of the most successful tech entrepreneurs in the tech space in Accra, was the result of him cleverly using the events, the resources and networks available to him, and the style of inspiration to his own advantage. Since Selorm acquired certain skills and experiences because he grew up in a higher middle-class environment, he was the first Ghanaian to be selected as a fellow by the Luvion Foundation, one of the first to get investment from the Foundation, and in the position to acquire a lot of experience with presenting himself and his app according to the style of tech entrepreneurship. Moreover, the combination of his coding and presentation skills caused him to win several 'local' competitions such as app challenges. These achievements, combined with access to the 'global network' of the Luvion Foundation, granted him access to 'global' competitions and events, and thus 'global networks, resources and recognition'.

During my internship, it became clear to me that while Selorm still presented himself and the African Heroes as 'local' at events like app challenges, due to his achievements he came to be presented, and presented himself as a 'global' and 'inspirational' success at many other events. For example in the Luvion Accelerator, Olaf connected Selorm's attendance of 'global' events to him being an 'inspirational success'. In October 2014 Selorm and I attended a Barcamp in one of the regions in Ghana, because he thought his presence was important to give (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs the idea that they got attention from people beyond their region. Also, Selorm was often invited to give interviews and speeches at events for aspiring tech entrepreneurs in Accra. At these events he often spoke of his successes and gave tech entrepreneurs advice, for example by stating that as a tech entrepreneur one could overcome struggle by being 'richer in passion than in money'. He told me that at these events he wanted to 'inspire' (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs. Other tech entrepreneurs like him, sometimes were also present at events to function as a judge or mentor to aspiring tech entrepreneurs. These kind of tech entrepreneurs thus continued to represent and articulate the style of tech entrepreneurship. However, their attendance of 'global events', transformed them into experts about 'global success', just like representatives of transnational NGOs and corporations, and sources of 'inspiration'.

Moreover, because of Selorm's 'successes', he was invited to very prestigious events in and outside of Accra. For example in Accra he was invited to speak at TEDxAccra, an event at which only 'successful' tech entrepreneurs spoke, and that was deemed to be prestigious because it was a local variant of a globally popular format. Also, he was invited to speak at the conference at USAID for an audience of experienced tech entrepreneurs and representatives of international NGOs and

corporations. Selorm and Kofi considered this to be very important because USAID was an organization with a lot of money. Furthermore, Selorm was invited to very prestigious international events, such as the US African Leaders Summit, which was presented as huge news by the Luvion Foundation. While other tech entrepreneurs considered this invitation a sign of recognition and to be inspiring, Selorm also considered it an opportunity to get access to more networks and resources.

Selorm thus presented the African Heroes and himself according to the style of tech entrepreneurship at events, because success at events granted him access to more prestigious events, and thus more success. Moreover, these events allowed him to acquire resources, in the form of monetary awards, or in the form of assignments from people he met at events. In this way, events thus provided Selorm and other tech entrepreneurs an alternative means to acquire 'financial success' with their apps. Also, and most importantly, based on the style of tech entrepreneurship, these events allowed Selorm to acquire prestige. At events, Selorm had the opportunity to expand his 'global' and 'local' networks, and the opportunity to 'inspire' Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs. Events thus provided him the opportunity of redistributing his success, experience and knowledge amongst a broad network. Selorm's way of achieving success at events showed that events, because they are structured and styled according to the style of tech entrepreneurship, were an important factor in the community formation and social mobility of tech entrepreneurs in the tech space in Accra.

Conclusion

This chapter has made clear that the style of tech entrepreneurship came to be articulated and (re)presented in the tech space in Accra because of a combination of class and generation specific local developments and global developments. The style of tech entrepreneurship was introduced to the tech space by the Luvion Foundation in 2008, based upon visions on tech entrepreneurship present in Silicon Valley, that have since then spread all over the world. This style revolved around certain ideas about successful tech entrepreneurship. It articulated that tech entrepreneurs in Africa could and should achieve 'global success', 'financial success' and 'inspirational success', should overcome 'struggle' by 'passion', desire to make 'impact' and focus on a clear business model. Through 'inspirational success', to be achieved by 'global' and/or 'financial success', tech entrepreneurs were considered to be able inspire others in Africa to become tech entrepreneurs, and thus contribute to 'local' community formation, or a so-called ecosystem. The Luvion Foundation considered itself to be the expert on the development of 'talent' in this way in Ghana, and thus decided to provide the tech entrepreneurs with resources and networks that were framed by them according to the style of tech entrepreneurship: the 'right' skill development presented to be of

‘global quality’, access to capital and access to a ‘global network’. Moreover, they started to organize events at which ‘globally successful’ tech entrepreneurs and investors articulated the style of tech entrepreneurship.

Tech entrepreneurs started to use the resources, networks, skills and style of tech entrepreneurship provided by the Luvion Foundation because they fitted well within local developments. The tech entrepreneurs had grown up in higher middle-class environments, in which education, the power to enact aspirations, ambition, transnational networks and coding skills were supported and valued, and which caused them to already be familiar with global role models of tech entrepreneurship. Moreover, the style of tech entrepreneurship could be interpreted as a reformulation of older ideas about success in Ghana. This style rearticulated the idea that success was the result of hard work, struggle, skillfulness and endurance. Also, since ‘inspirational success’ revolved around inspiring others and contributing to community formation, it could be interpreted as a reformulation of the local narrative of ‘accomplishment’, in which the redistribution of wealth and resources amongst a network of acquaintances was considered a way to gain prestige. Moreover, this type of success fitted well within the idea promoted by the Ghanaian state that technology should be used for the community’s benefit and to solve local problems.

During my fieldwork it became clear that events in the tech space were structured and styled according to the style of tech entrepreneurship. That Selorm was considered one of the successful tech entrepreneurs in the tech space was the result of him carefully using his resources, networks, skills, opportunity and strategy to reach collectively styled aspirations about the successful tech entrepreneur. At events he articulated and (re)presented the style of tech entrepreneurship: he presented the African Heroes app as ‘local’, Africa as a market to be made profit of, and himself as ‘passionate’. Success at these events provided tech entrepreneurs like Selorm with an alternative means of ‘financial success’, since it allowed them to win money, and acquire access to networks, resources and recognition presented to be ‘global’. Moreover, by being successful at events Selorm acquired more success, for example in the form of invitations to prestigious events. Also, by being successful at events, Selorm came to (re)present ‘global’ and ‘inspirational’ success in Accra. Selorm not only used this success to build a ‘local’ and ‘global’ network, but also to redistribute his success, experience and knowledge amongst (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs in Accra. Success at events was thus a way for him to gain prestige. This success shows that specifically styled and structured events contributed to the community formation and social mobility in the tech space. Selorm managed to acquire money and prestige through a specific styling of the African Heroes app [sentence rewritten].

3. [chapter deleted]

Conclusion

The argument I have developed in this research is that tech entrepreneurs in the tech space in Accra presented themselves and their apps according to certain notions of the global, local and African to enact their aspirations. I have shown that they styled themselves and their apps according to the style of tech entrepreneurship to acquire access to collectively styled resources, networks, prestige and success. Style thus functioned as a factor in social mobility, community formation and the circulation of apps and tech entrepreneurs in the tech space in Accra. [two sentences deleted] By presenting themselves and their apps according to the style of tech entrepreneurship, tech entrepreneurs financed apps having a 'new African' style that to them asserted their (global) agency. The global, local and Africanness were thus not fixed, but reified notions (re)presented and (re)styled differently based on context, class, generation, aspiration and economic circumstances.

I have started the development of my argument by arguing that the creation of 'fantasy' narratives and looks for the African Heroes was a class and generation specific way of appropriating, negotiating and distinguishing the African Heroes from other visions on African heritage and Africanness in the Ghanaian media scape. The creation of 'fantasy' was connected to the higher middle-class environment the tech entrepreneurs grew up in in the 80s and 90s. They were raised by parents they perceived to be 'un-African', who valued 'modern' technology such as television, and through their transnational networks, granted their children access to global media less privileged children did not have access to, such as DC and Marvel comics and games. They also grew up with media that were influenced by Sankofaism, and the consequences of neoliberalism, democracy and globalization for the Ghanaian media scape, such as access to American, Japanese and Chinese TV series, TV Africa and media influenced by Pentecostalism. Furthermore, they had access to schoolbooks which according to the tech entrepreneurs portrayed an 'African' style recognizable because of 'sketchy' lines and color use, that was influenced by the ideas foreign corporations had about what African should look like.

Inspired by the media they grew up with, the tech entrepreneurs created the narrative structure and looks of 'fantasy' through the combination of 'authentic' 'African' elements and influences from global media culture, like DC and Marvel comics. On the one hand, the creation of 'fantasy' was a way to appropriate and negotiate with other media present in Ghana. While Sankofaism had positioned African heritage firmly in the present by connecting it to the construction of a 'modern' nation and Pan-African identity, Kekeli Creations, just like TV Africa and the epic video films, created a Pan-African style connected to fashion and entertainment. In this way these media not only tried to circumvent Pentecostal critique about the potential 'evil spirits' in African heritage

objects, but also were both a crystallization of, and attempts to address a growing group of young middle-class urbanites in Africa and the diaspora with global consumer lifestyles and an increasing interest in 'African' products.

On the other hand, the creation of 'fantasy' was a way to distinguish the African Heroes from other media in Ghana. By combining 'African' elements with influences from global media culture, the tech entrepreneurs developed what they called a 'new African' style, recognizable because of its 'bright colors' and 'sharp lines'. To them, this style was important because it allowed them to create products they perceived to be of better 'quality' than Ghanaian and Nigerian movies and TV Africa, and that would allow their products to become globally competitive. Moreover, they emphasized that while previously foreign corporations had influenced what was considered 'African', this new style was developed by them 'from Africa, for the world'. The tech entrepreneurs thus used what they perceived to be global media standards and global media influences, and combined these with 'African' elements to create a 'new African' style they felt asserted their (global) agency.

[two paragraphs deleted]

Selorm was considered one of the successful tech entrepreneurs in the tech space in Accra, due to his clever use of the style of tech entrepreneurship [sentence rewritten]. This style was based on collective aspirations for tech entrepreneurs: they should overcome 'struggle' through 'passion', focus on a clear business model, and should achieve 'global success' and 'financial success'. Through these types of success tech entrepreneurs could become 'inspirational successes': they could inspire others in Africa to become tech entrepreneurs and contribute to 'local' community formation. This style was introduced by the Luvion Foundation in 2008 based on visions on tech entrepreneurship present in Silicon Valley. Also, this Foundation decided to provide tech entrepreneurs in Ghana with resources and networks framed according to this style: skills presented to be of 'global quality', access to capital and 'global networks'. They started to organize events at which 'globally successful' tech entrepreneurs and investors articulated the style of entrepreneurship.

Tech entrepreneurs appropriated the style of tech entrepreneurship and started to use the resources, networks and skills provided by the Luvion Foundation, because they fitted well within class and generation specific developments in Ghana. The experienced tech entrepreneurs had grown up in higher middle-class environments, in which education, the power to enact aspirations, ambition, transnational networks and coding skills were supported and valued. Since this group was one of the first to get access to internet, they were already familiar with global role models of tech entrepreneurship. Moreover, the style of tech entrepreneurship could be interpreted as a reformulation of older ideas about success in Ghana. Just like these older ideas, this style articulated that success was the result of hard work, struggle, skillfulness and endurance. Since 'inspirational success' revolved around contributing to community formation by inspiring others with one's success,

it could be interpreted as a reformulation of the local narrative of ‘accomplishment’, which articulated that the redistribution of wealth and resources amongst a network of acquaintances was a way to gain prestige. Also, this type of success fitted well within the idea promoted by the Ghanaian state that technology should be used for the community’s benefit and to solve local problems.

Due to the appropriation of this style, networks, skills and resources amongst Ghanaians, this style was articulated and (re)presented at the many events organized in the tech space by transnational NGOs and corporations. Based on this style, Selorm presented himself at these events as ‘passionate’ and the African Heroes app as a ‘local African’ app addressing ‘local African’ and ‘global’ audiences. He also presented Africa as a market to be made profit of with his app, since Africans had an increasing access to smartphones and internet, even while the app was limited in its circulation amongst Ghanaians. By positioning himself and his app in this way Selorm gained access to networks, resources and recognition presented at these events to be ‘global’. Moreover, by being successful at these events, he acquired access to more prestigious events and thus more success. Through this success, Selorm came to (re)present ‘global success’ and ‘inspirational success’ at events for aspiring tech entrepreneurs in Accra. By carefully making use of the structure of events and the style of tech entrepreneurship, Selorm thus managed to build a ‘local’ and ‘global’ network, redistribute his experience, knowledge and success amongst (aspiring) tech entrepreneurs in Accra, and gain prestige. Since events, resources, networks, actors and objects (re)presented the style of tech entrepreneurship, this style contributed to community formation, social mobility and the circulation of apps and actors within this space.

Furthermore, events were important for tech entrepreneurs like Selorm because they provided an alternative means for ‘financial success’, in the form of prize money and access to (potential) new assignments from transnational corporations and NGOs. Companies like Kekeli Creations attended these events to acquire the resources necessary to develop more games in a ‘new African’ style [paragraph rewritten, 5 sentences deleted].

By approaching the tech space from an historical perspective as an aesthetic formation that is formed and produced by different actors and objects constantly (re)presenting the global, local and Africanness, this research has shown that tech entrepreneurs are part of a broader group of young middle-class Africans actively engaging in a cosmopolitan lifestyle. For experienced tech entrepreneurs, this lifestyle was on the one hand made possible because of the resources and networks available to them because of their higher middle-class backgrounds. On the other hand, the tech space provided resources, networks, skills and aspirations styled according to the style of tech entrepreneurship, making a cosmopolitan outlook both possible and desirable for experienced and aspiring tech entrepreneurs. Since the style of tech entrepreneurship connected ‘global success’ via ‘inspirational success’ to ‘local’ success, it can be interpreted as a cosmopolitan style that is a variant

on the style of mobility. This research thus confirmed that cosmopolitanism is both styled, and made possible through access to resources and networks.

Moreover, this actor oriented approach has provided a way to put perceptions about the African middle-classes and Africa in the global media and amongst transnational NGOs into a different perspective. Media like the *The Economist* have described the middle classes in Africa as 'new' and 'rising'. NGOs like the Luvion Foundation presented themselves to be experts on the development of 'talent', and thus in similar fashion framed the Ghanaian tech entrepreneurs in a way that did not take their own agency and background into consideration. This research has made clear that tech entrepreneurship was a specific aspirational category to acquire social mobility and middle-classness, that was both made possible by the middle-class background of the tech entrepreneurs, and the skills, networks and resources provided by transnational NGOs and corporations in the tech space.

[paragraph deleted]

[sentence deleted] It is important to do further research about communities like the tech space in Accra, because the Luvion Accelerator is just one of the many Accelerators and Hubs in Africa, just like Kekeli Creations is one of the many tech companies [sentence rewritten]. Moreover, the events in the tech space do not only take place in Ghana, but are connected to a whole network of similar events all over the world. Increasingly, Accelerators and Hubs are also established on other continents, like Europe and Asia, and promoted using the similar style of tech entrepreneurship. Research about tech entrepreneurs in Ghana and other African countries, might thus help us gain insight into these broader transnational developments. Most of all, this research has aimed to show that both inside and outside of academia, an awareness of class and the styling and construction of Africanness is important to get insight into the role of technology in economic developments and community formation in Africa.

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