

Social Enterprises in Tanzania

How and under what conditions do social enterprises in the solar sector empower/disempower their female sales agents?

A comparative case study of Mobisol and Little Sun



Little Sun sales agents in Dar es Salaam (31st of March 2016)

Master's thesis in Business and Development Studies

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Abbreviations

BoP	Bottom of the Pyramid
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOE	State-owned enterprise
SOE	Bottom of the Pyramid
TZS	Tanzanian Schilling
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USD	US Dollar

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the empowering and disempowering impacts of the social enterprises Little Sun and Mobisol on their female sales agents. Moreover, the paper seeks to find out explanatory mechanisms that may explain the impact of the enterprises. To identify the impact and possible explanatory mechanisms, the paper combines and discusses the literature themes of business for development, the context of the bottom of the pyramid (BoP), and the concept of women's empowerment. Regarding the first theme concerning business for development, the thesis examines how the business models of the two social enterprises may influence their impact, by assessing their relation to the social enterprise definition as well as Blowfield's and Dolan's (2014) development agent concept. Regarding the second literature theme concerning the context of the BoP, the paper studies the context of the two social enterprises that are active in the solar light industry in Tanzania, to find out how the context of the BoP influences the interaction and its outcomes of the social enterprises and the female sales agents. Regarding the third literature theme, we use a modified version of Malhotra's and Schuler's (2005) framework to analyse the empowering and disempowering impacts on the female sales agents. We study this impact on the economic, psychological, social and cultural dimensions of the women's lives and at both a household and community level.

The paper is inspired by critical realism and aims to find explanatory mechanisms that may explain the enterprises' impact on their female sales agents. The data is analysed through an intensive comparative case study of the two social enterprises Little Sun and Mobisol. Interviews were conducted with 18 female sales agents from both companies, through a mixed approach of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews were also conducted with management representatives of both Mobisol and Little Sun. The interviews were held during a month-long field trip in Tanzania and conducted in Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Moshi, and surrounding villages. An analytical framework structures the data analysis with regards to the three literature themes discussed. The paper concludes that the business models of the social enterprises have an important and observable impact on the empowerment and disempowerment of the female sales agents. Mostly empowering impacts were found for the female sales agents of both Little Sun and Mobisol, although disempowering effects were identified as well. The paper establishes many similarities related to the impact of the female sales agents, with a few differences regarding the extent of the enterprises' willingness and ability to invest in addressing developmental issues of the women. The differences can partly be explained by the business models of the enterprises, in particular with regards to the vision, segment targeting and use of profits, and partly due to the context of the BoP. The paper acknowledges that there are many mechanisms occurring simultaneously in the same

context that have not been investigated in this study. Thus, more research is needed to find other underlying mechanisms generating the empowerment and disempowerment of female sales agents. However, the paper outlines some of the possible explanatory mechanisms that may explain the interaction and outcomes in this particular context of the two cases of the study.

1. Introduction

Eradicating poverty remains one of the greatest challenges of our time, which requires sustainable solutions. In September 2015, the 2030-Agenda for Sustainable Development was published, which includes 17 development goals, among these goal number five “*achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls*”. In large parts of the world, women and girls still face discrimination and violence in their everyday lives as well as barriers to enter even basic education. Gender equality is necessary to maintain peace and is a basic condition for a sustainable world. Thus, efforts to provide all humans equally with access to education, healthcare, employment, and possible involvement in political and economic decision-making processes, are indispensable (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2016).

To achieve gender equality as well as the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the support of multiple stakeholders is required, including public and private organizations (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2016). The private sector, as a driver of innovation and employment generator has a particular potential to contribute to development in terms of enhancing economic growth and poverty reduction (World Bank, 2016). Furthermore, a functioning private sector leads to the provision of better goods and services at competitive prices. Especially in low income countries, notably Africa, the development of the private sector has moved more and more into the focus of national development strategies of governments and regional and international development banks (OECD, 2007). Considering this, theoretically there is no doubt about the contribution that the private sector can make to economic development. Nevertheless, in practice, there are significant differences in the developmental outcomes which private companies can directly impact or even generate. As Blowfield and Dolan (2014) argue, the possible impact a business can have on development depends on whether the company functions simply as a development tool, providing employment and products; or if the business acts as a development agent, which strives to deliver and can be held accountable for developmental outcomes.

Relating the themes of gender equality with the private sector as a driver for development, our research is situated at their intersection as we seek to find out how private companies can contribute to gender equality and empower women.

1.1. Research question

Our thesis is situated at the intersection of business and development studies, aiming to understand what contributions businesses can make in terms of developmental outcomes in developing countries. The local context of our study is Tanzania. The East African country has implemented important economic and structural reforms and maintained a stable economic growth rate over the last years. Furthermore, Tanzania is among the politically most stable countries in the region. However, around 28 per cent of the Tanzanian population is still living below the poverty line. This persisting poverty can partly be attributed to a poor business environment, including the insufficiently developed infrastructure in the country (World Bank, 2016). To give an example, only 21 per cent of the Tanzanian population have access to electricity and in rural areas as much as 93 per cent live in off-grid communities (Tanzania Investment Centre, 2014-15). Due to the inability of the Tanzanian government to connect the majority of its population to the national electricity grid, private solar companies have emerged in recent years with the aim to provide clean energy, in terms of solar cells or solar powered items, to off-grid areas. A notable characteristic of these businesses is their marketing and distribution strategy which is also conditioned by the unfavourable business environment. In order to sell and advertise their products, these solar companies engage sales agents as freelancers who market and distribute the goods within their own and neighbouring communities. It can further be noted that they often hire women in these positions.

Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment in Tanzania, clearly defined traditional gender roles exist. While women are responsible to take care of the children and elderly family members, as well as carrying out household tasks such as cooking and cleaning, it is the men's duty to earn an income (Osorio et. al, 2014; Ceesay, 2013). Moreover, despite the efforts of the Tanzanian government to implement compulsory primary education for all children, there are still discrepancies in literacy rates between males and females (Osorio et. al, 2014). There are more areas of life in which the persistent gender inequality in Tanzania becomes apparent, which is further outlined in chapter five of this thesis.

Interrelating the newly emerging solar companies with the issue of underprivileged women in Tanzania, it is striking that these companies create a role of a working woman unlike her traditional function as a housewife. Since the employment opportunity as a business woman within a private company is relatively new and rare in the Tanzanian context, we think it is of great interest to further investigate the impact this employment possibly has on the female sales agents' empowerment or even disempowerment. We are not only interested in observing empowering and

disempowering effects, but also in going one step further, seeking to detect the reasons for this empowerment or disempowerment to happen. Here we focus on the social enterprises Mobisol and Little Sun and aim at finding out what internal structures and features of the businesses that condition the empowerment and/or disempowerment of their female sales agents. This leads us to our research question:

How and under what conditions do the social enterprises Mobisol and Little Sun empower/disempower their female sales agents?

1.2. Scope

Our research focuses on the two social enterprises Little Sun and Mobisol and their female sales agents in Tanzania. In the month of March 2016, we conducted a field trip to Tanzania where we interviewed in total 18 female sales agents of Little Sun and Mobisol as well as four managers of different solar companies (we then decided to only focus on two of them, namely Little Sun and Mobisol). Geographically, we concentrated our investigation on the cities of Dar es Salaam, Arusha and Moshi and their surrounding areas. Our analysis, findings and answers to our research question will mainly be based on the data we collected during the fieldtrip.

We will answer our research question in two parts. The first part focuses on the question of *how* the female sales agents are empowered/disempowered by their employing companies. Here we aim at empirically identifying empowering and disempowering impacts on the female sales agents as well as the components of Little Sun and Mobisol which directly enabled this effect to occur. The second part concentrates on underlying *conditions*, which generate the potential empowering and disempowering effects of the different business components on the female sales agents. In order to facilitate the identification of enabling mechanisms, we conduct our research as a comparative case study of Little Sun and Mobisol.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. The following chapter is dedicated to review different literature streams which are related to the thematic field of our study. We begin with an overview of the topic of *business for development*, followed by *the context at the bottom of the pyramid (BoP)*, and *women's empowerment*. In the end of the second chapter, we present our analytical framework

which is based on the preceding literature review and clearly indicates the two parts in which we decided to answer our research question as described above.

Chapter number three concentrates on the methodology underlying our research. As a first step, we introduce the philosophy of science of critical realism, which we were inspired by when conducting our research and interpreting the results. Furthermore, our research methods and design as well as data collection techniques and their limitations are explained in detail. The methodological chapter is followed by a background (chapter five) of the current business climate and gender inequalities in Tanzania. Chapter five comprises of the analysis which is guided by the analytical framework and thus divided accordingly into two parts. First, we analyse our data with regards to how and through which components of the enterprises the Little Sun and Mobisol sales agents are empowered and disempowered. Second, we investigate possible mechanisms of the enterprises which potentially generated the observations made in the first part.

In chapter six, we discuss our findings in relation to the suitability of the underlying analytical framework, literature and methodology. Finally, we terminate our study with some concluding thoughts in chapter seven.

2. Literature review

Our study is situated in the intersection of business and development studies. In order to develop an analytical framework to conceptualize our research question, we review literature with regards to three big themes related to our research question; business for development, the context at the BoP, and women's empowerment. The first theme, business for development, is of great relevance to our research in order to understand how the enterprises can impact empowerment/disempowerment of their female sales agents. The second theme gives insights to the context of the interaction of women and social enterprises at the BoP. We need to understand the context of the empowerment and/or disempowerment taking place, in order to answer our research question. The third and last theme relates to concepts and definitions of empowerment, to learn how to assess the effects on women's empowerment or disempowerment. All three themes are essential in order to understand the important concepts related to our research question. We draw on literature from all three themes in developing our analytical framework, which will help us analyse our data and answer our research question.

2.1. Business for Development

2.1.1. Business as a development tool or a development agent

The private sector can serve as a development tool through creation of jobs and by offering a range of products and services to the market (Blowfield, 2012). To achieve international development goals such as the United Nations' SDGs by 2030, it is crucial that businesses are involved. One example of the recognized importance of the private sector to reach international development goals is the initiative "Growing inclusive markets, an alliance between business and development" established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2006, showcasing UNDP's approach to use inclusive business in their development agenda to achieve the SDGs (Castresana, 2013).

However, being a development tool through the provision of employment and products to the market is not by itself a development-oriented activity, but a role a business could play anywhere in the world. A business can according to Blowfield and Dolan (2014) be considered a development agent only when it strives to deliver and is accountable for developmental outcomes, such as poverty alleviation, human rights, democracy and human development. More specifically, the authors employ three criteria to distinguish a development agent. First, the business must use its own capital for activities with an expected, calculated development benefit. Second, the business gives primacy to the poor and marginalised in its investments. Third, the business consciously and accountably strives to address poverty and marginalisation, going beyond providing opportunities that would seem to benefit the poor, to really ensure that the poor benefit from these opportunities. The business is accountable for its developmental outcomes just as it is for other core aspects of its business, such as financial performance (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014, p.26).

Blowfield's and Dolan's concept of a development agent may seem to be the ideal business-for-development actor. However, the authors admit that it has weaknesses, stating that the accountability practised is much weaker than in other aspects of business where business has to be accountable to others. This is perceived to be a result of difficulties of assigning causation between the investments of the businesses and development outcomes among the poor, as well as due to a reluctance of businesses to make claims that could be challenged in court (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). Furthermore, the authors refer to empirical evidence indicating that the impact of business investments for development outcomes is assessed in terms of the instrumental value that is comprehensible to business rather than to the poor and marginalised.

We understand from Blowfield and Dolan (2014) that a business can be anything from a development tool to a development agent. A development tool is a normal commercial business with profit-seeking motives, which unintentionally contributes to development through job creation and providing goods and services to the market. A development agent is a profit-making business on the other side of the spectrum, intentionally targeting the poor and being held accountable for its investments aimed at addressing the issues of the poor and marginalised. We believe that every business will choose its own combination of profit- and development goals, and through this choice position itself on the development tool-development agent spectrum. This would mean that there exists an endless number of combinations resulting in equally many business models with varying developmental goals. One of the most discussed business model in recent decades, that seeks to combine profitability with a social purpose, is the one of the social enterprise (Castresana, 2013). As Blowfield's and Dolan's (2014) definition of a development agent may seem utopian in its search for the ideal business-for-development actor, we need to complement this concept with a literature review on social enterprises to understand a current concept of how business for developmental outcomes is being practised. In the next section, we present a discussion on different definitions of a social enterprise and how it can create social impact.

2.1.2. Social enterprises

2.1.2.1 History and Definition

The social enterprise development is a recent phenomenon that has grown rapidly in the twenty-first century. The academic interest in the social enterprise field dates back barely a decade, and has been described by Nicholls (2010) as “pre-paradigmatic” (Castresana, 2013). The term “social enterprise” was first mentioned in the 1970s, but rose to prominence in the late 1990s (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011). Bornstein (2004) believes the reason for the rapid development and interest in social enterprise activity is motivated by the increased awareness spread through media of the world's severe poverty issues and social ills. Bornstein further notes that improved living conditions for many of the world's citizens leads to an increasing number of people having the freedom, time and wealth to help address these issues (Bornstein 2004, Nielsen and Samia, 2008).

The political context may also have increased the number of social enterprises. In the US, neo-liberal policies resulting in cutbacks in government funding meant that non-profits had to find new sustainable business models that would preserve their mission and values (Borzaga and Galera, 2009). This is also the case in other parts of the world where the rise and fall of welfare states has affected how businesses engage socially (Brown et. al, 2010, Sakarya et. al, 2012). Bureaucracy and

lack of innovation has also motivated non-profit organisations to adopt a new business model with commercial and entrepreneurial strategies (Borzaga and Galera, 2009, Henry, 2015).

International literature referring to social enterprises offers a number of possible definitions and lacks a consistent usage of the term “social enterprise” (Haugh, 2012). We discuss different perspectives here in order to give an idea of the components scholars choose to include in their definitions of a social enterprise, before stating the definition we will use in our paper. Pearce (2003) defines the social enterprise as a firm that aims to achieve social purpose through income-generating activities (Henry, 2015). Many authors, like Pearce, use income generation and mission as the key determinants for categorising organizations as social enterprises. However, they differ in their opinions of the enterprise’s financial structure, its governance and organisation, as well as its sectorial belonging (Henry, 2015).

Regarding the sectorial belonging, Henry (2015) and Sandu and Haines (2014) discuss the changing and blurring relationships between public, private and non-profit sectors in international development due to the emergence of social enterprises. Sandu and Haines (2014) are of the belief that the social enterprise is a new actor within the public sector. Other scholars echo the same idea, adding that social enterprises attempt to reform the public sector through their private sector management rhetoric, effectiveness and profitability (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011, Galvin and Iannotti, 2015). Ridley-Duff (2008) discusses that social enterprises may be socially driven without labelling itself as a non-profit, by using the business concept focused on “more-than-profit”. While Young (2008) perceives the social enterprise as a separate entity that is distinct from both classical business and traditional non-profit activity, Giddens (1998) suggests that social enterprises are ‘hybrid organizations’, combining the private sector’s capacity for wealth creation with community participation (Social Enterprise UK 2011, in Henry, 2015). Galvin and Iannotti (2015) stress that this type of hybrid enterprise may have an advantage over other organisational forms in the field of development, as they are able to be flexible and discover solutions within local contexts which contribute to development, and can also adapt to and in some cases change institutionalized behaviour. In our research, we choose to place the social enterprise within the private sector rather than the public sector, due to its profit-making business model. However, we agree with a position taken by the Social Enterprise Coalition, which states that the legal status of the social enterprise is less important for its definition than its social aims and outcomes, the basis on which its social mission is embedded in its structure and governance; and the way it uses the profits it generates (Ridley-Duff, 2008, p. 71).

In terms of financial structure, scholars differ in their views on how a social enterprise distributes and re-invests its profits. Some scholars are flexible, e.g. Everett (2009) noted that a social enterprise is a financially sustainable organization that distributes either its financial surplus or goods and services in order to benefit a community or interest, thus providing flexibility for the enterprise in terms of reinvesting its profits. Other scholars disagree, and argue that the social enterprise's profits must be reinvested for a social purpose (definition from the Department of Trade and Industry, cited in Ridley-Duff, 2008), instead of being distributed to individuals or to those who are exercising control over them. Ridley-Duff (2008) means that it is reasonable to expect a socially rational business to develop processes that build and distribute social and economic capital, and that it may plan its operations so that its surpluses are reinvested on a continual basis.

The notion that a social enterprise can make profit and have social objectives without contradicting one another, constituting a so-called "double bottom line", is discussed by Riddle-Duff (2008) and Nelarine et. al (2008). However, it may be problematic to determine if a self-proclaimed social enterprise stating to have social objectives really is more concerned about its financial profit (Galvin and Iannotti, 2015). In our view, profits for a social enterprise are desired either for self-sufficiency (Nicholls, 2006), or for addressing needs of socially excluded groups, such as women (Ridley-Duff, 2008).

The governance of social enterprises has been linked to cooperative ownership, especially regarding European social enterprises (Borzaga and Galera, 2009). Borzaga and Galera (2009) write that a social enterprise is created when a group sharing a certain social goal succeeds in translating it into an institutional arrangement, thus taking the point of departure in the will to create social change, and then establishing an entity that can serve this purpose. In our view, the social enterprise does not necessarily need to be based on a cooperative governance structure or be created in a certain succession. Again, our focus is rather on the social objectives and activities of the social enterprise in accordance with Blowfield's and Dolan's (2014) understanding of a business contributing to developmental outcomes.

In sum, we view the social enterprise as a business with an explicitly stated social purpose, which is embedded in its business functions and activities to contribute to developmental outcomes, while simultaneously making profit to ensure its survival. Going forward, we define a social enterprise in accordance with the definition offered by the Social Enterprise Coalition:

“A social enterprise is not defined by its legal status but by its nature: its social aims and outcomes; the basis on which its social mission is embedded in its structure and governance; and the way it uses the profits it generates through trading activities” (in Ridley-Duff, 2008, p. 71).

We are aware that this definition is vague on the condition regarding the social enterprise’s use of profits, which is why we want to emphasize that we regard the profits for a social enterprise to be used for self-sufficiency (Nicholls, 2006), or for addressing needs of socially excluded groups, such as women (Ridley-Duff, 2008). Thus, an enterprise that generates more than enough profit for its survival must invest in initiatives that address development issues to call itself a social enterprise.

We have provided a history of the social enterprise concept, and discussed different contemporary views of what a social enterprise is, as well as offered the definition we use in our paper. However, we have so far only touched upon the accountability of the social enterprise in relation to its social objectives and activities. We therefore discuss this in more detail below, whilst also comparing it to Blowfield’s and Dolan’s (2014) idea of the accountable development agent.

2.1.2.2. Social impact and accountability

The social enterprise can be seen as an entrepreneurial approach that prioritises responsibility to society (Ridley-Duff and Southcombe, 2012). These responsibilities may result in many forms of social good brought to communities, ranging from social and environmental improvements to benefits that transform labour relations and distributes wealth. The social enterprise could thus measure success by its capacity to affect social change, rather than only monetary profit, according to Galvin and Iannotti (2015). However, measuring social impacts can prove difficult. Social enterprises are often looking to contribute to long-term social outcomes without any immediate and observable benefits to show for it, which may end up undermining the legitimacy of the organization (Castresana, 2013). It is thus important to be certain of how to measure social impacts, in order to show concrete evidence of social outcomes and retain the legitimacy of the social enterprise (Mook et. al, 2015). As stressed by Blowfield and Dolan (2014), few businesses are accountable for their social aims due to difficulties in assigning causation and a reluctance to make claims that could be challenged in court. One way to assess the enterprise’s claim to contribute to social development is to examine how the enterprise defines development problems, development beneficiaries, and its own role in advancing solutions to improve these problems for the beneficiaries (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). Although, assessing the enterprise’s vision and intentions, is not the same as investigating the enterprise’s ability to be held accountable for social impact.

Our definition of a social enterprise does not hold the entity accountable for its social objectives. A social enterprise living up to this definition while failing to be accountable for social impact will not be classified as a development agent (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). Instead it will position itself somewhere in between being a development tool and a development agent depending on its success in fulfilling the other two criteria. We come back to this later in our analytical framework and analysis where we discuss the social enterprises' business models and how they can explain the impact on the female sales agents' empowerment. For now, we note the conditions we have chosen to define a social enterprise by, and the three criteria required to be a development agent.

We next discuss the characteristics of the BoP markets, which is where our research is carried out. Our aim with the next section is to understand how the context of the BoP market can explain the interaction between the social enterprises and the female sales agents. It is necessary to debate the conditions at BoP markets in order to answer our research question, examining if we can explain the impact of social enterprises on their female sales agents' empowerment/disempowerment by contextual enablers or hindrances that characterise the BoP market. The next section gives insights to scholars' ideas of contextual enablers or hindrances at the BoP market for this impact to take place.

2.2. The Context of the Bottom of the Pyramid

This section will provide important insights of *how* social enterprises can impact the power of its female sales agents. The *how* depends on various issues, such as how the social enterprises engage with the BoP market, how women interact with the BoP market, and how the enterprises and the women interact with each other. Their interaction depends on contextual conditions. The following sections provide a discussion of scholars' examples of conditions enabling or hindering this interaction and its impact. The section is divided into two parts. First, we discuss the conditions for social enterprises interacting with actors at the BoP, and secondly, the conditions for women engaging with businesses at the BoP.

2.2.1. Social enterprises at the BoP

The social enterprise is an international phenomenon that can be established in any society. Since our study examines social enterprises in a developing country, where the needs for social development are great and social enterprises have an important contribution to make, it is relevant to review existing literature on how social enterprises interact with actors and conditions at BoP

markets. As per above, social enterprises may be governed and organised in a number of ways and can thus use a variety of strategies to reach their goals in developing countries. However, we find it useful to discuss literature on how to do business in developing countries since social enterprises face similar challenges and opportunities as other enterprises in this context, which needs to be considered to establish and/or adapt the social enterprise's strategy. We begin our discussion by relating the social enterprise's business model to the well-known BoP-approach of doing business in developing countries. Thereafter, we debate scholar's suggestions for businesses to adapt its various business processes with respect to the conditions at the BoP. Lastly, we touch upon how the social enterprise's recruitment of employees at the BoP is being debated in the literature.

2.2.1.1. Social enterprises and the BoP-approach

There are more obstacles to success in developing countries, as social enterprises have to reach a market with more people with less money than in developed countries (Bornstein, 2004, Nielsen and Samia, 2008). Nevertheless, Prahalad and Hammond (2002) have laid out the business case (the BoP-approach) for entering the world's poorest markets, by arguing the opportunity and possibility of making profit whilst serving the poor at the BoP with well-needed products and/or by offering employment.

A social enterprise operating in the BoP segment differ from the BoP-approach through its explicit social purpose as an addition to simple profit-making (Ridley-Duff, 2008), which the first BoP-approach (BoP 1.0) has been criticized for encouraging (Karnani, 2007). BoP 1.0 has also been criticized for the simplistic description of poverty and the notion that access to consumption would automatically attain structural changes and transformations to end poverty (Castresana, 2013). This is in line with Blowfield's text (2012), since BoP 1.0 describes a business similar to Blowfield's development tool definition, offering products and services to the market but failing to understand that the developing country context calls on businesses to become development agents by understanding and contributing to structural changes and transformations.

The second version of the BoP-approach (BoP 2.0) is more similar to the business model of social enterprises in emphasizing the need to embed social aims in structures and in the governance of the business (Ridley-Duff, 2008). BoP 2.0 has a stronger focus on inclusive business and a "bottom-up" logic emphasizing co-creation and co-invention alliances with poor people. Prahalad (2005) highlights the need to consider and work with the poor as producers in addition to consumers for community-based development. However, the second version of the approach has been criticized for ignoring the presence of deep differences of power, gender, ethnic or caste interests, when

discussing concepts of e.g. “community”, “capacity of agency” or “participation in decision-making” (Castresana, 2013). This stands in contrast to the social enterprise’s business model that is driven by social objectives, aiming to raise awareness rather than ignoring such issues. How the business discusses and defines these issues are as mentioned by Blowfield and Dolan (2014) a way of understanding the businesses’ will to contribute to social development. Thus, the social enterprise’s business model shares both similarities and differences with the BoP-approach.

2.2.1.2. Social enterprises’ adaptation of business processes at the BoP

Some of the social enterprises’ business processes may need to be adapted to better fit the conditions provided by the BoP-context. Chikweche and Fletcher (2012) discuss the obstacles of doing business at the BoP in Africa, due to the inflation, corruption, political conflicts, and the large informal economy in African countries. In addition, developing countries often have a younger age demographic, and gender discrimination persists. Chikweche and Fletcher (2012) stress that it is essential for the companies targeting the BoP to have knowledge of the markets in order to adapt their strategies.

When social enterprises establish or adapt their marketing strategies to the BoP, it is important to recognize the heterogeneous nature of the market, with its many subgroups and their unique needs (Chikweche and Fletcher, 2012). Chikweche and Fletcher (2013) argue that managers should develop a marketing strategy that is tailor-made and relevant to BoP consumer needs. Nielsen and Samia (2008) and Rajagopal (2009) have found word-of-mouth promotion to be a fruitful marketing strategy in the BoP, where brands often are socially and culturally embedded. They argue that existing social networks can be used to spread the word and market the business’ product (Nielsen and Samia, 2008). Social networks are also suggested to be used in order to reach BoP consumers that are either illiterate or with no or limited access to conventional media channels (Chikweche and Fletcher, 2012). Chikweche and Fletcher (2012) describe cases where product demonstrations have been conducted in “women’s clubs” and some companies have arranged road shows where actors visit villages to perform plays that promote products.

In addition to establishing a marketing strategy to fit the BoP-market context, social enterprises also need appropriate distribution strategies to effectively achieve their social objectives. With poor infrastructure being a dominant feature in most BoP markets, companies must come up with innovative distribution solutions and use formal and informal channels, such as social networks, to reach consumers. Since consumers rely on the information and products provided within the social

networks, Chikweche and Fletcher (2012) believe that enterprises that collaborate effectively with insiders of the networks may obtain useful knowledge of consumer needs.

Social networks are further needed for the social enterprise in terms of finding suitable partner organisations that can help implementing its social aims and business. The BoP-market with its often underdeveloped institutions strengthens the need to cooperate with local businesses, government agencies, NGOs and cooperatives to increase the likelihood that win-win solutions will be developed for BOP consumers, as well as ensuring long-term business relationships and success in the BOP marketplace (Nielsen and Samia, 2008).

2.2.1.3. Social enterprises and the recruitment of employees at the BoP

BoP-markets are characterised by their lack of skilled workers (Prahalad, 2005), making it difficult for enterprises to recruit employees that already possess the right skill-set. Businesses tend to target the “viable poor”; people that are capable of being integrated into the market and consumer society. If you belong to this segment, the enterprises often offer training in sales, recruitment and financial discipline (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). However, this leads to exclusion of the poorest of the poor, who lack the ability to invest in resources necessary to participate in the market. The “viable poor” are hence offered the opportunity to work whilst the poorest segment, which includes certain groups of women, is excluded from the business’ investments at the BoP (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). The entry requirements for job opportunities provided by the social enterprise at the BoP thus determines the inclusion and exclusion of certain segments.

From this section we have learned that the social enterprise (according to our definition) shares similarities and differences with the BoP-approach. Furthermore, we learned how the conditions at the BoP with underdeveloped institutions affect the social enterprise’s interaction with actors, and the need for social networks for implementing its distribution- and marketing strategies. Lastly, we understand the difficulties for the social enterprises of employing the poor and marginalised while making sure they are capable of being integrated into the market. The different conditions discussed affect the interaction of social enterprises with various actors. We will come back to this in our analytical framework and analysis when we seek to answer how the interaction impacts the female sales agents’ empowerment. It is now time to understand the conditions women face when interacting with businesses at the BoP.

2.2.2. Women's interaction with businesses at the BoP

Many scholars emphasize the necessity and benefit of involving women when doing business at the BoP. Studies show that women improve national welfare through their fair distribution of resources within households and communities (Dolan, 2012, Prahalad and Hammond, 2002). Women's embeddedness in local communities and networks has shown deep positive effects on their immediate surroundings (Minniti, 2010). We aim to understand how and through what type of roles women engage with businesses at the BoP, in order to learn about the conditions for the women to be empowered or disempowered by this interaction.

While women could engage with businesses in the BoP as producers or consumers (Prahalad, 2005), they could also have the role as a social enterprise employee. Our research question focuses on female sales agents in social enterprises at the BoP. However, this definition is less prevalent in academic research, compared to the concept of the female entrepreneur at the BoP. Dolan (2012) defines a female entrepreneur at the BoP as "the 'poor' woman who travels door-to-door delivering a range of branded manufactured goods across the 'retail black spots' of developing countries". In our view, this may also be the role of a female sales agent at the BoP, marketing and distributing products for an enterprise. The reason we avoid using the term "female entrepreneur" in our study is to also include the women working for only one enterprise and selling only their products. The concept of the female entrepreneur indicates that the woman sells products of multiple enterprises. In order to study women working for social enterprises as their only or as one of several employments, we chose to use the term "female sales agent" in our paper. With most of the research on women's role in business at the BoP referring to the "female entrepreneur", we discuss the concept in more detail below.

Female entrepreneurs at the BoP

The motives of women to become female entrepreneurs can be many. Achieving economic freedom and independence, providing for their families, lack of other employment opportunities, or the desire to achieve a work-life balance, are some of the reasons for the emergence of female entrepreneurs (Hattab, 2012). Besides personal traits and individual motives, the socio-economic context also presents motivations for female entrepreneurs (Langevang et. al, 2015). The Schumpeterian view distinguishes between the opportunity-based entrepreneur with pull motives, (e.g. desire for independence, income, challenge, status and recognition), and the necessity-based entrepreneur being pushed into entrepreneurship because of a lack of alternatives. Necessity-based

entrepreneurship is believed to be common in developing countries while opportunity-based entrepreneurship is more prevalent in developed countries (Hattab, 2012).

Kobeissi (2010) argues that female entrepreneurs are hampered by gender-specific legal, cultural and institutional constraints resulting in women largely being underrepresented in entrepreneurial activities, and that the barriers to gender entrepreneurship may have an adverse impact on a country's competitiveness and growth potential. The constraints may relate to property rights, family laws, inheritance practices, and restricted access to capital (Acs et. al, 2011). The tendency of women to spend more time than men in child-rearing and other household responsibilities is another important factor explaining women's limited entrepreneurial role (Acs et. al, 2011). Social norms including taboos against women owning land or capital may also hamper the opportunities for women, just like indirect social norms such as the limited opportunity for girls and women to receive education and healthcare (Terrell and Troilo, 2010).

As an example of a study focused on female entrepreneurs in developing countries, Dolan (2012) writes about the female entrepreneurs at the BoP in Bangladesh, selling goods "door-to-door" to customers in rural areas. Dolan (2012) describes the BoP entrepreneur as a poor woman who is empowered through entrepreneurial opportunities by earning an income and gaining self-esteem. She further notes that her study showed the need for the woman to have the motivation, physical stamina and mental preparation to visit 50-100 households per day. In addition, they needed to have social networks of sufficient scale to recruit clients and ensure sales (Dolan, 2012).

Prahalad and Hammond (2002) argue that female entrepreneurs' social networks contribute to the economic development of BoP regions, making women a key instrument of BoP strategies that need to be paid special attention from companies seeking to succeed in BoP markets (Dolan, 2012). Ryuichiro (2010) writes about the importance of community and social networks for female entrepreneurs to succeed. The networks provide the involved women with business- and market opportunity information, advice, and problem solving (Ryuichiro, 2010). Trust and reputation building in communities are other important aspects for female entrepreneurs stressed by Ryuichiro (2010), in order to rely on loyal customers, stable suppliers of raw materials, long-term employees, and capital suppliers. Advertising costs are reduced through informal communication within the network on consumer preferences. Ryuichiro (2010) describes these neighbourhood social networks as often characterized by close spatial proximity, member homogeneity and low network inclusiveness. Consequently, enterprises aiming to involve female entrepreneurs in their business, must understand the importance of social networks for their success.

Networking strategies might be particularly useful for female entrepreneurs in resource-constrained environments and in countries where women do usually not play a big role in economic activities (Maas et. al, 2014), e.g. in developing countries. Poon et. al (2012) argue that the family is essential for female entrepreneurs' success as children and male family members may contribute as labour, income and community networks. However, Poon et. al (2012) discuss a study of Tanzanian entrepreneurs that found that these networks require women to abide by family obligations, which led entrepreneurs to prioritize family needs over resource mobilization. Too exclusive and close networks may further decrease the quality of information and resources according to Poon et. al (2012).

Household status is relevant for the success of female entrepreneurs, as it determines the woman's level of authority to exercise autonomous decisions (Poon et. al, 2012). Age is believed to have the same effect, as older women have more experience, knowledge and skills, which influence their status and agency. Studies have shown that the women at an age between 37 and late 40s are most successful in entrepreneurial activities (Poon et. al, 2012).

This chapter has highlighted some of the characteristics of female entrepreneurs in BoP markets. These conditions also apply to female sales agents at the BoP as they face the same constraints and opportunities as the female entrepreneurs, with the difference being that the female sales agent can have one or many employees. The similarities between the female entrepreneur and the female sales agent made it necessary to review the debated concept of the female entrepreneur at the BoP. We have learned about the role of a female entrepreneur and her interaction with businesses at the BoP. We have developed an understanding of the conditions female entrepreneurs are facing at the BoP market, which involves many constraints and taboos, as well as opportunities in terms of utilizing social networks to sell and market products.

From this second theme of our literature review we have learned about the conditions facing social enterprises and female sales agents at the BoP. This understanding will help us answer our research question regarding the conditions that explain social enterprises' impact on the empowerment of female sales agents. The social enterprise may induce various empowering or disempowering effects on its female sales agents, which our data will tell us more about. Our data will also dictate which specific business components of the social enterprise have most effect on the female sales agents' empowerment. We let our data show the most influential business components of the social enterprises in this regard.

The next section is the third and last theme of our literature review which debates the concept of women's empowerment. So far, we have discussed how the business can contribute to development, such as empowerment, in a developing country context. We have also discussed the role women can take on in this context. However, we lack a review on the development outcome itself. The next section comprises a discussion on the definition and concept of women's empowerment.

2.3. Women's Empowerment

In academia, many different perspectives on women's empowerment can be found. There are wide discussions on theoretical, methodological and empirical approaches to women's empowerment across the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, economics and demography. In addition, women's empowerment is a major aspect in the field of international development and it is part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the SDGs, defined by the United Nations. The importance of discussing women's empowerment in relation to developmental outcomes has been underlined in academic research. Duflo (2011) has found a correlation between women's empowerment and the economic development of a country. The two variables are interrelated in both directions. On the one hand, economic development can play a major role in decreasing inequalities, and on the other hand, it is proven that women's empowerment, especially in the areas of health, education, earning opportunities, rights and political participation can accelerate economic development (Duflo, 2011). As outlined above, the private sector is more and more recognized as a main driver for development. Furthermore, it has been proven in former studies that women's access to paid work can increase their decision making power within the family and community and thus have a positive impact on women's empowerment (Akhter and Ward, 2009; Dolan et al., 2012; Scott et al., 2012; Hashemi et al., 1996).

As particularly the private sector is increasingly recognized as a major driver for economic development, the impact of private sector initiatives on women's empowerment has been investigated in business and development studies literature. As for example, there were investigations made on the topics of BoP businesses, microfinance as well as entrepreneurship where researchers made an attempt to measure the impact on women's empowerment (Dolan et al., 2012; Scott et al., 2012; Hashemi et al., 1996). The perception of women's empowerment differs among different academic studies. As Kabeer (2005) points out, women's empowerment can either be seen as an "end-view", where increasing empowerment forms the aim of a certain initiative. Otherwise, women's empowerment can be perceived as an instrument, seeking to enhance development on other dimensions, such as poverty reduction.

Measuring women's empowerment has been carried out in various kinds of organisations, such as micro credit programs, BOP businesses and entrepreneurship. For instance, Hashemi et al. (1996) investigated the effect of micro credit programs in Bangladesh on women's empowerment. Dolan et al. (2012) studied BOP businesses' impact and its sustainability in regard to women's empowerment as well as the extent to which this leads to an improvement in the women's lives. And Scott et al. (2012) explored whether entrepreneurship contributes to poverty alleviation and increases women's standard of living.

Due to its importance, many impact assessments investigate women's empowerment on the micro and/or meso, i.e. household and/or community level (Hashemi et al., 1996, Dolan et al., 2012; Scott et al., 2012) which incorporates relations that are central to women's empowerment (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). Seeking to find out the degree of women's empowerment, researchers use similar attributes measuring women's empowerment related to social interactions, resource management and the ability to make purchases (Hashemi et al, 1996; Dolan et al., 2012; Scott et al., 2012). Hashemi et al. (1996) pursue a mixed approach, including a quantitative analysis and furthermore include the macro level in terms of political and legal awareness and involvement in political campaigns and protests into consideration. In contrast, Dolan et al. (2012) and Scott et al. (2012) follow a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews, seeking to gain profound understanding of determinants and the process of women's empowerment. In addition, they include elements such as self-perception and self-confidence into their analysis. This is in line with Malhotra and Schuler (2005), who argue that women's empowerment to some extent is subjective, meaning that the degree to which somebody experiences empowerment, partly depends on their own perception of it.

Also critical viewpoints regarding the impact of social enterprises on women's empowerment can be found in academia. Dolan (2012) questions whether social enterprises engaging women as sales agents or supporting them in becoming entrepreneurs, really target the poorest of the poor. She argues that women who want to engage in entrepreneurship need to fulfil certain requirements related to their education, social network as well as physical and mental conditions. Some women do not possess reading and writing skills or may not be allowed to work because they need to follow the local tradition and take care of the house and the children instead. Dolan et al. (2012) point out that social entrepreneurship empowers only a marginalised part of women which "may or may not lead to the sort of collective empowerment that confronts political structures or transforms power structures" (Dolan et al., 2012).

Reviewing academic literature in the field shows that the extent of empowering or even disempowering effects that is attributed to social entrepreneurship differs among authors. How and under what conditions social enterprises in the solar sector in Tanzania empower or disempower their female sales agents forms the core of our research. After having reviewed literature on social enterprises, BoP and female entrepreneurship in the previous sections, we now need to conceptualize and find possibilities to measure women's empowerment.

Conceptualizing and measuring women's empowerment

Women's empowerment has been conceptualized by different experts in this field. Overall, empowerment is defined as the ability to make choices (Kabeer, 1999; Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). Kabeer (1999) emphasizes the importance of change, meaning that somebody has to be disempowered before empowerment can occur. This does not only apply to women but to all disadvantaged or socially excluded groups. The special characteristic of women as a disadvantaged group is that they do not form a particular class within a certain society but they are a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps with other groups (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005).

Furthermore, in academia, women's empowerment mostly involves the aspect of agency which represents the process of how an actor makes decisions and to what extent these decisions can be overruled by the authority of others (Kabeer, 1999; Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). Formal and informal institutions of a society, including laws and regulations as well as traditions and cultural aspects determine the degree of agency someone possesses. Another determinant of empowerment are resources which are the mediums through which agency is exercised, such as positions in families, communities or businesses (Kabeer, 1999). Depending on the cultural and political context, achievements of women's empowerment vary. Kabeer (1999) defines achievements as the extent to which people realize their potential, i.e. the outcome of somebody's effort to exercise power and make important life decisions, such as marriage, education, employment and family planning.

Gender inequality is multifaceted and can occur across social, economic, political, legal and psychological dimensions. Numerous studies have shown that women's empowerment can take place in one area of life while not in others (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). Therefore, it should be anticipated that efforts aiming at enhancing women's empowerment along particular dimensions may not necessarily increase the degree of empowerment in other areas of life (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). Due to the resulting necessity to distinguish between different dimensions for potential empowerment to happen, frameworks have been developed to measure women's empowerment.

Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) outline a framework seeking to facilitate measuring and operationalizing women's empowerment. The authors define empowerment as enhancing somebody's capacity to make choices and transforming those into desired actions and outcomes. Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) moreover identify domains and levels of empowerment. Empowerment can according to them occur in different domains, such as the state, market and society. These domains are further divided into subdomains, such as justice, politics and service delivery on the state domain; credit, labour and production, and consumption of goods on the market domain; and the opportunities to explore relations in the family and community on the society domain. Concerning the different levels of empowerment, Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) further distinguish between the local level which involves empowerment in everyday life situations, the intermediary level which means empowerment on the residential or even national level, and the macro level which is the furthest away from the individual, the national level.

Malhotra and Schuler (2005) developed a framework that is similar to the one of Alsop and Heinsohn (2005), but even more detailed. The authors distinguish between the levels of household, community and broader arenas. Furthermore, they distinguish between five instead of three dimensions in which empowerment can occur, namely the economic, social and cultural, legal, political and psychological dimension. The framework is all encompassing and aims at providing a groundwork for measuring women's empowerment in all sorts of contexts. Malhotra and Schuler (2005) emphasize the importance of the household and community level. This is because women's empowerment is a process and involves a transformation of formal and informal institutions, particularly those supporting patriarchal structures. This transformation cannot be forced through different policies in terms of a "top-down" approach but has to be rooted in people's way of thinking and behaviours in their everyday life Malhotra and Schuler (2005). For that reason, Malhotra and Schuler (2005) argue that the household and community level, affecting women's family and community life, is central to achieve sustainable women's empowerment.

To answer our research question of how social enterprises impact their female sales agents in terms of empowerment, we consider the household and community level as most relevant. We base this consideration on the fact that the women that work as sales agents in solar companies mostly live in rural areas and are bound to their household and community, therefore we expect to find most empowering or disempowering changes induced through their employment mainly on the household and community level. The focus of the household level lies on relations to closest family members such as the husband and children, and the closest surroundings as for example the house, farm, own business etc. The community level considers relations to other community members, namely neighbours, friends, colleagues and others. In terms of locations, the community level looks

at public areas, among others the market place, public transportation and the work environment. We seek to investigate if these women, working as sales agents in solar companies, experienced an increase or decrease in their possession of power within the household or community. Regarding the concepts of power, empowerment and disempowerment, we take on definitions that are commonly used in academia. Hence, power is characterised as somebody's capability to make choices and his or her degree of agency, i.e. how these decisions can be overruled by the authority of others. In addition, power involves someone's ability to then transform the decisions into intended outcomes. Compared to the power-concept, the terms of empowerment and disempowerment involve change, thus an increase or decrease in power someone possesses (Kabeer, 1999). This is thus our understanding and definition of power, empowerment and disempowerment going forward.

As it is outlined in academia, women's empowerment can occur on different areas of life such as the psychological, economic, legal, political and social and cultural dimension (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). For instance, Hashemi et al. (1996) focused on women's empowerment on the legal and political dimensions, investigating legal awareness and involvement in political campaigns and protests. Dolan et al. (2012) and Scott et al. (2012) concentrate on empowerment on the psychological dimension, assessing self-perception and self-confidence among others. Depending on the context, empowerment is more likely to occur in some dimensions than in others. Therefore, we will limit our analytical framework on dimensions where we think empowering or disempowering effects are most likely to happen, regarding female sales agents in the solar light industry in Tanzania. The areas we have determined to be most relevant to our research question are the psychological, economic, and social and cultural dimension. Within these, we seek to investigate how social enterprises in the solar industry impact power relations of their female sales agents on the household and community level. Assessing women's empowerment on the psychological, economic, and social and cultural dimension and on the household and community level, we use three out of five dimensions of empowerment of Malhotra and Schuler's (2005) framework. We deliberately chose these three dimensions while excluding the political and legal dimension. We based this decision on the consideration of the political and legal dimension being less relevant to the context of our study than the other dimensions. The focus of the social businesses that form the core of our investigation lies on the BoP and off-grid communities, where we think it is more likely to find empowering/disempowering effects on the psychological, economic and social and cultural dimensions than on the political and legal dimensions.

	Household level	Community level
Psychological dimension	Self-esteem; psychological well-being	Collective awareness of injustice; potential of mobilization
Economic dimension	Control over income; relative contribution to family support; access and control of family resources	Access and credit to markets
Social and cultural dimension	Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; freedom of movement	Access to and visibility in social spaces; general shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference)

Table 1: Levels and dimensions of empowerment

Source: based on Malhotra and Schuler (2005)

The table above (table 1) shows examples taken from Malhotra and Schuler's (2005) framework for aspects where empowerment can occur. These serve as a loose basis for orientation in our study, nonetheless we are not restricted to these and open for other attributes that represent empowerment or disempowerment.

This literature review has provided an overview of the three themes related to our research question. We have discussed various views on businesses aiming to contribute to development, illustrated by the development tool and development agent concept, as well as the definition of a social enterprise. We have furthermore debated the conditions social enterprises and women face at the BoP and how they interact with each other, as well as the concept of women's empowerment and disempowerment. However, the literature review alone cannot help us answer our research question of how social enterprises affect their female sales agent's empowerment. Mainly because there is a research gap in combining these literature themes, we need to develop our own analytical framework for the analysis of our data. Figure 1 below illustrates how we seek to combine the literature themes we have discussed, in order to answer how and under what conditions social enterprises affect their female sales agents' empowerment/disempowerment. The figure is only meant to illustrate our idea of combining the different streams of literature to answer our research question, and will not serve as our analytical framework as it is too abstract. It thus only serves the purpose of showing how the different literature streams will be combined.

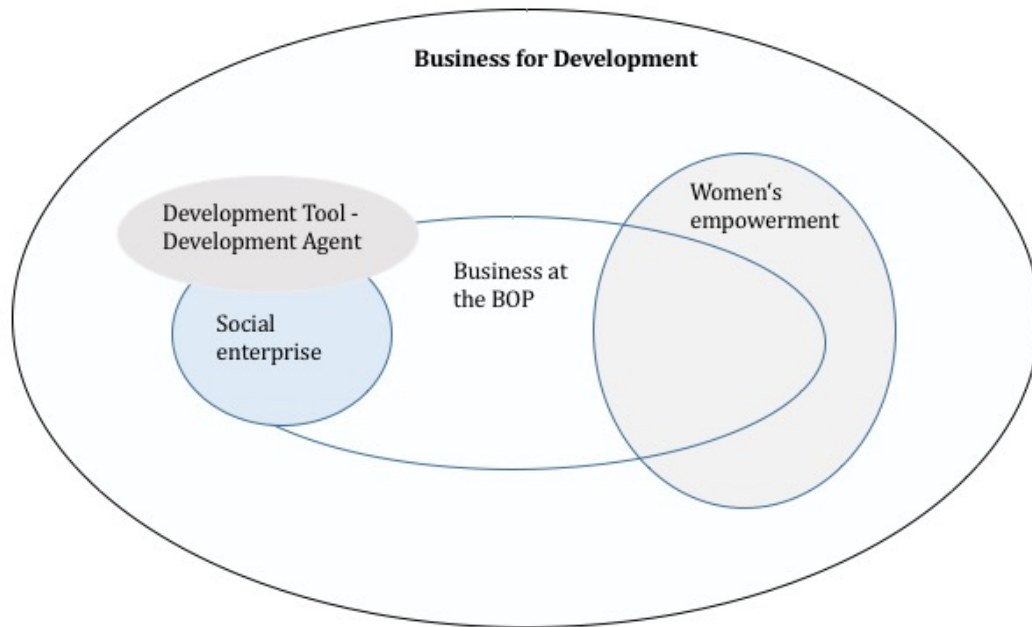


Figure 1: Combination of literature streams

Source: own illustration

2.4. Analytical framework

To answer our research question of how and under what conditions social enterprises in the solar light industry empower/disempower female sales agents, we have developed an analytical framework of two parts.

The first part concerns the question of how the business influences development; in our case how the social enterprises influence the empowerment or disempowerment of female sales agents. We will through our data identify aspects of the social enterprise that influence the sales agents in an empowering or disempowering manner. Even though our literature theme on conditions facing social enterprises at the BoP provided examples of aspects that could impact the sales agents' empowerment/disempowerment, we leave it open to our data to show us the social enterprises' most influential business aspects in this regard. The three arrows from the box in figure 2 with the text "Little Sun and Mobisol" represents the business aspects that our data will show are most influential in their specific cases, regarding the impact on female sales agents' empowerment/disempowerment. The box to the right with the headline "Female sales agents" represents the impact on the lives of the female sales agents in terms of empowerment or disempowerment, and on what levels and dimensions it takes place. As mentioned in our literature review, we assess empowerment/disempowerment on the dimensions (psychological, economic, and social and cultural) on the household and on the community level. These levels represent different environments and relations of the women that are subject to change.

The second part of the analytical framework focuses on the conditions under which the social enterprise impact the female sales agents. We specifically aim at determining the conditions that led to the existing relation of the social business and the empowerment/disempowerment of the female sales agents. To do so, we will at first analyse the social businesses with regards to the concept of the social enterprise we use in our paper, which contains the aspects of its social aims and outcomes; the basis on which its social mission is embedded in its structure and governance; and the way it uses the profits it generates through trading activities. Since we aim to analyse if the businesses are social enterprises according to our definition it, we will from here on refer to the entities as “solar enterprises” until we have come to a conclusion on the matter. Having analysed the enterprises according to the concept of a social enterprise, we further seek to place it within the development tool and development agent approach as developed by Dolan and Blowfield (2014). Placing the solar enterprises according to the concepts of the developmental tool and the development agent, we seek to identify whether the empowerment/disempowerment of the female sales agents through the determined business aspects, occurred due to the enterprise operating as a development tool or development agent, or as something in between. The second part of the analytical framework thus regards the left box of figure 2, containing our social enterprise definition, and the top box comprising of the development tool and development agent concepts, to analyse how these serve as conditions for the impact of the solar enterprises on the female sales agents’ empowerment/disempowerment.

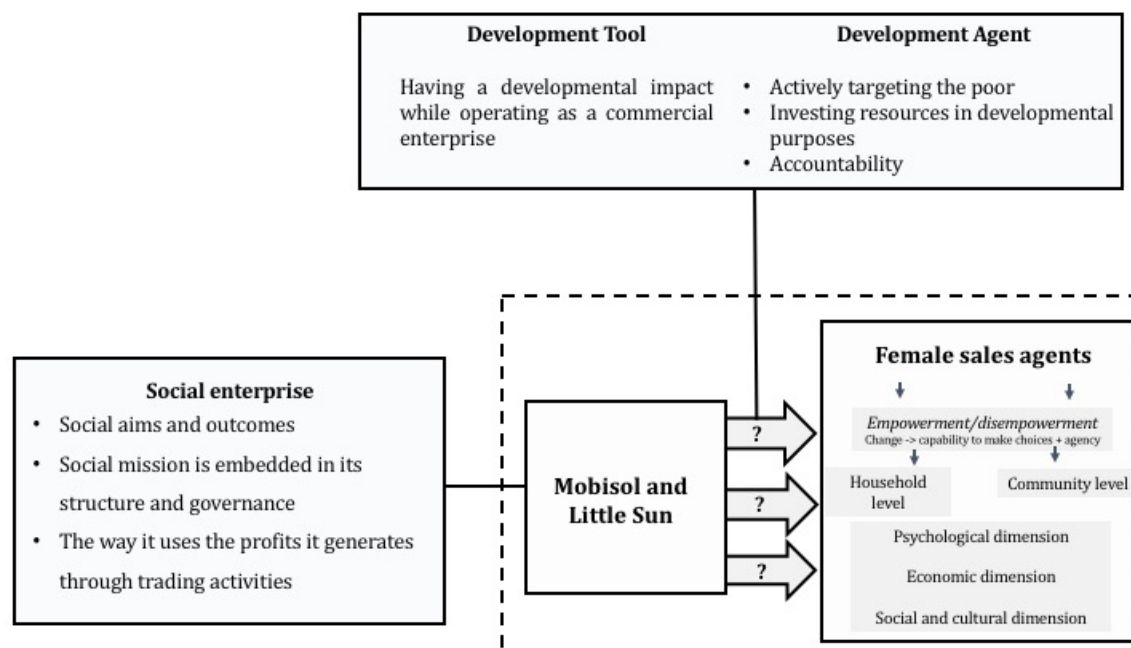


Figure 2: Analytical framework

Source: own illustration

3. Methodology

3.1. Philosophy of science

In our research we have to make decisions about our understanding of science which affects the choice of methods as well as the interpretation of the results. The chosen philosophy of science determines the comprehension of the nature of reality (ontology) and how to attain knowledge (epistemology) of it. Danermark (2002) emphasizes that there should always be an obvious connection between the ontological and epistemological perception and the practical research which makes the philosophy of science a decisive question when conducting research.

Philosophers have aimed at finding answers to the question of how to gain absolute knowledge about reality since the starting point of science. The response to this question depends on the underlying philosophy of science. There exist numerous different approaches and viewpoints to the questions of the nature of reality and how to gain knowledge of it. These range between the two extremes of positivism on the one hand and perspectivism on the other. Positivism is built on an empirical foundation where science should be based on what is empirically experienced, which in consequence reduces ontology to epistemology (Danermark, 2002). In contrast to that, perspectivism argues that it is impossible to see reality as it is because we always observe things from a certain perspective. Knowledge about something can only be true to a particular individual and not to others. It cannot be separated from specific individuals and is always local and contextual (Danermark, 2002).

We have chosen to be inspired by critical realism in our research, which can be placed somewhere in between the two extreme philosophies of positivism and perspectivism. Critical realism appeared as a critique of the positivist philosophy which has dominated the majority of the social sciences since the 1930s. Critical realism is mainly associated with the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar who has formed its philosophic tradition (Danermark, 2002). It combines ontological realism with epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality (Archer et al., 1998, in Danermark, 2002). As in perspectivism, critical realism claims the existence of a reality of which our knowledge is imperfect. However, in contrast to the perspectivist approach, theoretical and methodological tools exist that are more or less suitable to inform us about the external reality (Danermark, 2002). In the following, we will explain the critical realist perspective in detail.

The elemental assumption of critical realism is the existence of a reality unconnected to our knowledge of it (Bhaskar, 1998). Furthermore, reality is assumed to be stratified into the real, the

actual and the empirical domain. The real domain subsists of structures of social and physical objects that produce mechanisms which then generate events in the actual domain. These events may be observed in the empirical domain (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). In critical realism, the focus of research does not solely lie on detecting the event itself but to identify the mechanism causing the event (Danermark, 2002; Sayer, 1992; Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011; Easton, 2010). The aim of critical realism is thus not to disclose general laws, but to comprehend and explain the concealed and unobservable mechanisms (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011).

To go more into depth, the real domain consists of objects, or as Easton (2010) calls them “entities”, which form structures in which they can affect one another. These represent the theoretical core of critical realism and occur in terms of institutions, resources, organisations, relationships and others (Easton, 2010). As Sayer (1992) emphasizes, these are not to be confused with variables since variables only measure change, not the cause of it. Critical realists however seek to investigate the fundamental capability of objects and the mechanisms they cause (Easton, 2010). The objects or entities possess causal powers and liabilities, which generate mechanisms that are the ways in which structures of entities in combination with their causal powers produce particular events in the actual dimension. Researchers can observe and investigate these events in the empirical dimension. The different layers are illustrated in figure 3. As mentioned above, in critical realism particular attention should be paid to the process which generates the occurrence of specific events (Easton, 2010). Moreover, Easton (2010) accentuates the importance of the context or external contingency of the investigated relations which should be clearly described and considered. In the following paragraphs we will discuss how our research relates to critical realism.

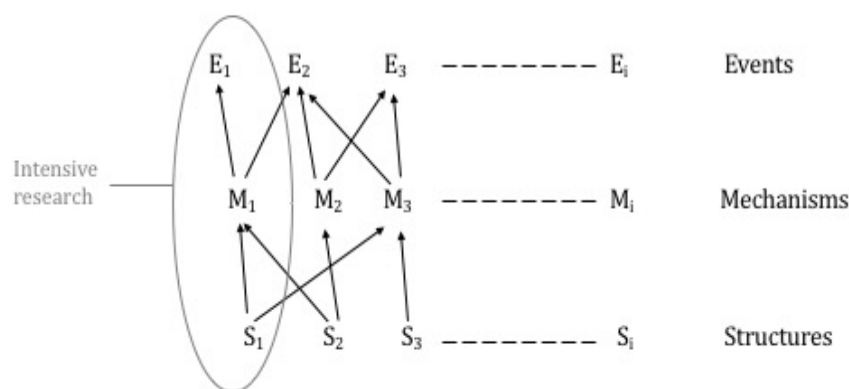


Figure 3: Layers of critical realism

Source: based on Sayer (1992)

Finding answers to the question of ‘what caused those events to happen?’ (Easton, 2010) is the central goal of critical realism. Critical realism-informed research questions focus on explaining the

occurrence of a particular event, trying to detect the underlying causal mechanisms. This fundamental aim of critical realism is reflected in our research question ('How and under what conditions are female sales agents' empowered/disempowered by the social enterprises Little Sun and Mobisol?') regarding the terms *how* and *under what conditions*. We thus clarify our aim of not only investigating and observing the event of empowerment/disempowerment itself, but to attain knowledge about the underlying generating mechanisms. The solar enterprises can be defined as objects which are embedded in a structure of entities which possess causal powers and liabilities that produce mechanisms causing the empowering/disempowering event. Relating to our analytical framework, we first aim at identifying and describing the empowerment/disempowerment of the female sales agents as this event can be observed in the empirical domain. Secondly, we seek to attain knowledge about the underlying conditions, i.e. the mechanisms through which solar enterprises' impact female sales agents' empowerment and disempowerment. Which methods and concepts we choose and their suitability to answer our research question considering the critical realist approach, will be discussed in the following section.

3.2. Research design

Over time, development thinking has been related to different philosophies of science and thus it has been associated with different approaches of how to gain knowledge about reality. Obviously, each way of thinking is connected to the use of different research methods. One can roughly distinguish between older theories, which focus on economic growth in the field of development and therefore concentrate on the use of quantitative methods, and later, more humanistic approaches to development that mainly apply qualitative methods (Desai and Potter, 2006). Danermark (2002) first of all clarifies that critical realism itself is not a method and can therefore not be applied directly to practical research. Instead, researchers basing their studies on critical realism rather believe that some methods are more suitable and productive than others and that particular conclusions can be drawn from the application of certain approaches. Even though critical realism allows for a relatively broad range of research methods, the researcher should consider the nature of the object of interest and what exactly one wants to learn about it. In other words, methods must be suitable to the research purpose of study and the nature of the object (Sayer, 1992). Sayer (1992) further emphasizes that the research method, object and purpose always should be viewed in relation to one another.

As we discussed in the previous section, critical realism aims at identifying and explaining underlying mechanisms and structures causing particular events. The methodological question in

critical realism is how to identify mechanisms since they are not observable (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). The term 'mechanism' has been criticized since it implies a causal linear relationship which would mean that one particular mechanism always generates the same outcome. However, critical realists argue that the outcomes of mechanisms are context dependent, meaning that they depend on other mechanisms occurring in the same context (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011); as Pawson and Tilley (1997) state, 'the basic structure of mechanisms is often described in a context-mechanism-outcome pattern'.

Going back to the question of how to identify mechanisms even though they are not observable, Bygstad and Munkvold (2011) explain that there are different steps involved in this process, including the identification of structural components of a mechanism, their interaction to produce outcomes as well as the context these processes are embedded in. This is because it is mostly a concurrence of objects that generate a mechanism and lead to an outcome which thus depends on but is not limited to the effect of the objects. Relevant techniques that are used within critical realism are abduction and retroduction which have been discussed in depth by different academics (Sayer, 1992; Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011; Bhaskar, 1998; Danermark, 2002). These are used to identify mechanisms which underlie a certain event (Danermark, 2002). In our research we made use of abduction but did not apply the technique of retroduction which we will explain more in detail later in this chapter.

Considering the above, a typical critical realist research design would be an in-depth study using only a small number of cases which makes it possible to profoundly analyse the interrelation between structures, mechanisms and events (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). Our research approach combines the aspects of a comparative case study, an intensive qualitative analysis and the tool of abduction. These will be discussed more in detail in the subsequent sections.

3.2.1 Intensive/extensive approach and qualitative/quantitative method

The researcher has to make a choice of which research approach and methods to apply to his/her study. Most academics distinguish between an intensive or extensive research approach, and between quantitative and qualitative research methods. Whereas an intensive research approach is usually associated with qualitative methods, an extensive approach is mostly related to the application of quantitative methods. However, these are not limited to each other as, for example, an extensive approach could be used within a single case study (Sayer, 1992).

In our research we have decided to conduct a comparative case study as an intensive research approach, using qualitative methods. Whether an extensive or intensive research approach is chosen depends on the formulation of the research question and the aim of the researcher. If the purpose of the study is to find some common traits and general patterns of a population as a whole, an extensive research approach is most likely more suitable. Descriptive and inferential statistics and numerical analysis as well as large-scale questionnaires of a population or a representative sample are typical methods of extensive research. In contrast, intensive research primarily concerns the questions of how a particular causal process works or what produces a certain kind of change. Mainly qualitative methods are used for this purpose, such as case studies, informal or interactive interviews or participant observation (Sayer, 1992). When relating these to the critical realist approach, it becomes obvious that an intensive research approach using qualitative methods is most reasonable (Sayer, 1992).

To go more into depth on the choice of methods, Danermark (2002) argues that detecting an empirical connection, as in a purely quantitative study, does not lead to the identification of causing mechanisms and structures of the event. Furthermore, it can be critically argued that quantitative methods can neither describe the complexity of the social reality, nor can they give comprehensive answers to agents' motives. To be able to detect underlying mechanisms and structures of an event, a focused study of cases in their contextual environment in terms of qualitative methods is necessary (Danermark, 2002). However, the most significant constraint of qualitative methods is their imprecision and inability to make predictions as well as the fact that results are always affected by the researchers' subjective viewpoints and perspectives (Danermark, 2002). Despite this constraint and due to its suitability to answer our research question, which asks for a deeper understanding of the causes of female sales agents' empowerment/disempowerment and requires profound analysis of solar companies as the employer of the women, we use an intensive research approach and qualitative methods.

3.2.2. Case study/comparative case study

To find answers to our research question, we chose to use a comparative case study research design. The case study is a typical method of an intensive research approach since it offers the opportunity to gain a profound understanding of complex relations and structures of factors. The possibility to comprehend a certain phenomenon in depth is a significant advantage of the case study method, whereas its lack of statistical representativeness represents its major constraint (Easton, 2010). Easton (2010) further emphasizes the flexibility of the case study approach,

investigating one or a small number of entities of which data can be collected from various sources such as interviews, observations, experimentation and others. Our research investigates two cases of solar enterprises which we will analyse in terms of a comparative case study.

Our case study concerns to the broadest extent the relation between the solar companies and their female sales agents, where we focus on the empowering and disempowering effects as well as the reasons behind it. In order to gain in-depth knowledge of this relationship, we conducted interviews with managers of the solar companies as well as with the female sales agents. In our research we chose to investigate two solar companies and their sales agents in detail, conducting a comparative case study. Since we seek to find out underlying conditions of the enterprises that generate the empowerment and/or disempowerment, we think it is beneficial to compare two companies in order to be able to isolate empowering and disempowering conditions from other mechanisms. As Pawson (1989) argues, due to the lack of physical and statistical nature of the mechanisms in question, some comparative research design is required to recognize their functions. Also Edwards' et al. (2014) present arguments for the use of a comparative case study in critical realism to identify causalities. As a precondition to apply this technique, Edwards et al. (2014) argue that the cases need to show similarities in at least one category. As such, we compare two enterprises in the solar light industry which both employ women as sales agents in our research. Comparing two or more cases enables the researcher to identify necessary or sufficient conditions to attain a particular given outcome. Conversely, this method can also be used to eliminate potential causes of an outcome. The technique of a comparative case study as outlined by Edwards et al. (2014) involves the initial identification of events and outcomes and a subsequent determination of conditions causing these.

3.2.3. Abduction and retroduction

Compared to positivists who aim at generalizing laws and perspectivists who entirely focus on experiences and viewpoints of social actors, critical realists believe in the existence of a reality independent of our knowledge and seek to gain a deeper understanding of structures and mechanisms in the real domain (Danermark, 2002). The tools of abduction and retroduction are typical within critical realist research to attain knowledge about underlying mechanisms that cause a particular event (Danermark, 2002). According to Danermark (2002), abduction involves interpreting the different components that were observed on the empirical domain within conceptual frameworks in order to understand the event more in depth (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). Retroduction is closely related to abduction and it should be seen complementary to

abduction as Danermark (2002) argues. Using the tool of retroduction, a researcher seeks to find answers to the questions of what the fundamental mechanisms are that cause in our case empowerment and disempowerment. This knowledge should be attained through hypothesising about different possible mechanisms (Danermark, 2002), and analysing the relationships of these potential mechanisms, contexts and observable events to identify causes for particular outcomes (Edwards et al., 2014).

Regarding the tool of retroduction, Danermark (2002) explains that in research, oftentimes there are predetermined concepts that provide possible answers to the question of causal mechanisms. In our research, we analyse our empirical data within an analytical framework of theoretical models. In these we distinguish between the psychological, economic and social and cultural dimension as well as the household and community level. Furthermore, we use the theoretical frame of the social enterprise, development tool and development agent concepts, to conceptualise the solar enterprises and their business models to see if they can explain possible impacts on the sales agents. In other words, we redescribe our empirically collected data within a theoretical frame to understand the event of empowerment/disempowerment more in depth. In these terms, we are thus applying the tool of abduction. According to Bygstad and Munkvold (2011), retroduction focuses on hypothesizing about different potential causing mechanisms. Since our research is based on these theoretical concepts for identifying generating mechanisms, we argue that we do not make use of the retroduction tool as would be typical in critical realist research, because we lack the hypothesizing feature of it.

3.3. Data collection technique

Our methods aim at understanding the generative mechanisms and structures (Easton, 2010) that explain the empowerment or disempowerment of female sales agents by their employers. We were unfortunately not permitted to shadow the female sales agents at work to understand the events taking place first hand (Easton, 2010). Instead, we have interviewed the female sales agents to obtain second-hand reports on their work experience and how the relation to their employers has affected them.

Our data collection technique reflects our critical realist approach in our search for explanatory mechanisms, that may explain the events resulting from interaction between the actors. In addition to interviewing female sales agents, we also set up interviews with the managers of the social enterprises we investigate to ensure that our study includes two perspectives of the relationship

between the actors, the events as they happened as a result of interaction between the actors, and ultimately the underlying mechanisms for these events to occur (Easton, 2010). The events we study regard external and visible behaviours of people, systems and things, as they happened (Easton, 2010). In our specific study, the events relate to the aspects of the business that through interaction with their female sales agents impact the empowerment/disempowerment of the sales agents.

Our data collection technique is synchronized with our critical realist-inspired approach, as well as our choice to use qualitative methods and collection of primary data, in order to find and understand the events and mechanisms that can answer our research question. In line with the critical realist approach, our data collection technique considers the context and the relevant circumstances of the actors and events we study (Easton, 2010), which may impact both the events themselves but also our data collection procedures (e.g. interviews, interpretation, validity, reliability). The subsequent sections provide a detailed description of our data collection technique and our motives for choosing this technique, as well as its advantages and limitations.

3.3.1 In-depth individual-/group interviews

With qualitative methods as overarching focus for our data collection, we chose to conduct in-depth interviews with female sales agents and social enterprise managers. The interviews helped us understanding the sales agents personal and individual experiences (Kvale, 2007, p. 1) regarding any changes in their lives as a result of their interaction with the social enterprises. The choice of conducting in-depth interviews was thus motivated by the personal and individual nature of experiencing empowerment/disempowerment, and is in line with the critical realist approach, as in-depth interviews can contribute to uncovering and understanding underlying mechanisms that may explain the outcomes of empowerment/disempowerment (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011). The results of the in-depth interviews build the basis for our analysis and discussion to help us answer our research question.

A disadvantage with interviews as a data collection technique is that it risks exploitation of the interviewee's knowledge where only the researcher benefits, without providing anything in return (Desai and Potter, 2006). We discussed using participatory research methods as a complement to the in-depth interviews, such as first-hand observance of the female sales agents at their workplace. We asked to follow Mobisol's sales agents around at the marketplace, but our request was rejected.

In retrospect, it would have been a time-consuming activity of questionable usability with regards to our inability to understand the spoken language at the market; Swahili.

We considered the nature of our research question, the context and the people we interviewed, when determining our interview structure (Desai and Potter, 2006). An unstructured interview would have been difficult for us to conduct, considering our time constraints and the need to find interpreters on short notice who quickly could familiarise themselves with our research topic. Therefore, we needed a pre-set list of standardized questions for the interpreter and ourselves to feel comfortable and in control of the interview. This is in line with a structured interview technique (Desai and Potter, 2006). However, whilst having a pre-set list of questions, we had a flexible approach during the interviews, adding or removing questions depending on the answers we obtained, and always reformulating to create open-ended questions that allowed the respondents to answer as they wished. This is in line with the semi-structured interview technique, as the question order is fluid and open to the respondent answers (Robson, 2002, p. 270, Bryman and Bell, 2011) to obtain knowledge on the respondent views (Flick, 2006, p. 149). We therefore have a mix of a structured and a semi-structured interview technique, with a structured question guide of standardized and specific questions (Annex 1 and 2), whilst allowing for other questions/topics to be introduced during the interview, as well as allowing scope for the respondents to direct the interview with their responses. It was important for us to be able to tailor the questions during the interviews to respond to the interviewees' answers (Desai and Potter, 2006), to understand their experiences fully and elaborate on interesting aspects necessary to answer our research question.

Regarding the nature of our interviews, we chose to use a mixed approach of individual interviews and focus group discussions. Our interviews with social enterprise managers were individual, in-depth interviews. However, we decided that the same strategy would not apply equally well to our interviews with female sales agents. As it is likely the first time for the female sales agent to be interviewed by "white Western women", we assumed that they might be intimidated and cautious in their responses to our questions (Desai and Potter, 2006). Therefore, we decided to conduct all interviews with female sales agents in groups, using a mix of questions addressed to either individuals or to the group for discussion. With our individual questions, we sought to obtain an in-depth understanding through individual life stories of how the interaction with her employer changed e.g. access to resources, decision-making power, etc. (Desai and Potter, 2006).

Our approach shares many similarities with a "focus group discussion" or "group depth discussion", which are group-based interviews with around six to eight participants that focus on observing and understanding views on a particular issue, that may reflect the various perceptions and opinions

found in the community (Desai and Potter, 2006). The focus group is a prime research tool in the field of development with its aim to learn about existing views and attitudes in the community. A focus group discussion typically lasts from ¼ to 3 hours, which is the same time span we used for our interviews. One of its strongest advantages is that the participants find confidence in the group to discuss the issue more openly, in comparison to individual interviews (Desai and Potter, 2006). However, our groups did not always fulfil the requirement of six to eight participants, as our most common number of participants was four. While a focus group discussion requires participants to discuss an issue, the nature of our questions varied and sometimes addressed each participant individually and sometimes the whole group. Our goal was to obtain individual reports of personal experiences, with the participants being comfortable enough to tell us. Furthermore, we aimed to observe if the group had a similar set of experiences and if they mostly agreed or disagreed with the responses of the other participants. Finally, having in-depth interviews with groups was time efficient and enabled us to meet with many more female sales agents than would otherwise have been impossible.

3.3.2 Secondary data

We used secondary data sources in terms of websites and web documents to complement our primary data on the business operations of Mobisol and Little Sun. The need to complement the primary data arose after our interviews with the female sales agents and the management staff of the social enterprise. The management staff, especially in the case of Mobisol, was secretive about various aspects of their business such as management of profits and accountability tools used to document the enterprise's developmental impact. Therefore, we used secondary sources to complement this information.

3.3.3. Respondent selection, reliability, validity and ethical considerations

Respondent selection

We based our decision of whom and how many we should interview on the nature of our research question and the kind of sample required to answer it (Desai and Potter, 2006). Regarding the number of interviewees, we sought to interview as many as possible during our limited time period to ensure we had a good idea of the topic, or as Kvale (2007, p. 43) puts it; we sought to “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know”. We interviewed four managers at four different social enterprises, of which we chose to continuously focus on only two (Little Sun

and Mobisol]). The other two enterprises, Karibu Solar and Devergy, did not have enough female sales agents for us to interview and make a case study of. The four managers were selected either because they responded to our email inquiry to meet for an interview, which we sent to approximately 20 solar enterprises in Tanzania, or because they were located at a distance we were able to travel to considering our time constraints. The interview with the managers were important for two reasons: obtaining complementary information of the interaction between social enterprises and their female sales agents, and getting access and permission to interview their female sales agents, whose perspectives we rely on to answer our research question.

Regarding the criteria for selecting a sample of female sales agent to interview, we needed to consider the population with its different cultural context and tribes. Since our research question relates to the opinions and perceptions of female sales agents in terms of their sense of change in their empowerment/disempowerment, we wanted to target people from different tribes and context to include various views and experiences on the subject. We requested help from the managers in setting up interviews with their female sales agents at various locations, with the only mutual factor of the women being the fact that they were female as well as sales agents for Little Sun or Mobisol. We travelled to rural villages and to various cities in the North and Northeast of Tanzania. We used the snowball effect when selecting some of the interviewees, by asking all Little Sun and Mobisol staff we met to have more interviews with more female sales agents. We were content after having interviews with 18 female sales agents as our data reached a level of saturation and new data just repeated what we already had found out (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Reliability

The reliability of findings depends on the purpose and motivations of the research itself, who will use the information generated and how (Desai and Potter, 2006). Our study is completely independent with no external stakeholders. We hope to contribute to the theoretical discussions on social enterprises' developmental impact, however, we have no obligation to showcase the results of our paper to anyone but our thesis examiners.

Regarding the reliability of our results, we selected respondents based on their ability to provide reliable information and represent wider trends and perceptions in the community (Desai and Potter, 2006). While a bias is expected from the managers we interviewed due to their interests in the good reputation of their enterprise, no such bias was observed from the interviews with the female sales agents. On the contrary, the women seemed to distance themselves from the enterprises and discussed many negative aspects of their job. The reliability of our interview also

relates to the ability of other researchers to get the same answers if asking the same questions. We formulated our questions so that the respondents were free to answer them in multiple ways of their own choice (Kvale, 2009). Our open-ended questions allowed us as researchers to be less biased. However, our appearance and linguistic shortcomings forced bias on us nevertheless, which has an impact on the potential for other researchers to obtain the same answers if asking the same questions.

An important weakness to discuss is thus our cultural bias as white foreign women coming from developed countries and conducting field research in a poor, developing country. We did not observe any motivations of the female sales agents to give unreliable answers to our questions, as we did not offer any compensation. However, the positionality and power differences between the respondents and us may impact the answers given, as the respondents may tell us what they think we want to hear (Skelton, 2001). Partly to ensure the reliability of the respondents' answers, we chose to conduct group interviews as we think it is more difficult to state something that is not completely true in the presence of a group that has the same job and face the same conditions.

Desai and Potter (2006) urge researchers from richer countries conducting interviews with relatively poor respondents, to be constantly aware of his/her positionality (in terms of e.g. race, nationality, gender, age) towards the locals. We are aware of the fact that we may have impacted the responses and the way we analyse our findings by being foreign with linguistic and cultural barriers. This might have led to scepticism or resulted in the women being more reserved when answering our questions, compared to if we were Tanzanian nationals. Acknowledging that we might not be fully aware of the roles assigned to us by the local respondents, we did our best to ensure reliable answers by attempting to be as objective as possible in asking open-ended and not leading questions, as well as considering multiple perspectives (e.g. of the managers vs. the female sales agents). Furthermore, we read about the culture, gender roles and power gradients amongst tribes and communities before our field trip, to learn about the context of our research and be able to pick up on underlying and implicit mechanisms at work. It was also important to be knowledgeable of the culture in order to position us as something else than outsiders, to enhance the quality of our data collection (Desai and Potter, 2006). Our translators could also help us bridge some of the cultural gaps through their knowledge of local customs of how to address and converse locals appropriately considering the existing different tribes and cultures (Desai and Potter, 2006).

Another implication for our data collection methods that relates to the reliability of the findings is the presence of men and enterprise representatives during the majority of our interviews. Unfortunately, we were not able to find female translators on short notice, and had to have male

translators, which may have impacted the answers of the female sales agents. Furthermore, in one of our interviews where we drove out to the Maasai village to interview Little Sun sales agents, both a male village clan leader and the male manager of Little Sun's partner organisation were present. This is a major drawback for the reliability of the answers provided, as it is highly likely that the women felt obliged to speak positively of the impact they experienced in their lives by working for Little Sun. We may have seemed like allies to the enterprise instead of independent researchers. However, the fact that we were taken to the women by the managers of Little Sun's partner organisation, an organisation working to spread awareness of women's issues and educating women to address these issues, meant that we could have an open discussion of both the advantages and disadvantages of the women's employment (Desai and Potter, 2006).

Validity

The critical realist approach regarding internal validity is about addressing whether the actual events researchers uncover are caused by certain mechanisms (Hart and Gregor, 2010). For the internal validity of our paper, we use the advantage of being two authors who can offer two perspectives to explain and confirm the mechanisms we believe may explain the events. Throughout our research process, we have tirelessly discussed and compared our views on our findings in an attempt to decrease our subjectivity and open our minds to more clearly observe the events and mechanisms at work (Kvale, 2009). We have questioned each other's statements, and have oftentimes used the theory discussed in our literature review as basis for the discussions of our findings.

The external validity depends according to Hart and Gregor (2010) on how representative the units of analysis are to the context of the studied phenomena, in order to see if the explanatory mechanisms are transferrable to other settings. While we believe that the views and perceptions of the female sales agents in our sample are representative for the Northern and Northeast regions of Tanzania due to their diverse experiences and cultural background, we are sceptical regarding the ability to replicate identified explanatory mechanisms in our study to other settings. Sayer (1992) notes that there is no guarantee that the results are representative even though they provide what seems like satisfactory explanations. Furthermore, our focus on the Northern and Northeast regions of Tanzania provide a certain cultural and developmental context that other settings without doubt differ from. Our own subjectivity as researchers from developed countries conducting research in this specific setting, unquestionably bring a subjective lens whilst observing and collecting data of the events and mechanisms taking place (Hart and Gregor, 2010), which impacts the ability to replicate our research.

Furthermore, our small study of two case studies and interviews with 22 respondents can be criticized for being too small for any generalisations to be made regarding its results (Kvale, 2009). Although we may not be able to generalize our findings to the extent that they are transferrable to other settings, the findings still have value. It is important to remember that the primary aim of our intensive case study is to understand the generative mechanisms that may explain the outcomes in our two specific cases, not to produce results that can be generalised and used in other settings.

Ethical considerations

According to Bryman (2008), four characteristics that define ethical research are the absence of harm, informed consent, protection of privacy, and not being deceptive to the participants (p. 118). Throughout our research process, we have aimed at conducting ethical research. To ensure that the respondents did not feel deceived, we made clear to both managers and sales agents why we conducted our research, for what purpose, how the findings would be used, and that we unfortunately could not offer any payment as compensation for the interviews. However, we did pay for beverages for the respondents to stay energized during the interviews. We did not take any measures to secure informed consent, as we assumed that the managers setting up the interviews would not push anyone to participate. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure that all respondents participated out of their own will and this is a limitation of our research process in terms of its ethical nature. However, we respected the lack of consent from Mobisol's managers regarding our request to follow the female sales agent to the marketplace to observe them while working, and as a result we only focused on face-to-face interviews for our data collection. Moreover, the measure taken to ensure absence of harm to the participants was the choice of a safe location to conduct the interviews. Regarding Bryman's characteristic of protection of privacy, we have chosen not to disclose the respondents' full names in our paper.

3.3.4. Conducting the interviews

Locations and access

We paid particular attention to the locations where we conducted the interviews. We wanted to ensure the respondents' ability and will to speak freely in a calm and safe environment. Therefore we chose to bring the sales agents to secluded parts of cafés, which provided neutral environments at a physical (and perhaps psychological) distance from the offices of their employers. However, the

interviews with the managers were conducted at the enterprise's office (in the case of Mobisol) and at a restaurant suggested by the manager (in the case of Little Sun). We presented ourselves professionally to the respondents (shirts and black long pants) to stress that we were serious about conducting good research.

During our month-long field trip in Tanzania, we travelled on average every three days for interviews. We started in Dar es Salaam where we interviewed the manager of Little Sun and the manager of Devergy, after which we decided not to pursue further research of the latter due to its limited number of female sales agents. Similarly, we had an interview in Moshi with the manager for the solar enterprise Karibu Solar, which also lacked enough female sales agents for us to pursue further research. The manager for Little Sun helped us set up our first interview with female sales agents in Arusha, with the help of a local NGO that cooperates with Little Sun in recruiting and training female sales agents to sell the Little Sun light. The NGO drove us to the rural village of Mererani, where we had our first interview with four Maasai women working for Little Sun. In total

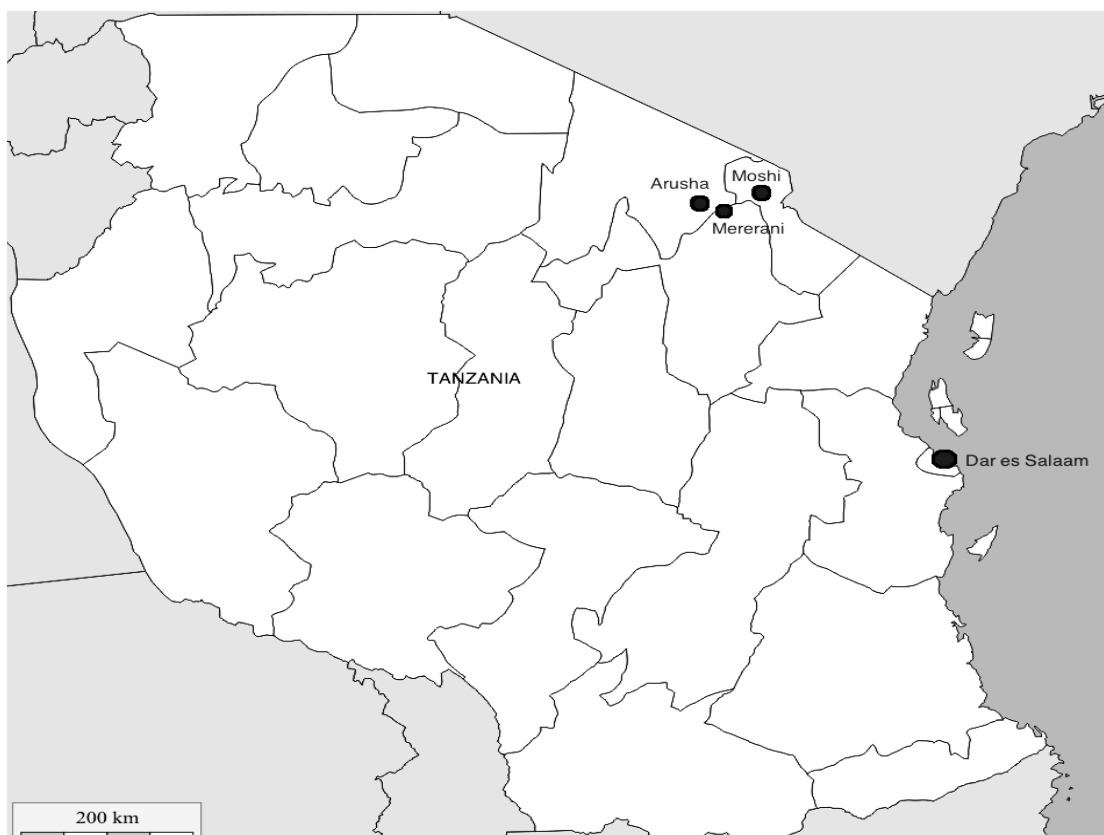


Figure 4: Locations of primary data collection

Source: http://www.d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=4974&lang=en

we had interviews with 18 female sales agents located in Mererani (4), Arusha (6), Moshi (2), and Dar es Salaam (6), which is specified in figure 4. The women in Mererani and Dar es Salaam worked for Little Sun while the others were employed by Mobisol. The locations were determined based on

where we were permitted by the managers to have interviews with female sales agents (Bryman, 2008). As Mobisol had a regional office in the Northern region, and Little Sun had the largest part of its customer base in the Northern region, we spent most of our time in the North of Tanzania.

Recording and transcribing data

We recorded most of the interviews, after receiving the interviewees' permission, to allow us to engage fully in the questioning and conversing with the respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 482). We later transcribed the parts of the recordings that were in English, using the exact words of the recordings and occasionally adding in brackets how the respondents said it (e.g. with laughter, long silent breaks, etc.) (Flick, 2006, p. 288). We took advantage of being two researchers, and divided the responsibilities of taking notes (in case the recording would be flawed) and asking questions.

Interview questions

We started the interviews by introducing ourselves and our research, after which we began the questioning by asking simple and factual questions. After this introduction we continued the interview in accordance with our question guides (see Annex 1 and 2), with some variation between interviews. We had one question guide for the managers (see Annex 1), starting with general questions about the enterprise and the manager's relation to it, and proceeding with a section on the aspects of the business model and the involvement of female sales agents in the enterprise. We had a separate question guide for the female sales agents (see Annex 2), also starting with general personal and work-related questions, followed by a section on the female sales agents' views and experiences regarding their empowerment or disempowerment. Furthermore, we had an additional section of questions to use during larger group discussions with more than two participants (see Annex 3).

When asking questions, we tried to be unbiased and not lead the interviewees in any particular direction. We chose to ask open-ended questions and always emphasized to the respondents the many possible ways to answer the questions (Kvale, 2007, p. 88). We did not send the questions to the interviewees in advance, to avoid prepared answers. Moreover, we did not explain any theoretical underpinnings of the topics raised, such as the concept of empowerment, since we wanted to hear the spontaneous and unbiased views of the respondents.

Some of our questions were highly personal and touched upon sensitive and sometimes taboo topics, such as the women's relationships to their husbands and their decision-making power in the household. Providing this information may place the respondent in a vulnerable position, if the husband for example would hear that his wife shared information with foreign researchers on the power inequalities in their household. However, obtaining such information was vital in order to answer our research question, and we tried to be as sensitive as possible when asking these intimate questions. We also reviewed the cultural context with the aim to understand which and why some topics were highly sensitive (Desai and Potter, 2006). It should be noted that the respondents themselves raised highly sensitive issues in the presence of both male and female interpreters.

Interpretation and translation

The interviews lasted between one and two hours and were conducted in Swahili with the help of interpreters. Our lacking knowledge of Swahili unfortunately made it impossible to conduct the interviews ourselves. Regarding the interpreters for the interviews with Mobisol sales agents, we often asked the staff at our accommodation in each location to help us find a suitable interpreter fluent in English and Swahili, preferably a woman and someone with previous experience of interpreting. Due to time constraints we often had to settle with someone's brother or male friend who spoke adequate English but lacked experience. Due to difficulties in finding female interpreters most of our interviews were conducted with the help of male translators (one interview had a female interpreter). Although we assumed that the female sales agents would feel more comfortable in the presence of a female interpreter, we found that the women's responses did not differ with regards to the gender of the interpreter. Staff of Little Sun and Little Sun's partner organisation assisted us with translation and interpretation for both interviews with Little Sun sales agents.

At times, we experienced translation issues due to the misinterpretation of our questions. We had to pose the question again and again to minimize the ambiguity until the translator fully understood the question (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 697). It was obvious that the interpreters made their own judgements about what and how to translate, despite our clear directives to the interpreters to translate as exact as possible and not add their own explanations and opinions. In our last interview, we had much difficulty explaining to our interpreter that he needed to repeat the examples expressed by the respondents, and not summarize their opinions. As noted by Desai and Potter (2006), we felt that the dependence on local translators caused issues of the interpreter making own judgements based on their perspective on their own society, and transforming the message received.

3.3.5. Analysing qualitative data

According to the critical realist approach that views the nature of society as an open system, it is impossible to analyse the data in the same way as can be done in natural science. Instead, the analysis must be based on the possible explanatory mechanisms of the observed events, in order to have a well-informed discussion about our research question of how and under what conditions social enterprises impact the empowerment of their female sales agents (Danermark, 2002). As noted earlier in this chapter, critical realists emphasize that the analysis should study competing explanations to ultimately confirm the causal mechanisms and rule out alternative explanations (Easton, 2010). In our analysis, we do not aim to confirm all causal mechanisms responsible for the events of our case studies, rather we aim to identify and outline a number of possible explanatory outcomes that may explain the events occurring in the particular context of our study. Relating to the section above concerning abduction and retroduction, we seek possible explanatory mechanisms by applying the tool of abduction where our empirical observations are redescribed (Danermark, 2002) within a theoretical framework. Here we first analyse our data within the empowering/disempowering frame of the psychological, economic and social and cultural dimension and at the household and community level. In a second step, we seek to find out if the theoretical concepts of the social enterprise, development tool and development agent can help us in identifying underlying mechanisms which enabled the occurrence of empowerment/disempowerment.

In order to analyse our data, we coded the interviews into different categories. Coding the interviews also helped us build a chain of evidence that would help the reader understand the process from collecting the data to analysing the data (Yin, 2003, p. 105). The data was categorised according to identified patterns and themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 148-153) that could help us understand the context, mechanisms or outcomes. The categories regarding the various business aspects of the social enterprises that allegedly had an impact on the women's empowerment/disempowerment, emerged from the data collected. We listened to our recordings and repeatedly read through our transcripts to thoroughly code the raw data. The categories related to empowerment/disempowerment were identified by our analytical framework. The categories were selected to combine the results of the data with our analytical framework in order to answer our research question. After coding all interviews, we structured our findings according to our identified categories and presented them in our chapter on empirical findings.

In analysing and coding our data, we are aware that we bring a subjective bias based on our personal experiences, theories, and frames of references (Danermark, 2002). Being aware that our

background and cultural context affect the way we collect and analyse this data, we have aimed to be as open-minded and objective to various ideas and perspectives as possible.

4. Background

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the business climate in Tanzania, with a particular focus on the existence of social enterprises in the solar light industry. It also provides an introduction to the current situation on gender equality in Tanzania. Lastly, this chapter present background information on the two enterprises of our study, Little Sun and Mobisol.

4.1. Business climate in Tanzania

Although Tanzania is the fastest growing economy in the East African Community with a 7 per cent GDP growth rate (2014) (World Bank, 2015), it scores worse than neighbouring countries in the World Bank's 'ease of doing business'-index, ranking as number 139 out of 189 countries (World Bank, 2016). Classified by the World Bank as a low income economy, there are a number of challenges of doing business in Tanzania, including the unreliable and expensive power, underdeveloped transport system, bureaucracy, widespread corruption, limited availability of skilled labour, lack of technological resources, and complex land laws (UK Trade and Investment, 2015). Tanzania's economy depends on its agricultural sector, accounting for nearly half of its GDP and employing around 80 per cent of the labour force (Tanzania Investment Centre, 2014-15). Other important economic sectors are financial and business services, trade and tourism, and manufacturing (Tanzania Invest, 2016).

The socialist history of Tanzania has influenced the business climate in the country. Socialism, or 'Umajaa', dominated Tanzania's socio-economic policies in the 1970's with a focus on central planning and public sector-led development. Due to high inflation, low growth rates and the restricted investment climate among other factors, the Government of Tanzania launched an economic reform in 1986 supported by the IMF and the World Bank. The reform aimed at enhancing the role of the private sector in the economy, moving from central planning to market-based solutions for development. The government implemented a privatisation programme and competitive incentives, and reviewed regulations to remove obstacles to private sector development (Musiba, 2005).

The economic reform led to a wave of privatisation during the 1990s (Tanzania Invest, 2016), with the government privatising 219 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) between 1995 and 2004. However, SOEs still play a major role in Tanzania's economy, with the government reportedly investing 2 per cent of GDP in 238 SOEs and public authorities in 2009/2010. The SOEs operate in various sectors such as transportation, energy, water, ports, telecom, and banking (The Citizen, 2013). Tanzania's business landscape is dominated by small enterprises (95 per cent) that contribute to 35 per cent of national GDP. Furthermore, Tanzania has over a million entrepreneurs running small, medium or micro enterprises. The micro entrepreneurs often fall under the informal sector, and are often associated with "survivalist enterprises" that generates income levels at or below the poverty line (TCCIA, 2009). Social enterprises are not a completely new phenomenon in Tanzania, as the former socialist government of President Julius Nyerere encouraged co-operatives and collective practices amongst citizens (Minca, 2012). However, the social enterprise sector has increased in recent years and comprise primarily of co-operatives, microfinance initiatives and community-based enterprises (Minca, 2013).

Social enterprises and the solar light industry

Despite vast energy resources such as natural gas, coal, hydropower, solar and biomass, only 21 per cent of Tanzania's population and around 7 per cent in rural areas have access to electricity. Solar energy accounts for less than 5 per cent of power generation in Tanzania, with wood-fuel making up for about 90 per cent of total national energy consumption. The government encourages investments that can help accelerate the production and distribution of electricity, in particular to rural areas through off-grid solutions (Rural Energy Act, 2005) (Tanzania Investment Centre, 2014-15). The government strives to achieve an efficient energy sector serving both national and commercial interests (National Energy Policy, 2003), and has opened up the electricity sector to private investments through the 2009 Electricity Act (FUAS, 2011). This ended a 40-year monopoly held by the state-owned enterprise TANESCO, leaving room for, amongst others, social enterprises to produce and distribute energy in Tanzania. The number of social enterprises or "solar-preneurs" in the solar light industry in Tanzania has increased in recent years, combining entrepreneurial opportunities while increasing access to solar (BBC, 2015).

4.2. Gender Equality in Tanzania

Tanzania scores poorly on global rankings of gender equality. According to the Global Gender Gap Index in 2014, Tanzania was ranked as number 47 out of 142 countries (World Economic Forum,

2014). UNDP categorizes Tanzania as a country with “low human development”, ranking as number 151 out of 188 countries. However, there is a positive development in women’s labour force- and political participation. In 2014, women held 36 per cent of seats in parliament, which is an improvement but still a long way from the government’s aim of having 50 per cent female leaders by 2015. In 2013, labour force participation rates as per cent of ages 15 and older were 88.1 for women and 90.2 for men (UNDP, 2015). There is however a discussion regarding the type of work that women conduct, which we discuss further below in the section on domestic work.

Education

The government in Tanzania has been committed to develop policy and extend access to primary education with particular attention to girls’ schooling. Since primary education was made free in 2001, enrolment rates have increased with 50 per cent from around 4.4 million in 2000 to 8.4 million in 2009 (Heslop et. al, 2013). National statistics for this period show equal numbers of girls and boys enrolling in primary school, with a gender parity index of 0.99 in 2007 (Heslop et. al, 2013). Despite the positive development, national illiteracy rates remain high, especially in rural areas where 39 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men are illiterate. Female members in female-headed households tend to be the most disadvantaged (Osorio et. al, 2014).

The access to education for girls also depends on community attitudes and varies between tribes and regions. Heslop et. al states that the Chagga, who grow cash crops with limited high yield land that may be inherited by women, have been active in seeking high levels of education for young women over generations. On the other hand, other groups in the region such as those engaged in nomadic pastoralism, have been known to withdraw girls from school before puberty due to the importance of marriage relationships to maintain herds (Heslop et. al, 2013).

The reasons for girls’ under-performing are partly cultural practices of girls having more domestic responsibilities than boys, which interferes with homework (Sida, 1999). Other hinders are the hostile environment for girls in Tanzania’s education system with gender insensitive school management practices, inadequate trained teachers on gender issues, and a gender biased curricula. Stereotype attitudes in school still favour education for boys rather than girls in most communities, resulting in a majority of girls sticking with stereotype fields of study such as home economics, secretarial courses and nursing. Moreover, pregnancies and women’s inadequate access to reproductive health and family planning provision are other reasons for the under-performance of girls (Heslop et. al, 2013). Other health aspects may hinder girls’ chances to educate themselves, such as the higher levels of HIV infection for women compared to men (Heslop et. al, 2013).

Violence

Discrimination and violence against women are widespread and commonplace in Tanzania, often found at the family level and at work places. Gender-based violence (GBV), early marriages for girls, sexual abuse and female genital mutilation together with patriarchal norms, traditions and impunity before the law, are all factors that continue to reinforce women's subordinate status (United Nations, 2014, Danish Embassy in Tanzania, 2012). GBV is found to be increasing, especially in rural areas. 10,139 women participated in a study by Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey in 2010, half of which answered that a husband was allowed to beat his wife for burning the food, arguing with him, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, or refusing to have sexual intercourse with him. Of the 2,527 men participating in the survey, around 38 per cent agreed on the same issues. Sexual abuse is widely prevalent, with around 20 per cent of the respondents saying that they have experienced sexual violence, and 10 per cent of the women reporting that their first sexual intercourse was forced against their will. For married women, the husband was the main perpetrator, while current/former boyfriends or acquaintances account for most incidents of single women (Danish Embassy in Tanzania, 2012).

Access and ownership of resources

Tanzania has a dual legal system consisting of customary and religious laws. Many customary laws oppress vulnerable groups in the society, such as women (MCDGC, 2006). Customary laws prohibit women to inherit land after the death of a spouse or after a divorce. Married women have the right to access, but not control or own clan land. A few are able to purchase land in their own right but most are dependant on the good-will of community authorities or relatives for access to land (Sida, 1999). In 2012, around 19 per cent of registered land were estimated to be owned by women (Danish Embassy in Tanzania, 2012). The latest national Tanzania Long Term Perspective Plan (2011/12-2025/26) states that 90 per cent of women engaged in agriculture (Tanzania's largest sector) do not have equal rights to assets such as land.

Lack of collateral such as land ownership, reduces women's possibilities of accessing financial institutions. A World Bank study in 2007 estimated that only 5 per cent of women in Tanzania were banked (Danish Embassy in Tanzania, 2012). Furthermore, the average wage for women is three times less than those paid to men (Osorio et. al, 2014). In terms of managing income, men often claim the right to control the income of other household members (Sida, 1999). With limited access to their earnings, credit and financial markets, women are to a high extent excluded from decisions in the household of how to drive production or use their agriculture-derived income. Data has

shown that self-employed women in agriculture are more likely to farm their land for subsistence use rather than commercial use (Osorio et. al, 2014). The Danish embassy in Tanzania (2012) reports a lack of entrepreneurship skills among women, and a lack of knowledge of producing what is marketable. Most women sell what they can at rural markets where demand for their products may be insufficient, or prices are particularly low (ICMA, 2013). Very few women run SMEs in Tanzania due to their lack of exposure to business management skills (Danish Embassy in Tanzania, 2012).

Domestic work

More women than men have a second job, often as unpaid family workers. Domestic tasks such as food preparation, fuel collection and care for children and the elderly are primarily carried out by women in Tanzania (Osorio et. al, 2014). While men's duty is to earn an income, women's main tasks are to be a homemaker and caretaker (Ceesay, 2013). Domestic responsibilities constrain women to reach markets (ICMA, 2013), but some manage to have a business on the side. Women complain that their husbands dictate how much time they may spend on their business, or even forbid them to work (Sida, 1999). Women report that female networks help them sustain their businesses in rural areas, through sharing skills and information, protecting assets and income from men, assisting each other with reproductive responsibilities and in sharing business locations (Sida, 1999).

Government's commitment

The government of Tanzania has shown great commitment to tackle the challenges of women, through e.g. Tanzania's Five Year Development Plan, the Zero Tolerance to Violence against women and children campaigns, the Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, and the Vision 2025; all recognizing the need for empowerment of women in all socio-economic and political relations and cultures (United Nations, 2014, Daily News, 2015). The government has ratified all major international and regional instruments that promote gender equality, but their implementation has been delayed due to incompatibility with national laws (United Nations, 2014). The government has for example postponed the revision of the gender policy, as to avoid conflict with the revised constitution, and has sent back the maternal health bill to the lawmakers for adjustment to existing legislation (Lange and Tjomsland, 2014). Furthermore, the government has inadequate capacities for coordination, monitoring, evaluation, advocacy and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes regarding gender equality (MCDGC, 2006). On a positive note, Tanzania is slowly developing more equal gender relations. Since the first democratic elections in 1995, a vibrant civil

society has developed in the country with NGOs addressing many gender-specific issues. Women's networks challenge patriarchal attitudes daily, and government agencies, media and NGOs have been active in familiarizing Tanzanians with gender issues (Sida, 1999).

4.3. Introduction to Little Sun and Mobisol

The social business Little Sun was launched in London in 2012. Across Africa, the company is present in 10 countries, among them Tanzania. Little Sun distributes the Little Sun lamp, which is a solar powered LED lamp designed by Olafur Eliasson and Frederik Ottesen (Little Sun, 2016). In Tanzania, the Little Sun lamp can be purchased for about 10 USD per piece (Int. MN, 2016). The lamps are sold by local entrepreneurs or sales agents that distribute the lamps on local markets, door-to-door sale, and in-home sales events (Little Sun, 2016). As Mohamed (Little Sun's management representative in Tanzania) explains, Little Sun cooperates with capacity builders that are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working with youth and women in different communities. Here the main focus lies on those women and young people who did not succeed to finish secondary school and thus only have basic education. Currently Little Sun employs 253 sales agents across Tanzania to distribute Little Sun lamps. Little Sun is passing on its products to the local capacity builders. These are training women and youth to become sales agents. Once finished the training, the sales agents are provided with a starter-kit containing flyers, brochures, a t-shirt and two lights. Having sold a lamp, the sales agents are transferring the money through mobile to the local capacity builder. The sales agents are paid on commission and receive about 1 USD for each lamp they sell (Int. MN, 2016).

Mobisol is a Berlin-based social business, founded in 2011, that sells solar-home systems in various sizes that are suitable to power LED lights, mobile phones, TVs or other household appliances. So far, the social business concentrates its operations to East Africa with the ambition for further expansion (Mobisol, 2016). The marketing and distribution functions through local sales points and sales agents in each region. Currently, Mobisol employs 545 sales agents nationwide – about half of them are women. Whereas the solar home systems are sold in the sales points, the sales agents are marketing the product on local markets and through door-to-door marketing, trying to bring potential customers to the sales office. The sales agents are working on a freelance basis and are paid on commission. For each customer that purchases a product, they are paid about 23.000 TZS (10 USD).

5. Analysis

The structure of the analysis is guided by the analytical framework. The first part thus concerns the question of *how* the solar enterprises influence the empowerment or disempowerment of female sales agents. The second part focuses on the *conditions* under which the solar enterprise impact the female sales agents.

5.1. Part 1: How and through which aspects of the solar enterprises are female sales agents empowered/disempowered?

This section is dedicated to identify the aspects of the social enterprise and establish how they have led to empowerment/disempowerment of the female sales agents on the psychological, economic and social and cultural dimension. The analysis of this part is predominantly based on the information we obtained through interviews with the female sales agents. Thus the empowering and disempowering effects we find are derived from the subjective viewpoints, feelings and experiences of the female sales agents. The women of both companies indicated that the aspects of the employment itself, the payment as well as the training provided had the biggest effects on them in terms of empowerment and disempowerment. Furthermore, we found that their social network expanded, which influenced the women in an empowering or disempowering manner, as we shall see in more detail below. How the components of the employment itself, the payment training and social network relate to our analytical framework is illustrated in figure 5.

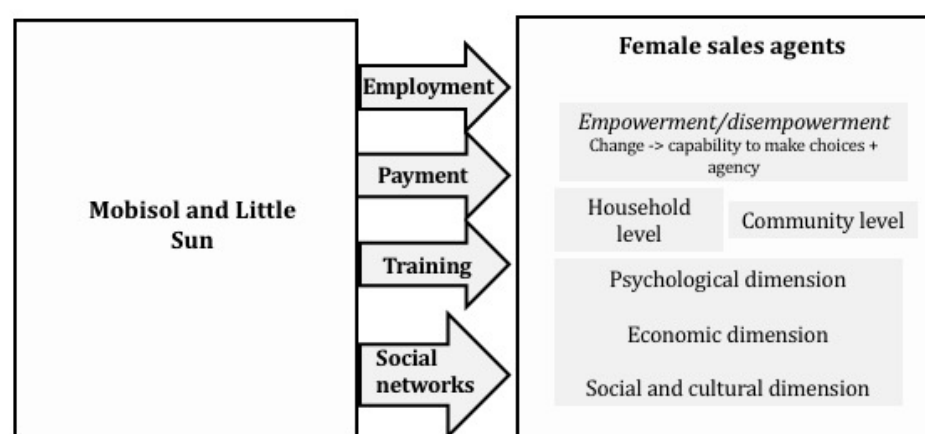


Figure 5: Empowering/disempowering components of Mobisol and Little Sun
Source: own illustration

In the subsequent sections we will use and analyse these four aspects of Mobisol and Little Sun on the psychological, economic and social and cultural dimensions. Our findings are summarized in a table in the end of each section.

5.1.1. Psychological dimension

On the psychological dimension, we assess how the female sales agents are psychologically affected in terms of empowerment or disempowerment through the different aspects of Mobisol and Little Sun. As outlined above, these aspects include the employment itself considering the nature of the job, the payment, the training and the social network that the companies provide. Psychological empowerment or disempowerment implies a change in the perception of themselves, how they think others perceive them and how they feel in different environments. We will specifically assess empowering and disempowering effects on the psychological dimension within the household, in relation to close family members, and in the community, regarding the marketplace, neighbours and others.

Employment

On a psychological dimension, we found empowering and disempowering effects for the female sales agents working at Mobisol and Little Sun. Through the employment and work environment offered by the companies, all women described feeling more confident, independent and stronger. However, women working for Mobisol as well as for Little Sun stressed that they took on the employment as sales agents in addition to other household duties such as taking care of the children and the household.

Mobisol: Especially for the younger women working at Mobisol, the experience from having a job had contributed to the formulation of goals and ambitions, who described dreams of becoming the big boss of Mobisol or starting their own business based on their newly gained experience. The job itself involves a lot of travelling and walking around in the sun for many hours, which many women expressed to be exhausting and difficult. Some of the women were keen to comment that the difficult nature of the job had made them stronger in overcoming challenges (Int. MA2, 2016). Sauda, a 29-year old single mother, did no longer feel the need to find a husband to rely on financially, as her experience of working at Mobisol showed her the possibility of being financially independent (Int. MA4, 2016). All the respondents had experienced that the community respected them more now when they had a job instead of sitting at home doing nothing. The women felt

respected walking around in Mobisol t-shirts, and stressed that the big name of Mobisol immediately put them in a more respectful position within the community, compared to the status they had prior to their employment at Mobisol. Neema, a woman in her 50s, proudly said she was known in her community as “Mama Mobisol”. Neema said she was respected for her successes at work, and for her ability to simultaneously take care of her family, maintain her farm and work at Mobisol (Int. MA2, 2016).

Little Sun: The Little Sun sales agents described similar experiences, they felt more appreciated within their families as well as in their household. As Nuru (21) explains, even though she is young, her family and the community respected her for having a job (Int. L6, 2016). Furthermore, the women working at Little Sun are mostly living and selling the lamp in off-grid areas and they said that they were not only respected in association with the brand of the company or the job itself, but also for the product they sold and the solutions it brought to the customers living in off-grid areas (Int. L4, 2016).

Payment

Mobisol: Regarding their payment, the women described effects and feelings similar to those of having the employment itself. The women stated that their confidence had increased from having an income. This is because the income made it possible for the women to formulate goals and believe in the possibility to achieve them. Upendo put it like this: “Some just sit around waiting to get married. There is more to life than to get married” (Int. L6, 2016). The women dared to have the idea to invest in themselves and create a new lifestyle while being financially independent. The women were optimistic of their chance to increase their living standards. To put this in perspective, some of the women explained that they now had the money to afford rejecting men approaching them for sexual services. The relief and empowerment to be able to make the choice to refuse, increased the self-esteem of the women. A 26-year-old Mobisol sales agent highlighted the importance of her income. As a single woman with no family members to financially support her, her lack of alternatives would have forced her to cease any opportunity of income to fulfil her basic needs (Int. MM, 2016). Another single, 18-year-old sales agent expressed her pride and happiness of being able to help her mother with household expenses through her income (Int. MA4, 2016). Our married respondents said the income helped reduce tensions with their husbands by allowing the women themselves to solve financial issues and provide for the family without the constant assistance from their husband, making the women feel stronger, more independent, and in a little less inferior position compared to their husbands.

Little Sun: All of the Little Sun sales agents stressed that since they earn their own income, they are more respected within their families and communities and they feel proud to have the capability to provide for their families. One of the women said: “at the beginning we had nothing, we were ruled by the men”, indicating that income had increased the position of the women (Int. L4, 2016). This expression indicates a strong feeling of empowerment; the women sensed that their income positively changed their position within the family and community, even though we noted that the women were accompanied by their male head of their Maasai community since they were not allowed to meet visitors alone.

Training

Furthermore, the women describe the training which the companies offered as an aspect that impacted them. Through the training that was offered by Mobisol and Little Sun, the women had been equipped with a skill-set that gave them hope for the future and their career path.

Mobisol: The newly acquired skills and capabilities had made the women believe in their own potential to grow within the company or to start their own business. Upendo, 32 years old, intended to use the skills she acquired in marketing and sales for expanding her own business (Int. MA2, 2016). A 21-year-old Mobisol sales agent saw her own potential after acquiring the new skills to start a career within Mobisol with the hope to achieve a full-time employment (Int. MM, 2016). Within the community, the women felt empowered due to their increased confidence in social interactions, which increases their capability to speak up and thus to make their own choices. The women stated that the communication training had given them confidence to speak to a variety of people, leading to more confident interaction with community members. Paulina emphasized her increased ability to master interactions with many different people in life with confidence (Int. MA4, 2016).

Little Sun: The women working at Little Sun explained that the training about the product itself as well as the training in sales skills made them more confident in selling the product (Int. L6, 2016/Int. L4, 2016).

Social networks

Taking on the employment as sales agents, the women expanded their social networks in terms of colleagues, customers and markets. The social networks provided by the job gave the women an empowering sense of belonging in the community.

Mobisol: Neema used to be shy, but happily said she now communicated well and often with others and had made many new connections (Int. MA2, 2016). At the same time, the women were disempowered by their vulnerability and exposure in the market in terms of men yelling at them and asking them for sexual services. A female sales agent working at Mobisol describes the situation, which all the Mobisol sales agents stated to be the biggest challenge of the job: "Some people take the phone number and if I refuse I often get yelled at. I lose my job if I refuse. Men often do not have respect for me" (Int. MM, 2016). Mary informed us that the first step of selling the product is to give your own phone number to the potential customer. A common incident stated by the respondents were men taking the leaflet with the number of the sales agents and calling in the middle of the night, asking if she was married or wanted to meet up. As the sales agents are required to maintain a professional response to all the potential customers, including men approaching them inappropriately, they are put in a vulnerable position with limited ability to leave or defend themselves. A few of the women said that they had learned to handle these men to their advantage, telling them to buy a product in order to get their number (Int. MA4, 2016). At least the women expressed the ability to reject the men due to their income, which most likely increased the mental stability of the women. Although the women are psychologically empowered through increased self-confidence and independence, it is a mentally challenging job that puts them in a vulnerable position and requires the women to have the stamina to overcome these challenges.

Little Sun: In comparison to the Mobisol sales agents, the women did not complain about men approaching them inappropriately. Instead they emphasized their new social network where customers value and respect them for selling a product that brings light to the off-grid communities (Int. L4, 2016).

	Providing employment	Payment	Training	Social networks
Household	<i>Mobisol:</i> Self-confidence (+) Independence (+) Strength (+) Ambition (+) <i>Little Sun:</i> Self-confidence (+) Independence (+) Strength (+)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Self-esteem (+)	<i>Mobisol:</i> Hope for a future career (+)	-

Community	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Self-confidence (+) Independence (+) Respect from the community (+)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Recognition and respect (+)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Confidence to speak up in public places and sell the product (+)	<i>Mobisol:</i> Increased confidence to talk to people (+) Disrespected/increased vulnerability (-) <i>Little Sun:</i> Respect from customers (+)
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Table 2: Findings on the psychological dimension

"+" indicates empowerment; "-" indicates disempowerment

As it is summarized in the table above (table 2), we found empowering and disempowering effects of the employment, payment, training and social networks on the female sales agents employed at Little Sun and Mobisol. Overall, our main findings for the sales agents of both companies regarding psychological empowerment are increased self-confidence, respect and recognition from the family and community. These can be seen as particularly empowering because it increases the women's capability to make choices and their degree of agency. Being more self-confident and respected facilitates decision-making and the achievement of intended outcomes.

Even though we found similar or the same empowering effects for some aspects for the Mobisol and Little Sun sales agents, it does not mean that they possess the same capability to make choices. Empowerment describes the process of change which can take place on different stages. Comparing the findings of the two companies on the psychological dimension one can see a few differences. We found especially some of the younger Mobisol sales agents to be very ambitious regarding their future. Being successful at their job made them realize their potential and the possibility, even as women, to earn their own income and build a career. We found a similar difference in the effects from the training. Whereas the training gave the Mobisol sales agents hope to be able to use the skills for a future career, the Little Sun sales agents simply expressed that the skills helped them selling the Little Sun lamp. Furthermore, all of the Mobisol sales agents stated that the biggest challenge of their job are men that approach them inappropriately in the marketplace or when selling the product door-to-door. This is a disempowering effect where the women are limited in their capability to make choices, as they are incapable to choose to leave the marketplace and escape the exposing situation because of the necessity to always be polite when advertising and selling the products.

5.1.2. Economic dimension

On the economic dimension, we assess how the sales agents are empowered economically with regards to the different aspects of the companies. Economic empowerment involves a change in the women's business activities and what decision-making power they possess related to these. On the household levels this involves the capability to make choices and agency towards other close family members such as the husband. On the community level, economic empowerment can take place with regards to the employer, credit institutions or other community institutions and members. Our findings did not indicate that the women experienced economic empowerment or disempowerment in terms of their expanded social networks.

Employment

On an economic dimension, the women were empowered by their employment at Mobisol and Little Sun which provided them with experience and thus increased opportunity to build a career. Working at Mobisol and Little Sun had helped the majority of women to gain enough experience to be more successful in the job they had next to being a sales agent, thus increasing overall profits.

Mobisol: Stella commented: "not only money but also the experience from working. Using skills to develop my own business" (Int. MA4, 2016). Paulina further said: "Mobisol is just a step to experience and in the future build up my own business" (Int. MA4, 2016). Apart from a few respondents saying that their goal was to build a career within Mobisol, the majority aimed to start their own business and they emphasized that the experience they gained at Mobisol would help them in being successful. The seasonal nature of the job caused frustration among the women, as farmers only had enough money to buy the products after harvest, and people employed in the tourism industry only had purchasing power during the high season. The long hours spent in the sun at markets or going door-to-door exhausted the women and resulted in a poor hourly wage. Besides Upendo, who had a prior job at a petroleum company and moved to Mobisol when she got pregnant, no other woman had any real prior employment. They had either worked in their own small business selling various items, or carried out unpaid domestic work at home. The lack of alternative employment opportunities put the women in a poor bargaining position towards their employer regarding their working conditions. The low hourly wage due to the hard work of getting customers, and the fact that the salary consists of only commission, had created big monthly variations in salaries for the women (MM; Int. MA2, 2016; Int. MA4, 2016).

Little Sun: Four women employed at Little Sun argued that “the time we take to move around selling product, the energy we spend, and the speed of the product we sell is very minimal” (Int. L4, 2016). Just like the Mobisol sales agents expressed, we found the same disempowering effect for the Little Sun sales agents in terms of low bargaining power due to the lack of other employment opportunities. On the community level, the respondents explained that having a job increased their chances of obtaining a loan, not only because of the income but because they proved to the community that they were responsible enough to keep a job. One woman stated that the credit institution perceived the women as responsible people who could guarantee to repay the loan (Int. L4, 2016).

Payment

The economic empowerment due to the payment from the job, was clearly one of the biggest benefits for the women working at Mobisol and Little Sun. This allowed the women to accumulate capital, invest in their family, themselves, or in their own business.

Mobisol: One of the women of Mobisol used the income to “pay the school fees for my cousins because they cannot afford it” (Int. MM, 2016). Neema’s income helped pay school fees for her children, but she had also built two houses with her salary and had recently opened a bank account (Int. MA2, 2016). Upendo’s income was spent on groceries and school fees, and other household expenses (Int. MA2, 2016). Others raised capital for their business (Int. MA2, 2016). As mentioned above, the women needed to be cautious with their spendings due to the seasonal nature of the job and the irregular payments. Sauda explained: “biggest challenge is the salary. Work so much but at the end of the month not really much left” (Int. MA4, 2016). Despite the limited economic empowerment in terms of income level, the women still named the payment they received as the most beneficial factor of their job. This is because they could contribute to household expenses, which has empowered them with more decision-making power in the family. Our data shows that the women’s access to paid work increases their decision-making power within the family and community, and thus has a positive impact on women’s empowerment (Int. MA4, 2016; Int. MA2, 2016).

Little Sun: Also the interviewees at Little Sun stated that it is not only the income they earn, but also the fact that they have a job outside their home where they can “be someone” in the eyes of both the family and community, which increases their decision-making power on these levels (Int. L6, 2016). The income gave some of the women more decision-making power within the family regarding how to spend the money. The four Masaai women at Little Sun said “we can say something; we can

contribute more than before. Because if we are empty, we can't speak" (Int. L4, 2016). Before the women contributed to the household income, they could not participate in the decision-making of how to spend the income. Moreover, most of the women at Little Sun explained their aim to accumulate capital to facilitate loan accessibility to be able to start their own businesses (Int. L4, 2016). One of the women, Elizabeth, spends her income on tailoring classes to improve her skills and build up her own tailoring business (Int. L6, 2016).

Training

Mobisol: The women believed that their newly acquired skills could further empower them economically in the future. The training provided by the companies could be helpful to get future employment or start a business, according to the respondents (MM; Int. MA2, 2016; Int. MA4, 2016). The women listed communication-, marketing- and sales skills as the most valuable competencies taken from the training. Neema stressed: "I learned how to convince customers to buy a certain product, so that is something I can use in my business" (Int. MA2, 2016). Mary agreed, saying: "convincing people is very difficult but you learn so much. If you want to open your own business you already learned a lot" (Int. MA4, 2016).

Little Sun: The Little Sun sales agents described similar experiences. The basic life skills as well as specific skills of how to market and sell products did not only contribute to successfully selling Little Sun lamps, but also had positive effects on the success of the women's other businesses (Int. L4, 2016, Int. L6, 2016).

	Providing employment	Payment	Training
Household	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Increased business opportunities (+)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Increased decision-making power (+) Seasonal job=irregular income (-)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Increased career opportunities (+)
Community	<i>Mobisol:</i> Poor bargaining position towards employer (-) <i>Little Sun:</i> Access to loans (+) Poor bargaining position towards employer (-)	<i>Little Sun:</i> Access to loans (+)	

Table 3: Findings on the economic dimension

"+" indicates empowerment; "-" indicates disempowerment

Our main empowering finding concerning economic empowerment is increased decision making power within the household for both Mobisol and Little Sun sales agents. This kind of empowerment means that the women have a higher capability to choose what to spend their income on, and a higher degree of agency towards other people involved in that decision, in most cases the husband. As already noted in the previous chapter, even though we find some similar empowering effects for Little Sun and Mobisol sales agents, the empowerment can occur on different stages. In addition, we only consider the women's viewpoints of their empowerment which makes the matter of empowerment and disempowerment very subjective. For these reasons, different women can feel empowered or disempowered to the same extent and at the same time possess a different degree of agency and capability to make choices. The strongest economically disempowering aspect that we found is related to the employment itself and concerns the low bargaining power that the women possess towards their employers. Due to the lack of alternatives, the women's choices are limited and the authority of their employers determines the low salary they receive.

5.1.3. Social and cultural dimension

In this section we will assess how the female sales agents are socially and culturally empowered/disempowered through the different aspects of Mobisol and Little Sun. Empowerment on the social and cultural dimension involves a change in patriarchal structures of the society that keep women in disadvantaged positions. We will assess if and how these patriarchal structures were subject to change on the household and community level.

Employment

Mobisol: In consequence to their employment as sales agents at Mobisol, Neema and Upendo had taken initiatives to hire a maid to help them out in the household (Int. MA2, 2016). The majority of our younger respondents, who did not yet have a husband or children, envisioned a future where they would be working and not be solely responsible for the household work. The female sales agents were empowered by their changing role in the communities, as they were mostly respected as working women and increasingly accepted as the breadwinners of their family.

Little Sun: On the social and cultural dimension we found that the employment provided by Little Sun only partly empowered the female sales agents on the household level. In the Maasai village, patriarchal norms only seemed to have changed slightly in consequence of the women taking on the

job (Int. L4, 2016). However, other women did not seem to accept their traditional role to take care of the household. Instead they had been socially empowered through their job by visualizing an alternative and more independent way of life. Traditionally, it is still the woman's task to take care of the family in Tanzania. We found that even after taking on the job at Little Sun, the women still had the sole responsibility for the household. The Maasai women at Little Sun gave us an overview of their daily tasks: "we are on the farm in the morning, around 6 we do the work there to 10 in the morning. We come back, we do something for our kids. And then after that, around 11, we move out of our lands, to the markets and elsewhere" (Int. L4, 2016). We asked if the responsibilities had changed after taking on the job, and if the husband now helped them with the household duties. The women laughed and replied: "maybe if you are sick" (Int. L4, 2016). Even though the social and cultural norms seem rigid in this regard, the women seemed aware of the gender inequality and emphasized that they wished the situation would be different for their daughters. The women did not believe that the situation would change from one day to the other, but they were optimistic that providing their daughters with education would help them live a more independent life. (Int. L4, 2016/Int. L6, 2016).

Payment

Mobisol: The women were now able to provide not only for themselves, but for both close and distant family members, as was the case for two of our interviewees who paid school fees for their cousins' children and their grandchildren (MM, Int. MA2, 2016). Traditionally, men have higher education than women in Tanzania. However, due to her income, Mary sought to save enough to get her own education (Int. MA4, 2016). One of the younger women further expressed that the "husband is not most important, need income that's most important" (Int. MA4, 2016), which is a non-traditional way of seeing her role in society for a Tanzanian woman. It is possible that the self-sufficiency provided by the income made her realise the possibility of being independent.

Little Sun: At a household level, a Maasai woman described the change in both decision-making power of how to spend the income, but also the newfound respect by the children towards their mother who now possessed the ability to solve their financial issues (Int. L4, 2016). The income of the women had also impacted the women's relation to their husbands. One Maasai woman said her husband now stayed with her instead of leaving her for a younger wife, since he knew the woman could provide for him. The dependency in this case had shifted from the wife to the husband. The Little Sun women described an empowering feeling: "the community respect us, and they value us, because we contribute something for the development of our families" (Int. L4, 2016). The income

of the women does to some extent change their role in the community, as men used to be the only ones with an income to provide for their families.

Training

Mobisol/Little Sun: The training had empowered the Little Sun and the Mobisol sales agents socially as they felt more comfortable in social interactions. In addition, the training has potential to impact empowerment on the social and cultural dimension because it has raised awareness amongst the women regarding the importance of increasing education opportunities for women (Int. L4, 2016; Int. L6, 2016; MM; Int. MA2, 2016; Int. MA4, 2016).

Social networks

Mobisol: With regards to the social network, the women experienced social empowerment both through their sense of belonging and in being more visible and involved at social spaces such as the market. The respondents were happy with their increased social network in the community, built through their job and the connections it facilitated (Int. MA4, 2016; Int. MA2, 2016). These networks in social places meant the women were more visible in the community. The social network could provide a sense of belonging for the women, and also a chance to discuss collectively about issues they were facing. Nonetheless, talking with all kinds of people in the social networks also includes the men we discussed earlier, approaching the sales agents inappropriately. It is clear that despite taking on a new role in the community as an employee and “breadwinner”, this did not change the custom of men approaching women for sexual services, seeing them as inferior and not respecting their will (MM; Int. MA4, 2016; Int. MA2, 2016).

Little Sun: Also the Little Sun women expanded their social networks, which includes new colleagues, friends and customers (Int. L6, 2016; Int. L4, 2016), and now transcends household borders. This provides the potential opportunity to have a collective voice within the community.

	Providing employment	Payment	Training	Social networks
Household	<i>Mobisol</i> : Shared household responsibilities (change in patriarchal structures) (+)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun</i> : Increased financial independence (+)	<i>Mobisol/Little Sun</i> : Increased awareness of importance of	-

	<i>Little Sun:</i> Increased awareness of inequality (+), but no actual change of the role of the woman (-)	More respect of family members (+) Increased decision-making power (+)	education (+)	
Community		<i>Mobisol/Little Sun:</i> Increased perception of the women as “breadwinners” (+)		<i>Mobisol:</i> More visibility and opportunity to raise a collective voice (+) Inferior position/exposure (-) <i>Little Sun:</i> More visibility and opportunity to raise a collective voice (+)

Table 4: Findings on the social and cultural dimension “+” indicates empowerment; “-” indicates disempowerment

On the social and cultural dimension, we found significant differences between the sales agents of Mobisol and those of Little Sun. As a result of having the employment as a sales agent at Mobisol, some of the women were not solely responsible for the household duties anymore, as is traditionally the case in Tanzania. For our Little Sun interviewees this tradition had not changed and the women were still responsible for the household duties. They were aware of the existing inequalities but for them, this awareness and the employment did not lead to a change in the traditional role of the woman. However, the Little Sun sales agents explained that education is key in order for the role of the woman to change. Most of the women told us that they spent their income on sending their daughters to school. Furthermore, Ziola emphasized the importance of promoting an equal role of men and women within the family. She further explained that children have to learn from the start that there is no gender difference and that men, for instance, are as responsible for preparing food as women (Int. L6, 2016).

5.2. Part 2: Under what conditions do the solar enterprises impact the empowerment of their female sales agents?

In this second part of the analysis, we seek to understand the conditions that explain the impact of the solar enterprises. To be precise, we aim to study how the business model of the enterprise affects the impact it has. For instance, we are interested in examining if the solar enterprises can be defined as “social enterprises” according to our definition of it and if their business model is more

aligned with the one of a development tool or a development agent, in order to see if and how this influences the impact of the enterprises on the female sales agents.

The three conditions for being a social enterprise and the three criteria for being a development agent can be connected to various aspects of a business model. The social enterprise condition of having social aims and outcomes, and the development agent criteria of actively targeting the poor, both regard the strategy and vision of a business model (see table 5). The social enterprise condition of embedding the social mission in structures and governance, and the development agent criteria of being accountable for development, both relate to the activities of the business model for implementing its vision. The social enterprise condition of how to use profits and the development agent criteria of investing resources in developmental issues, links to the financial management aspect of a business model. We seek to fill the boxes below with data on Little Sun's and Mobisol's business models regarding their strategy, activities and financial management. This serves two purposes. First of all, it shows the relation of the business models of Little Sun and Mobisol to the social enterprise- and development agent concepts. Secondly, it informs us of the importance of the business model itself by showing its impact on female sales agent's empowerment/disempowerment. This will give us input for our discussion in the next chapter, where we discuss the certain conditions that need to be fulfilled in order for the solar businesses to contribute to development. Our analysis will follow the structure of the three business model aspects.

Business Model Aspects	Social Enterprise Definition	Criteria of a Development Agent	Little Sun	Mobisol
1. Strategy: Vision, segment targeting	Social aims and outcomes	Actively targeting the poor	?	?
2. Activities: Implementation of vision	Embedding social mission in structure and governance	Accountability	?	?
3. Financial management: Investment of profits	The use of profits	Investing resources in developmental issues	?	?

Table 5: Interrelation of business model aspects with the social enterprise and development agent concept

5.2.1. Strategy: vision, segment targeting

To answer the question of how the vision of the solar enterprises impact empowerment of their female sales agents, we first outline Little Sun's and Mobisol's visions. The vision will indicate if, how and for whom the businesses intend to contribute to development.

The vision of Little Sun is to *"provide clean, solar-powered Little Sun light to as many people in the world as we can, focusing our reach particularly in off-grid areas, which need light the most"* and also to *"strengthen off-grid communities from the inside out, training young local entrepreneurs to become Little Sun sales agents and powering their small businesses with an initial seed capital of Little Sun lamps"* (Little Sun, 2016). As we can see in the second part of its vision, Little Sun has a focus on training and empowering sales agents, which is further emphasized by the designer of the Little Sun lamp, Olafur Eliasson, who states that *"the distribution part of this project is also powerful. If [local merchants] make a few bucks selling it there's something there that I consider a work of art as well. The microeconomic infrastructure needed to take this to the end user is also part of the Little Sun vision"* (Little Sun, 2016). From Little Sun's vision we see that providing training and an initial seed capital are the two ways that Little Sun aims to empower its sales agents. From our interview with the representative for Little Sun in Tanzania (Int. MN, 2016), we found that Little Sun recognizes the need to enable support to help change the role of women and empower women in Tanzania. Mohamed envisioned a future for Little Sun in Tanzania where the enterprise employs women in most rural areas who sell Little Sun lamps, with the hope that by then, *"women are already empowered and livelihood for their families is good"* (Int. MN, 2016).

Mobisol's vision is to *"be a socially responsible business with the clear aim to empower communities in developing nations with affordable and clean solar energy. We aspire to work and live in an environment where business not only means profit, but also responsibility"* (Mobisol, 2016). Mobisol further states its general goal to *"act responsibly towards team colleagues, customers, other stakeholders and the environment"*, but does not include a specific aim of empowering its female sales agents (Mobisol, 2016). Thus, in contrast to Little Sun, Mobisol's vision does not state how or even if it aims to empower its sales agents.

The vision impacts the solar enterprises' segment targeting strategies and the entry requirements for women aspiring to become sales agents. In line with Blowfield's and Dolan's (2014) definition of a development agent, Little Sun actively targets the poorest segments with regards to both their customers and the sales agents they recruit, employing poor women in rural areas as sales agents.

Little Sun has determined to only employ women and youth as sales agents. Little Sun has approached local NGOs with local knowledge to help recruit women with entrepreneurial potential but lack opportunities due to failing to proceed to secondary school. Little Sun focuses on the poorest of the poor by selecting and training these underprivileged women in rural areas to become sales agents. The only entry requirements for the women are the abilities to read and write (Int. MN, 2016).

Mobisol on the other hand, does not cooperate with NGOs to find female sales agents amongst the unprivileged women in rural areas. Mobisol requires their sales agents to, besides being able to read and write, have a smartphone and a driver's license (Int. Ab, 2016). Although some exceptions had been made for women who possessed the personal traits desired by Mobisol (e.g. honesty and aggressiveness), the entry requirements generally exclude women who cannot afford a smartphone or a driver's license. Mobisol operates from selling points in bigger villages, and therefore needs the female sales agents to be able to physically get to the village. Thus, the enterprise excludes women in rural areas without the ability to travel. We found one example where Mobisol made an exception for a sales agent with limited ability to walk, who was allowed to make sales calls from her house (Int. M2, 2016). Whether this exception was an attempt to include women with disabilities and provide them with work, or if the woman sold so much that the company did not want to lose her (she was very successful), is a question we cannot answer. Regardless, we note Mobisol's adaptation of work to one employee's needs.

Mobisol does not have an explicit focus on hiring women or empowering its female sales agents, although it states on its website that it is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from qualified women and men, without discrimination (Mobisol, 2016). Mobisol's HR department says it strives to keep a gender balance of its positions, which has resulted in Mobisol's employment of hundreds of women as sales agents throughout Tanzania (Int. Ab, 2016). Regarding its customers, Mobisol targets customers who are part of the emerging middle-tier of the BoP, living in rural off-grid areas in developing countries (GNESD, 2016).

Although Little Sun targets the poorest of the poor in rural areas, it is difficult to determine if the enterprise contributes more to the empowerment of women with its business model compared to Mobisol. Both enterprises recruit women who lack a high level of education, and offer training and sharpening of entrepreneurial skills. The extent and sense of empowerment is, as shown by our data, highly individual and dependent on additional factors besides the enterprise's business model, such as the family situation, mental stamina, and the physical ability to travel. We found these additional factors to serve as entry requirements to some extent, as the women require certain

mental and physical conditions in order to carry out the work by walking in the sun and handling men approaching them.

Mobisol is passively aiming to employ women, as the enterprise has the goal to have a gender balanced workplace and recruits on the basis of skills, regardless of gender. What we found, however, is that in the context of severe gender imbalances prevailing in Tanzania, firms must go out of their way to find and recruit women, especially women of the poorest segments. Mobisol does not reach the poorest of the poor in the rural areas and therefore does not have the ability to empower the most disempowered. Little Sun makes an effort to find the women with very little to offer, and helps them with skills training. It is interesting to note how these differences in segment targeting affect the inclusion and exclusion of women that can be empowered.

Little Sun and Mobisol include clear social aims in their visions and strategies, both fulfilling the first condition of being social enterprises according to the definition we use in this paper. Little Sun actively targets the poor when recruiting female sales agents, while Mobisol rather focuses on employing people with desired personal traits while striving to achieve a gender balanced workforce. Little Sun therefore fulfils the first criteria of being a development agent. Mobisol does not fulfil these criteria although it is more than a commercial enterprise in this regard through its aim of having a gender balanced workforce. Little Sun envisions development for both customers, through access to affordable energy, and female sales agents, by providing training and an initial seed capital. Mobisol views development mainly as an outcome for its customers and their communities through the provision of the product itself: clean and affordable energy. Little Sun's vision clearly enables the empowerment of its female sales agents, whilst Mobisol's vision is more focused on other development objectives such as distributing clean energy.

5.2.2. Activities: Implementing the vision

To answer the question of how the solar enterprises implement their vision, we write about the activities they carry out. First of all, Little Sun exclusively employs women and youth as sales agents, in line with their vision. Little Sun implements this part of its vision with the help of NGOs, and intentionally invests in training to solve the problem of uneducated women in rural areas who failed to obtain a secondary education. Little Sun offers a solution for these unskilled and uneducated women, by equipping them with the necessary skill-set for life ("basic life skills") and skills in sales and marketing in order to be able to work as a sales agent. Besides training of employees, Little Sun embeds its social mission in its distribution structure, establishing sustainable trade routes and

creating jobs in rural off-grid communities. Little Sun helps to generate local profit and jobs by supplying off-grid small businesses with Little Sun lamps at subsidized prices (Little Sun Factsheet, 2013).

Mobisol also invests in women's training at Mobisol Academy, where the newly recruited sales agents are equipped with entrepreneurial skills. Mobisol states that it contributes to human empowerment in rural communities through its training of young people at Mobisol Academy (Ansole, 2015). Mobisol Academy "provides local actors with the professional and practical training needed to take 'development' into their own hands" (Mobisol Akademie, 2015). The training of employees is also one of Mobisol's key infrastructures needed to successfully run its operations (USAID, 2014).

An important difference between Mobisol and Little Sun is that the former does not actively approach the underprivileged women in rural areas for filling sales agent positions, neither do they offer training in "basic life skills" as they expect the women to already possess these. Mobisol rather assesses the personal traits of female applicants approaching the enterprise to see if they have what it takes to become sales agents (Int. Ab, 2016). While Mobisol offers training exclusively to its new recruits, Little Sun invests in training sessions where it only expects to employ around seventy or eighty of a hundred women they provide the training to. Little Sun thus invests to find solutions to disadvantaged women's issues, and claims that by investing in the development of these groups of women, they are helping to develop the whole society (Int. MN, 2016).

However, there is more work to be done. For example, Little Sun expects the women to already have the permission from their husbands to work (Int. MN, 2016). In case the women are not permitted to work, Little Sun does nothing to interfere in this situation. Thus, even though Little Sun does not see it as an entry requirement, the family situation of the women affects their ability to engage with the enterprise. Women without their husband's permission, without primary education and with a lack of entrepreneurial skills, will thus be excluded from the job opportunity provided by the solar enterprise. Local traditions of women taking care of the household restricted many women to apply and work for Little Sun, according to Little Sun's representative (Int. MN, 2016). As a side note to illustrate the exclusion of some women from job opportunities, we interviewed another solar enterprise called Devergy, who did not employ many women as sales agents because they did not have the right skills and, if married, were not allowed to travel long distances (Int. F, 2016).

In terms of accountability for developmental outcomes, Mobisol monitors project outcomes and social impact that are presented in quarterly reports to donors and financial partners. In accordance

with its B Corporation certification, requiring accountability of social and environmental performance (GNESD, 2016), Mobisol collects statistics to track and measure its economic, social and environmental impact. However, Mobisol does not consider the empowerment of women as a specific development objective for its operations, and therefore has no reports on its impact on this development issue. For example, Mobisol is accountable in terms of environmental criteria through its carbon offset project it has developed in cooperation with 'myclimate' (Mobisol, 2013), but lacks an equivalent monitoring system for women's empowerment.

Little Sun embeds its social mission in its recruitment-, training- and distribution processes, living up to the second condition of our social enterprise definition. Mobisol's social mission concerns the empowerment of communities through providing clean and affordable energy and embeds the mission in its structure and governance. Both enterprises thus also fulfil the second condition of our social enterprise definition. Mobisol states it addresses development through providing 'self-help' to its employees in terms of professional and practical training. This is in line with the concept of a development tool, which passively contributes to development through its business operations (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). Mobisol is nevertheless showing accountability for its social and environmental impact related to its aims and strategy, which unfortunately for our study does not include the empowerment of its female sales agents. However, Mobisol fulfils the development agent criteria of being accountable for social outcomes and is more of a development agent than Little Sun in this regard. Little Sun has not published any reports on how the enterprise is ensuring its accountability of developmental outcomes, which positions Little Sun as a development tool rather than achieving the status of a development agent in this regard.

5.2.3. Financial management: Investment of profits

Our aim with this section is to understand how the enterprises use the profits they generate: for self-sufficiency or for investments to solve development issues. Little Sun explicitly states that it uses all funds it generates for its project to establish self-sustaining off-grid sales networks and making sure that local entrepreneurs profit. Little Sun's distribution of the lamps in Tanzania is based on a self-funded system, where Little Sun through events and projects worldwide has spread awareness and generated funds to invest in its off-grid distribution. Little Sun also has a pricing system aimed at lowering the product price in off-grid areas in Tanzania, by offering the product to a higher price in on-grid areas. The product is sold to approximately half the price in off-grid compared to on-grid areas, to make the lamp affordable to the poorest segment (Little Sun Factsheet, 2013). The sales of Little Sun lamps in on-grid communities are further meant to

subsidise the supply of the lamps to the local sales agents in off-grid areas, to help generate local profits and build livelihoods (Wolff Olins, 2016). Hence, Little Sun uses profits to create local development impact in off-grid communities.

Just like Little Sun, Mobisol also relies on funds for its operations. A German solar industry professional financed Mobisol's initial product development and its first employees. Since then, Mobisol has continued to attract investors for its growth and expansion, with successful financing rounds primarily involving large, sustainability-focused (development) banks (GNESD, 2016). Little Sun fulfils the third condition of the social enterprise definition, by using all its profits for its projects of helping local entrepreneurs and establishing sustainable off-grid sales networks. Little Sun thus also fulfils the last development agent criteria of investing own resources to address development issues. Mobisol did not indicate that it uses any of its own profits to invest in women's empowerment, or any other developmental outcome, and therefore does not fulfil the third development agent criteria. However, our findings indicate that Mobisol uses its profits for self-sufficiency and to keep its operations running (GNESD, 2016). Therefore, Mobisol also qualifies as a social enterprise regarding the third condition of our definition. A summary of findings regarding the business models of Little Sun and Mobisol can be found in table 6.

Little Sun and Mobisol both live up to the three conditions of our social enterprise definition, with their social aims, their social mission embedded in its structures, and their use of profits for self-sufficiency or developmental impact. With the data we have collected, we define both Little Sun and Mobisol as social enterprises. In contrast to Little Sun, Mobisol's social aims embedded in its structures do not include the aim to empower its female sales agents. Furthermore, Mobisol's use of profits regards mainly survival purposes rather than investments aimed at addressing development issues.

We did not find any of the enterprises to be ideal development agents, in accordance with Blowfield's and Dolan's (2014) definition. Little Sun lacks accountability mechanisms for its developmental impact. With such mechanisms in place we would have considered the enterprise a development agent. Nevertheless, Little Sun is more than a simple development tool, through its active targeting of the poorest segment and by investing its own resources to address developmental issues. Mobisol is not a development agent due to its lack of an active focus on targeting the poor and failure to live up to the criteria of investing own resources to address development issues. However, Mobisol's accountability mechanisms for its social and environmental impact distinguishes the enterprise from other commercial businesses. Mobisol is therefore more than a development tool in this regard.

Business Model Aspects	Social Enterprise Definition	Criteria of a Development Agent	Little Sun	Mobisol
1. Strategy: Vision, segment targeting	Social aims and outcomes	Actively targeting the poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social aim regarding product is to distribute clean energy to off-grid areas - Social aim regarding other parts of business is to strengthen off-grid communities, train young local entrepreneurs, power businesses with seed capital - Specific aim to only employ women as local entrepreneurs/sales agents - Entry requirements include reading and writing skills - Actively targets women of the poorest segment, in the off-grid areas, without secondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social aim regarding product is to empower communities in developing countries with clean and affordable energy - Social aim to be socially responsible towards customers, employees, stakeholders and the environment - No specific aim to employ and empower female sales agents - Entry requirements: reading, writing, having a smart phone and a driver's license - Not actively targeting the poorest segment
2. Activities: Implementation of vision	Embedding social mission in structure and governance	Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social mission embedded in recruitment structure, distribution structure, and in offering basic "life skills" training to build capabilities of the women - No accountability mechanism in place for impact on women's empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social mission regarding provision of clean energy is embedded, but has no social mission regarding empowerment of female sales agents - Accountable for its social and environmental impact - No accountability mechanism in place for impact on women's empowerment
3. Financial management: Investment of profits	The use of profits	Investing resources in developmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using profits to make product affordable to the poorest segment, and to help generate local profits and build capacities of local entrepreneurs/sales agents - Invests resources to address issue of uneducated women in off-grid areas, through training and provision of seed capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of profit is invested in sales training of its employees, which includes its female sales agents - No investments observable that specifically address women's issues - Profits used for self-sufficiency, to keep operations running

Table 6: Summary of findings regarding the business models of Little Sun and Mobisol

6. Discussion

6.1. Discussion of findings

Our analytical framework has helped us to analyse our data in relation to our research question. We designed our analytical framework with regards to its suitability to guide our data analysis. Our research question aims at finding how and under what conditions social enterprises in Tanzania empower or disempower female sales agents, which requires a reflection of different themes in the analytical framework such as business for development, doing business at the BoP and women's empowerment. Seeking to detect underlying explanatory mechanisms for the female sales agents' empowerment and disempowerment through their employment, our research is of explanatory purpose. The analytical framework was developed while conducting interviews and understanding the data. Throughout the process our knowledge about the topic evolved, which made us move back and forth between data and theory. This iterative method proved to be useful in developing our analytical framework. However, it was also challenging to combine various aspects within one framework when constantly discovering new features.

In our analysis, we used the analytical framework to analyse our data and answer our research question in two parts. In the first part we answered the question of *how* the female sales agents were empowered or disempowered, and in the second part we focused on the *conditions* under which the empowerment/disempowerment investigated in the first part took place. In other words, the analysis provided us with insights to the context and interaction (events) of social enterprises and their female sales agents, and identified possible mechanisms explaining the impact of the interaction. Our findings on *how and under what conditions* the female sales agents were empowered or disempowered are summarized in the following paragraph, before we continue in the next section to discuss our findings in relation to the broader debates of our literature review.

Answering our research question

Our research question is "How and under what conditions do the social enterprises Mobisol and Little Sun empower/disempower their female sales agents?". We have answered this question through our gathered data. We found that the majority of the Little Sun and Mobisol female sales agents interviewed experienced mostly empowering effects through the social enterprises' provision of employment, payment, training and social networks. Most of the respondents stated to have gained empowerment in terms of rising financial independence, growing self-confidence and ambitions, and through the increasing respect from family and community members as a

consequence of having the employment. The majority of the women at Mobisol also reported disempowering effects, thus decreased decision-making capabilities and degree of agency, due to their vulnerability and exposure at the market to sexual harassment. Most of the women at both enterprises commented on the disempowering bargaining situation towards their employers, caused by the women's lack of employment alternatives. We also observed some differences between the sales agents of the two enterprises, with the younger Mobisol agents showing more ambition and hope as a result of the employment and training, while the Little Sun agents seemed to have settled with their current situation. Furthermore, some of the Mobisol women received help with household duties since taking on the job, which was not the case for the Little Sun women who seemed to live in a more conservative community.

Regarding the conditions for the empowerment to take place, our findings indicate that the business models of the enterprises play an important role in determining the market segment that is empowered, as well as in tackling the challenges prevailing at the BoP in terms of gender imbalances and community practices. We elaborate on the conditions needed for the empowerment to take place in the next section, by discussing our findings in relation to the broader debates in our literature review.

6.2. Our findings in relation to the broader discussion

We are interested in the ways our findings relate to the broader debates, in terms of the three literature themes reviewed in our paper. In the subsequent paragraphs, we discuss how our findings confirm or contrast our reviewed literature.

6.2.1. Business for development

Our findings confirm and contrast the main assumptions of our first literature theme regarding the concept of business for development. The main assumptions of this literature theme concern the definition of a social enterprise and its social impact and accountability, as well as the discussion on businesses as a development tool and development agent. Both Mobisol and Little Sun are social enterprises according to the Social Enterprise Coalition's definition we use in our literature review (Ridley-Duff, 2008). The problem identified by our literature review regarding the social enterprise definition is its lack of accountability for developmental impacts compared to the definition of the development agent (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). Our findings confirm this issue, as Little Sun provided no observable accountability tools to assess its impact on the empowerment of women

despite its aim to train and ‘power’ local female entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, the female sales agents stated that they had experienced empowerment in multiple ways due to their employment at Little Sun. At Mobisol, accountability tools were in place for the social and environmental impact it had aimed to achieve. Mobisol is thus an example of a social enterprise, which is accountable for its developmental impact. Mobisol did not include a specific aim to empower its sales agents, and thus did not strive to be held accountable for this outcome.

Mobisol’s social aim mainly regards the goal of empowering communities through distribution of clean energy. However, its focus on achieving a gender balanced workforce is also part of its vision and business model. Our findings show that this vision led to Mobisol employing hundreds of female sales agents, in contrast to Devergy that failed to employ many women due to their lack of skills and travel restrictions. Our point is that even though women’s empowerment is not the aim or the reason why Mobisol is a social enterprise, it still has had an impact on its female sales agents’ empowerment. Thus, the relation of Little Sun’s and Mobisol’s business models to the social enterprise definition, is not a necessary condition for their impact on women’s empowerment. Instead, we note that all of their business activities and strategies are important.

Our literature review provides three criteria to be fulfilled in order for enterprises to be “development agents” (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014). As mentioned above, Mobisol fulfils the criteria of accountability, by assessing and reporting its social and environmental impact. Little Sun fails to live up to this criteria, which is a normal occurrence for enterprises according to Blowfield and Dolan (2014). However, Little Sun fulfils the two remaining criteria, by actively targeting the poor and by investing its own resources to address development issues. Mobisol does not fulfil either of these two, by focusing on a different segment and using profits to maintain its operations rather than addressing development issues. Neither Little Sun nor Mobisol fulfil all three criteria for being a development agent.

Little Sun’s relation to the development agent concept influences the impact of the enterprise. Firstly, its active focus on the poor includes otherwise excluded women in the labour market. Secondly, the investment of own resources helps addressing development issues that otherwise would have been neglected. This has resulted in Little Sun’s recruitment and training of poor women in rural areas with limited possibilities, who now enjoy increased decision-making power due to their income, as well as the possession of newly acquired skills and knowledge. Thirdly, the lack of accountability makes it difficult to clearly assess the developmental impact of Little Sun and establish causation, which is in line with Blowfield and Dolan’s (2014) assumption. Nevertheless, our interviews with Little Sun’s female sales agents provided us with sufficient data of personal

experiences and thoughts on their empowerment caused by their employer, for us to discuss possible explanatory mechanisms such as the impact of the business model.

Mobisol's business model and its relation to the development agent criteria also impacts the enterprise's potential to empower its female sales agents. Regarding the first criteria, Mobisol only targets potential sales agents that are capable of being integrated into the market. Its lack of focus on actively targeting the poor excludes the poorest women from the possibility to become female sales agents at Mobisol. Although Mobisol cannot empower the women of the poorest segment due to its different targeting strategy, it has empowered its female sales agents belonging to another segment. Our research question does not require the female sales agents to come from a certain market segment, but rather focuses on the empowering impact the enterprises provide. In the analysis, our findings show the difficulty of assessing if Little Sun and Mobisol contribute equally to the empowerment of their sales agents. Whilst similar empowering impacts of the two enterprises were identified, the main difference lies in the targeting and empowering of different market segments. Any empowerment is by itself a developmental outcome, even though we agree with Blowfield and Dolan (2014) that it is more of an effort to address the needs of the poorest of the poor and therefore more of a development-oriented activity. Hence, more of a development agent activity (Blowfield and Dolan, 2014).

Secondly, since Mobisol uses its profits for the running of its operations rather than to address developmental issues, Mobisol cannot help solve women's issues to the extent that Little Sun does through the latter's provision of basic life skills training and recruitment of unprivileged women in rural areas. In this regard, Mobisol cannot be considered a development agent. However, Mobisol scores well in relation to the third criteria of the development agent concept, by being accountable for social and environmental outcomes related to its strategic aims.

Our research question asks how and under what conditions female sales agents are empowered or disempowered by their social enterprise employees. We find that Little Sun's and Mobisol's business models and their relation to the development agent concept affect this impact. To be specific, we found that by fulfilling the criteria of actively targeting the poor, Little Sun gave primacy and addressed development issues of the poorest and most marginalised market segment. Whilst the female sales agents of Mobisol and Little Sun expressed similar feelings of empowerment, we consider Little Sun to be more of a development agent due to its impact on the poorest of the poor, confirming the arguments made by Blowfield and Dolan (2014). Nevertheless, our findings also contrast Blowfield and Dolan's (2014) concept of the development agent, as they show the necessity

to empower female sales agents of both segments targeted by Mobisol and Little Sun, and therefore both business models are needed to contribute to empowerment of women across Tanzania.

In sum, our findings could not distinguish one enterprise that had more empowering impact than the other, despite differences in their business models. Instead, their empowering impact affects different segments. In relation to the broader debate on business for development, our findings conclude that businesses can have development impacts on different market segments depending on their business models.

6.2.2. Context of the BoP

Our findings confirm some of the contextual enablers and hindrances discussed by our literature review. In terms of adaptation of the business model to fit the BoP, we found that Little Sun and Mobisol used many of the strategies discussed in the literature review, such as one-on-one and word-of-mouth marketing strategies (Nielsen and Samila, 2008; Chikweche and Fletcher, 2012; Rajagopal, 2009). This mainly impacted the empowerment and disempowerment of the enterprises' sales agents in terms of expanded social networks, which increased the social skills, confidence and respect of the sales agents but also exposed them to vulnerable and disempowering situations. Furthermore, as the sales agents of Mobisol and Little Sun primarily sell the product to strangers at various markets, having a social network is not a prerequisite for the success of the female sales agents. Our findings contrast many authors in this regard who argue that social networks are the main benefit for female entrepreneurs at the BoP (Dolan, 2012, Ryuichiro, 2010, Maas et. al, 2014). However, the fact that the authors mainly focus on female entrepreneurs selling multiple enterprises' goods may restrict the application of their arguments to our findings, as the social networks may be crucial for female entrepreneurs responsible for creating their own customer base, but not to the female sales agents of our study.

In terms of the social enterprises' business models' relation to the BoP-approach, our findings show that both Little Sun and Mobisol pay attention to the power and gender imbalance in their business models, and making an effort to change these through recruitment and training of disempowered women. This stands in contrast to the BoP approach that has been criticized for ignoring gender inequalities in terms of decision-making power and capacity of agency (Prahalad, 2005; Castresana, 2013). Our findings show the difficulty to recruit women at the BoP context. For example, our analysis noted the case of Devergy, a social enterprise that does not recruit many women as sales agents due to the complications it brings in terms of travel restrictions (if the women are married)

and lack of skills. For Devergy it proved easier to recruit men in the BoP context with its prevailing gender inequalities (as discussed by Kobeissi, 2010; Terrell and Troilo, 2010). Mobisol and Little Sun have successfully made efforts to recruit women, according to our findings. Around half of Mobisol's sales agents are female, experiencing empowerment through their employment. Little Sun exclusively recruits as well as empowers women and youth as sales agents. Thus, the two enterprises have managed to recruit and empower women in a context with obstacles facing such events.

In the analysis, we noted that the context of the BoP provided few employment alternatives for the female sales agents. This confirms the argument of Acs et. al (2011), stating the constraints for women to join the labour market due to cultural norms and community practices. Our findings show that the lack of employment alternatives resulted in the disempowering and poor bargaining position of the women towards their employers, making it easy for employers to take advantage of the women who has to accept tough working conditions and low earnings. Several authors in our literature review argue the benefits of involving women in business initiatives at the BoP due to their documented positive influence on for example the distribution of resources within household and communities (Dolan, 2012; Prahalad and Hammond, 2002; Minnitti, 2010). These arguments are useful in relation to our findings, as they further emphasize the risks of enterprises taking advantage of the benefits women bring to their business. In order to determine if Little Sun and Mobisol take advantage of their female sales agents, it is important to understand the motives of the women for becoming female sales agents.

Some of our interviewees had no other prior employment than household duties, such as the Masaai women employed at Little Sun living in an off-grid area. Their lack of opportunities may in accordance with the Schumpeterian view have pushed them into necessity-based entrepreneurship (Hattab, 2012), with a poor bargaining position vis-a-vis their employer. The majority of Mobisol's female sales agents that we interviewed had pull motives for joining the enterprise, such as desires to increase their income, status and independence in terms of providing for themselves and their families. It is an observable difference between Little Sun and Mobisol, with the former targeting the desperate for necessity-based entrepreneurship and the latter targeting more empowered women for opportunity-based entrepreneurship. In our analysis, we noted that the female sales agents of both Little Sun and Mobisol complained about tough working conditions and low earnings. However, all sales agents stated that the job had empowered them in multiple ways. We conclude that the enterprises of our study do not take advantage of their female sales agents to the extent that they only experience disempowerment through their employment.

Another contextual factor found in our analysis that influenced the empowerment and disempowerment of the sales agents, regards the age and the household responsibilities of the women. The majority of the Mobisol sales agents were significantly younger than the ones employed at Little Sun, which we think may have impacted a few of the differences identified in empowering outcomes of the enterprises' sales agents. The younger Mobisol agents had more visible ambition and career goals than the Little Sun agents. However, they also expressed bigger problems with men approaching them for sexual services at the markets. Poon et. al (2012) argue that older entrepreneurs are more successful than younger ones due to their experience and knowledge. We can agree with Poon et. al to the extent that being older may keep men away at markets as they probably only approach women they believe to be single, thus allowing the older women to instead focus on the potential clients at the markets. However, we do not fully support the argument since we observed the ambitious and successful young sales agents at Mobisol, working hard to reach their goals of climbing the career ladder within Mobisol or starting their own business. Many of the young women at Mobisol were unmarried and did not have as much household responsibilities as women in marriage tend to have (as noted by Acs et. al, 2011), which may explain their ambitions. However, some of the married Mobisol sales agents explained that they now received some help with household duties from their husbands or through hired help, which allowed the women to spend time on developing their ambitions.

In sum, there are a number of contextual enablers and obstacles at the BoP that influence the empowering or disempowering effects on female sales agents by their employers. The gender inequalities prevailing at the BoP influence the labour participation of women and the recruitment processes of enterprises, as well as the bargaining position between the women and their employers due to the lack of employment opportunities for women at the BoP. The BoP context with its gender and power imbalances further impact the social interactions at marketplaces between the women and men. Lastly, we note that the age and family situation of the women at the BoP affect their ability to successfully interact with enterprises and customers.

6.2.3. Women's empowerment

This paragraph is dedicated to discuss our research with regards to the literature on women's empowerment. Malhotra and Schuler (2005) argue that empowerment is to some extent subjective, meaning that the degree to which somebody experiences empowerment partly depends on their own perception of it. In our research we took this into consideration when conducting interviews with the female sales agents. However, assessing their empowerment and disempowerment, we use

the interviews as our primary source of data and thus, the findings regarding the empowerment and disempowerment are fully based on the female sales agents' subjective viewpoints and perspectives.

Another aspect that we think is interesting to discuss with regards to our findings is Kabeer's (1999) emphasis on the importance of change, meaning that somebody has to be disempowered before empowerment can occur. As discussed above, we found that all female sales agents that we interviewed have experienced empowerment and disempowerment to some extent regardless of their employer and their ethnical background. The focus on our research was thus as Kabeer (1999) suggests, on the dimension of change instead of concentrating on the final or initial degree of "power" the women possessed. To illustrate this with an example, the group of Masaai women that we interviewed emphasized that they experienced change after having taken on their jobs as sales agents. They described that they felt more self-confident, were more respected by the community and have increased decision making power within their families. The women experienced this change as positive and confirmed to feel empowered since they took on the job. At the same time, the women were not allowed to meet visitors and thus to talk to us without supervision of a male community member. In comparison, some of the Mobisol sales agents explained that they hired a maid because they did not see themselves solely responsible for the household duties and that they were fully involved in the decision of what to spend their income on. Obviously, these women possess a very different capability to make choices as well as a different degree of agency towards others. However, both the Masaai women working for Little Sun as well as the Mobisol sales agents experienced empowerment through their employment, even though the actual capacity to make choices and agency, or in other words "power" these women possess shows great variations.

Galvin and Iannotti (2015) stress that the social enterprise may have an advantage over other organizational forms in the field of development, and can also adapt to and in some cases change institutionalized behaviour. The transformation of formal and informal institutions supporting patriarchal structure is necessary to sustainably empower women (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005). Regarding our research, it can be questioned whether the empowering effects of the social enterprises Mobisol and Little Sun induce such a change of institutions and then lead to sustainable development in the long-term. Dolan et al. (2012) take on a rather critical viewpoint on the issue. The authors argue that social enterprises/social entrepreneurship empowers only a marginalised part of women and the authors further doubt whether this leads to some sort of collective empowerment that reforms institutional structures. On a rather positive note, Malhotra and Schuler (2005) emphasize the importance of empowerment on the micro level because of the necessary transformation of patriarchal institutions. According to the authors, this transformation can only be successful if it starts in people's way of thinking which then leads to a change in political and power

structures. Concerning our research, one could argue as Dolan et al. (2012) and debate the long-term effects of Mobisol and Little Sun and if they are leading to empowerment and a change in social structures in a broader sense. We found that especially elderly women were accustomed to social norms and traditions and it is unlikely that the empowering effects of their employment transform institutions making a fundamental change in their lives. However, as Malhotra and Schuler (2005) state, changing institutions is a process which ideally starts at the micro level. All of the female sales agents who we interviewed were aware of their unprivileged situation and the role of the Tanzanian woman in general. Even though the elderly women seemed to have accepted their own situation, they expressed the desire to increase educational opportunities for their daughters and hoped for more gender equality in the future. The women further explained that the situation will not change from one day to the other but they were optimistic that providing their daughters with education will help them live a more independent life.

Our findings show how interrelated the three literature themes are to each other. For instance, the context and conditions at the BoP influence the enterprises' choice of business model, which in turn affect the outcomes of empowerment/disempowerment of the female sales agents. In sum, our findings both confirmed and contested assumptions in our literature review regarding the empowering or disempowering impact of social enterprises on their female sales agents. Each of our literature themes raises their own issues, but fails to connect with one another. Our findings have contributed to the debate on the three themes by bringing the issues together and illustrating their relation by the two case examples.

6.3. Discussion in relation to our methodology

For our research we were inspired by a critical realist philosophy of science and used an intensive research approach in terms of a comparative case study. In retrospect, the critical realist philosophy of science is suitable for our research purpose in the sense that we investigated underlying conditions for the event of female sales agents' empowerment and disempowerment in Tanzania. Applying the critical realist lens to our study supported us in focusing on the explanatory mechanisms instead of only looking at the observable event itself. Furthermore, as critical realism suggests, we applied an intensive research approach using qualitative methods in a local context. Here it can be noted that our research can be placed within the critical realist perspective, however, we do neither adapt all of its typical tools and methods, nor do we aim to do so.

Conducting research in Tanzania during our one-month field trip was of great advantage because we could not have obtained the same results doing research from far. This is because the emergence of solar companies in Tanzania is a relatively new phenomenon of which only little data has been collected until today. Regarding data collection, we chose to base our analysis on structured/semi-structured interviews with managers and female sales agents. The reason for this is that we see empowerment and disempowerment as highly subjective matters which makes the viewpoint of the women themselves on this matter indispensable. However, we argue that our data collection methods lack diversity which may bring the internal validity of our data into question since our interpretation only relies on the managers' and sales agents' perspectives. In addition, the time frame of our study was rather short which constrained us in observing the empowering/disempowering process over time or to use a great variation of methods which would have increased the internal validity of our data.

Furthermore, we collected our data in the context relevant to our research question which critical realisms emphasizes to be necessary in order to gain an in-depth understanding of causing mechanisms and structures. Accordingly, we conducted our field study in Tanzania. However, Tanzania counts more than 200 different tribes and ethnic groups who all have their own language, tradition and culture. This local setting made our study very complex since the outcomes that we observed differed among different tribes which made it challenging to identify those mechanisms that lead to the respective empowering/disempowering events and distinguish them from other mechanisms that lead to obtaining varying outcomes.

7. Conclusion

Our intensive comparative case study has examined our research topic of how and under what conditions two social enterprises in the solar light industry have had empowering and disempowering impacts on their female sales agents. Our findings are based on the subjective views of 22 respondents, of which 18 are female sales agents employed at Mobisol and Little Sun. To answer our research question, our findings show that the social enterprises both empower and disempower their female sales agents through the provision of employment, training, payment, and social networks. The empowering effects for Little Sun's and Mobisol's female sales agents regard increasing financial independence, decision-making power, confidence, respect by family and community members, as well as the formulation of goals and ambitions. The disempowering effects concern tough working conditions, low earnings, and the poor bargaining position of the female sales agents towards their employers, due to lack of alternative employment opportunities. We also

found a few differences in the impact of the female sales agents between the two social enterprises, such as more goal formulation but also more exposure to sexual harassment at the marketplace for the younger Mobisol sales agents in comparison to the older Little Sun sales agents' experiences. Furthermore, we found that some of the Mobisol sales agents received more help with household responsibilities from their husband or from a maid, whilst this was not the case for the sales agents at Little Sun.

To answer our research question regarding the conditions under which the empowerment or disempowerment occurs, our findings show a number of possible explanatory mechanisms. First of all, the business model of the social enterprises had an influence on the ability to empower the female sales agents in terms of recruiting women as sales agents and providing the necessary training. We found that the social enterprises recruit and empower different market segments, with Mobisol focusing on what Blowfield and Dolan (2014) call the "viable poor" who are capable of being integrated into the labour market, while Little Sun targets the poorest segment of underprivileged women in the rural areas of Tanzania. Our findings show that both enterprises have had mostly empowering effects on their female sales agents, regardless of the market segment that they target. Furthermore, we conclude that the two segments of women targeted by Little Sun and Mobisol both were in need of empowerment, which emphasize the necessity of both business models in order to achieve empowerment of women of different segments across Tanzania.

We investigated the social enterprises' business models, to see if their relation to the social enterprise concept itself as well as the development agent concept could serve as the explanatory mechanisms regarding their empowering impact on female sales agents. We found that both enterprises lived up to the definition of being a social enterprise, although the business models of the enterprises differed with regards to social aims and use of profits. Little Sun's social aim of recruiting and employing poor women that would have difficulties finding other employment, meant that the enterprise included poorer women than Mobisol did in their workforce, and reduced more barriers for women to enter the labour market than Mobisol did. Mobisol's social aim did not include empowering its female sales agents, although the enterprise demonstrated a focus on achieving a gender balanced workforce and successfully had recruited hundreds of female sales agents.

We found that neither of the two fulfilled all three criteria of Blowfield's and Dolan's (2014) development agent concept. Little Sun fulfilled two out of three criteria, which resulted in their successful empowerment of the poorest segment of underprivileged women in rural areas. Even though both Little Sun and Mobisol empowered their sales agents, we found that Little Sun was

more of a development agent than Mobisol in terms of its investments in development issues of the poorest segment in Tanzania. In contrast to Little Sun, Mobisol had an accountability system in place to assess its social and environmental impact. The accountability of the enterprises did not turn out to be the most important criteria with regards to their developmental impact, as we listened to the female sales agents' reports of perceived empowerment and disempowerment, and could conclude that both Little Sun and Mobisol had empowering impact.

Secondly, the context of the BoP also affects the conditions for the empowerment or disempowerment by the social enterprises to occur. The gender imbalances prevailing at the BoP influence women's participation in the labour market, women's lack of skills, and unequal distribution of household responsibilities, which in turn result in difficulties for enterprises to recruit women as sales agents. The social enterprises' focus on recruiting women have successfully removed or at least ignored the contextual obstacles hindering the employment of female sales agents, in the case of Mobisol and Little Sun. However, we found that the enterprises did not include all women in the employment opportunities they offered, as the job required the women to have permission from their husbands to work, and neither Mobisol nor Little Sun went as far as to interfere with the family situations of the women.

Our research has been inspired by critical realism and sought to gain an in-depth understanding of explanatory mechanisms and structures. However, Tanzania's ethnic diversity made our study very complex since the outcomes that we observed differed among different tribes, which made it challenging to identify the mechanisms that could explain the respective empowering and disempowering events. Furthermore, the empowerment and disempowerment expressed by the female sales agents showed great variations due to their subjective experiences. We by no means claim to have found the underlying mechanisms that enable social enterprises' empowering impact on their female sales agents, instead we have outlined a number of possible explanatory mechanisms that may explain the events of our specific case study in this particular context. As Bygstad (2011) argues, the results of the mechanisms depend on other mechanisms at work within the same context. Hence, there are many mechanisms occurring and influencing each other, mechanisms that we were not able to identify and that may have an impact on the events we studied. However, we have identified some possible explanatory mechanisms regarding the enterprises and their potential to empower and disempower their female sales agents.

Our paper has reflected and combined the different debates related to business for development, the BoP context, and women's empowerment. Our findings have contributed to the debate on the three themes by bringing the issues together and illustrating their relation by the two case

examples, and our hope is that our paper possibly can help with theory building regarding the research topic. However, we note that the debate is much broader than what we have managed to discuss in this paper, and our findings only illustrate the events and the possible explanatory mechanisms of our particular case study.

Further research

Our paper has found that the social enterprises mostly have empowering effects on their female sales agents by providing the employment, training, payment and social networks. We therefore encourage further research on the subject to better understand how businesses can contribute to development by employing disempowered groups in society. Moreover, our paper has contributed by a fraction to the interrelation of the three literature themes regarding business for development, the context of the BoP, and women's empowerment, but more research is needed to identify and study other interesting aspects of this interrelation. There is currently little research on the phenomenon of social enterprises in the solar light industry and their potential to empower their female sales agents, and more is needed in order to build theory of the research topic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Example of a question guide for managers

General questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founder/Mission/Vision? • How many men and women are working in the company? Are they working in the same fields? • Why is your company a social enterprise? • Which areas/districts does the company serve? • Employing conditions (full-time regular contract vs. freelancing)? • When was the company founded? Who founded the company (NGO, foreigners, locals)?
Business Model related questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is special about your business model? • What is your vision regarding social impact of your business? • How is this vision visible in your choice of distribution- and marketing strategies? • Could you describe the distribution system, and your marketing strategy? • How are sales agents recruited?
Female sales agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a deliberate effort to employ women? • What capabilities and prerequisites are needed (working hours, start-up capital, having a car, special language skills, special tribe, education, previous experience, capabilities, motivation, social position, having social networks, already a good credit rating)? • How do you prepare/equip women to be able to work in marketing and distribution of solar products (e.g. training, workshops, guidance etc.)? • How much do marketing and sales agents earn (average income in that industry)? And how are they remunerated (e.g. fixed salary, depending on sales)? • Challenges and opportunities of employing women?

Appendix 2: Example of a question guide for female sales agents (individual)

Personal questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been employed in the company? • Age? • Family situation (husband/children)? • Education? • Where did you work before? What did you do before?
Work related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills have you acquired since your deployment? • Can you use any of these skills outside of work? • Have your finances been affected by your deployment? • What is the best and worst part of your job?
Empowerment on different levels and dimensions (individual, family, community - economic, social,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you perceive yourself now, and how do you see yourself prior to taking this job? • Do you think your family's perception of you changed after taking this job? • Do you think your community's/friends' perception of you

psychological)	<p>changed after taking this job? (maybe ask here: how many of your female friends have an employment? How do you think your employed/unemployed friends perceive you? Is there a difference?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you experience that your ability to make decisions in the household has changed in any way after taking the job? • Which areas were your responsibility in the household before taking this job, and what are your responsibilities now? • How do you think your family/members of your community sees you now that you are employed here? • How much do you earn? And how are you remunerated? • What do you spend your income on? • How did your living standard change? • Do you wish the role of the woman in the Tanzanian society to change? If yes, in which sense?
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Appendix 3: Example of a question guide for female sales agents (group discussion)

- What is the best part of your job? Strengths weaknesses
- How does the community perceive women working for this social enterprise?
- How is the job you have affecting how you and others perceive yourselves?
- What changes to your role in society has been made through your current job?
- Have you made any new contacts through your job?
- Is there something you would like to change in your daily life?

Appendix 4: Chronological overview of interviews

<i>Date</i>	<i>Interviewee(s)</i>	<i>Company and position</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Translator</i>	<i>Cited as</i>
03/03/16	Mohamed	Representative of Little Sun Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	1h30	-	Int. MN, 2016
04/03/16	Fabio	Manager and founder of Devergy	Dar es Salaam	45min	-	Int. F, 2016
07/03/16	Abubakari	HR manager at Mobisol	Arusha	45min	-	Int. Ab, 2016
09/03/16	Adam and Brian	Manager and founder of Karibu Solar	Moshi	1h	-	Int. AC, 2016
10/03/16	Two women	Female sales agents at Mobisol	Moshi	1h	Matthias	Int. MM, 2016
15/03/16	Four women	Female sales agents at Little Sun	Mererani	1h	Edward	Int. L4, 2016
16/03/16	Stella Mary Paulina Sauda	Female sales agents at Little Sun	Arusha	2h30	Musakamaika	Int. MA4, 2016
17/03/16	Neema Upendo	Female sales agents at Mobisol	Arusha	1h30	Mary	Int. MA2,

						2016
31/03/16	Elizabeth Sofia Ziola Nuru Monica Salama	Female sales agents at Little Sun	Dar es Salaam	2h30	Friend of Mohamed	Int. L6, 2016

Appendix 4: Overview of interviewed female sales agents			
Name, (≈)age	Family	Region (Village), tribe	Work
Elizabeth, ≈ 30	married, two children	Dar es Salaam (Noronmamboto)	Little Sun, one year
Sofia, ≈ 30	single, one child	Dar es Salaam (Noronmamboto)	Little Sun, one year
Ziola, ≈ 30	married, two children	Dar es Salaam (Mwanbapanda)	Little Sun, three years
Nuru, ≈ 20	single, no children	Dar es Salaam (Zongola)	Little Sun, one1 year
Monica, ≈ 20	single, no children	Dar es Salaam (Zongola)	Little Sun, one year
Salama, 21	single, no children	Dar es Salaam (Chanita)	Little Sun, six months
Unknown name, ≈ 20	married, multiple children	Arusha (Mererani), Masaai	Little Sun
Unknown name, ≈ 30	married, multiple children	Arusha (Mererani), Masaai	Little Sun
Unknown name, ≈ 40	married, multiple children	Arusha (Mererani), Masaai	Little Sun
Unknown name, ≈ 50	married, multiple children	Arusha (Mererani), Masaai	Little Sun
Stella, 23	single, no children	Arusha, Skoma	Mobisol, six months
Mary, 18	single, no children	Arusha, Niramba	Mobisol, three months
Paulina, 21	single, no children	Arusha, Niramba	Mobisol, six months

Sauda, 29	single, one child	Arusha, Iraq tribe	Mobisol, one year
Neema, 50	widowed, seven children (grown up)	Arusha	Mobisol, three years
Upendo, 32	married, three children	Arusha	Mobisol, one year
Unknown name, 23	single, no children	Moshi	Mobisol, six months
Unknown name, 26	single, no children	Moshi	Mobisol, six months

Appendix 6: Transcripts and recordings of interviews

For confidentiality reasons, transcripts and recordings of the interviews are only available upon request.