

EDUCATED YOUTH IN KENYA: NEGOTIATING WAITHOOD BY GREENING LIVELIHOODS



Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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DATE OF COMPLETION: 24th NOVEMBER 2015

ABSTRACT

The burgeoning scholarship on African youth indicates that young people are experiencing difficulties in attaining social adulthood and spend extended time in *waithood* – a period of economic and job insecurities that is becoming a permanent marker of their youth, affecting their life trajectories and future aspirations (Honwana, 2012; Locke & te Lintelo, 2012). Youth *waithood* involves navigating precarious conditions arising under neoliberalism and its economic liberalization reforms, and developing new subjectivities resulting from the acquisition of extra skills set, maintaining social networks, and engaging in new political formations (Jeffrey, 2008).

Informed by concepts of neoliberal subjectivities, opportunity spaces, and Bourdieu's forms of capital, I conducted qualitative research with university students in six public universities, and with educated young farmers in Western, Eastern, and Central regions of Kenya. I investigated how Kenyan youth navigate *waithood* by occupying new opportunity spaces opened up by student environmentalism and agricultural entrepreneurialism – two areas that have been reconfigured by global discourses of environmental change, green jobs, and agricultural transformation.

My findings show that the occupational aspirations of educated youth were changing to include navigation strategies of portfolio occupations, tarmacking, and side-hustling. Within the new opportunity spaces, these youth realized neoliberal subjectivities that enabled them to garner capitals through self-making, entrepreneurialism, and reworking of elite distinctions. Student environmentalists' navigation strategies included acquiring environmental knowledge and work experiences; joining networks of environmental professionals; and participating in environmental anti-politics. Educated young farmers embraced ideologies of portfolio occupations and green livelihoods. They also relied on the reconfigurations of gendered identities and the rural-urban divide, competitive individualism, and associational life to rework their occupational aspirations and maintain elite distinctions in society.

In sum, negotiating youth *waithood* is a complex, intertwined, and uncertain process involving flexibilities and chance opportunities to access, maintain, and utilize capitals. The emergent subjectivities remain insecure, unstable and do not necessarily guarantee exiting *waithood*.

DEDICATION

To my mother,

Mary Wangui Mwaura,

This is your second doctorate; and the journey continues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is the outcome of an academic journey that I started in mid-2005 when I first attended university as an undergraduate student. Then, unaware of the future as an environmental scientist, I started hustling for ‘something else’ from the first day of university. Little did I know that this zeal would eventually lead to my academic interests in the study of the aspirations of educated youth. I acknowledge all my colleagues and my mentors through whom my career has evolved until the completion of this doctorate. You have all made me a better person by challenging me to seek answers to life’s intricate questions.

This particular research would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my academic supervisor, Dr. Patricia Daley, who for the past four years has been a source of encouragement when conducting the research and has motivated me up to the very last minute of writing this thesis. It is through her supervision that I have sharpened my critical thinking and writing skills in the social sciences and through our discussions inspired me to broaden my views on youth aspirations in a neoliberal society. I am grateful for the extended period of supervision, her quick responses on my drafts, her constructive critiques to my arguments, and her new thinking into the subject. She has particularly reassured me of my potential in completing my studies with diligence, and showed concern with my well-being outside academic matters.

I thank all my research participants without whom this research would not have been possible. I consider it a privilege that they allowed me into their lives, and with enthusiasm, responded to even the most irrelevant questions I had, and dared to question the relevance of my research. The discussions we held, the emotions we expressed, the laughter and moments of confusion that arose, all account for the richness of this thesis. May you realize your dreams for decent lives as you showed through our interactions. I specifically pass my gratitude to the club leaders who sampled students from the diversity of their clubs, and the colleagues and friends of friends who assisted me in identifying and contacting educated young farmers.

Accessing my research participants would not have been possible without the support of my host organizations. I acknowledge the administrative support from the Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies; United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). St. Hilda’s College Research and Travel Grants, the Rhodes Trust and associated David Frederick Research Grants, and ICRAF financed my fieldwork. I am grateful that through the Rhodes scholarship, I experienced Oxford as a postgraduate student in the School of Geography and the Environment, from where this research was conceptualized. I further thank St. Hilda’s College for offering further financial support here in Oxford in the last months of my doctorate. In Kenya, I particularly thank Dennis Garrity and Alice Muller at ICRAF, who not only contributed to the initial idea of the research subject and financed the fieldwork, but who also shared their office space with me in 2014. Both of you continuously offer new insights into the subject of youth and agriculture in Africa, of which I am grateful.

I am grateful to my research assistant, Lynette Achieng, who brought delightful insights to the field through her hard work and humour. She was a good student, then a good assistant, and eventually a colleague with whom we shared the harrowing fieldwork moments. With her side-hustles alongside her university education and my demands in the field, I could see her embodiment of the very youth subjectivities I was researching. I also appreciate the support of Alice Wanjiru, Rosemary Wangechi, Deborah Ikaroot and Antony Kamau in providing feedback on my research process and proof-reading the transcribed data. Thanks to David Wainaina for taking some of the photographs. I hope this research equally motivated you all to attain your desired life goals.

Many thanks to Natalya, Beth, Hellen, Caroline, Joshua, Laura, and Julius who offered to proof-read part of this thesis.

At Oxford, I would like to thank the following for their support in my student life: Ruth Saxton, Nicky Charles, Mary Eaton, Kate Seagrave, and the librarians at St. Hilda's College for allowing me to practically occupy the library during the summers of 2013 and 2015.

My appreciations go to Tom Vandenbosch, Hellen Ochieng, Jonathan Muriuki, and Julius Muchemi and many other former colleagues who have inspired the journey leading to this doctoral work.

I acknowledge my many friends whom I cannot list here, but each one of them has shown an interest in my research and supported me in whichever way possible. I hope I will return into your lives with more zeal than before. I particularly thank Bernadette and Joe who forcibly offered me dinners and play time with their girls, even when I wanted to just keep writing. I honestly enjoyed babysitting the girls and just being in your house. It was the closest I would get to home.

My family, you are special and I cannot thank you enough for demanding only one thing: that I complete school. You surely did understand when I forgot to call for weeks. To my nieces and nephews who could not understand why I never went on school holidays as they did, but who surely will be the next generation to benefit from this research. Special thanks to Hellen for her genuine advice on how to complete a doctorate, to Ann who reminded me to be strong, to Rozzie who made me laugh, and to all my brothers who always dreamt big for me.

I am indebted to two special persons in my life. Elorm, you have relentlessly supported me and reminded me of how much I believe in this piece of work and how exciting it will be to complete this journey. Makena, you, your palace, and your warm heart have indeed been my refuge any time I needed a break from long days of writing. I cherish the moments we have shared in Oxford as international doctoral students. You two have been such a delight through this whole process and I can't thank you enough.

Finally, to my mother whom I dedicate this thesis: I have seen generations of young people change through your inspiration. You created opportunities for many of them to change their waitthood. Your waiting too is full of changes. Let life direct you in its judgement. All thanks to God for you and for the gift of life and wisdom.

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ACRONYMS

AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
AISEC	International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Softwares
CEU	Commission for University Education
CFA	Community Forest Association
CPA-K	Certified Public Accountants - Kenya
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSS	Corporate Staffing Service
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DFID	Department for International Development
EMCA	Environmental Management and Coordination Act
ERC	Environmental Resources Conservation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GBM	Green Belt Movement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGAP	Global Good Agricultural Practices
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre (formerly, International Centre for Research in Agroforestry)
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IT	Information Technology
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
JAB	Joint Admissions Board
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis
KKV	Kazi Kwa Vijana
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KUCCPS	Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service
NACOSTI	National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovation
NCPD	National Council for Population and Development
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NGO	Non-Government Organization
ROSCAs	Rotating Savings and Credit Organizations
Saccos	Savings and Credit Cooperatives
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WCK	Wildlife Clubs of Kenya
WEDF	Women Enterprise Development Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WSCSD	World Students Community on Sustainable Development
YEDF	Youth Enterprise Development Fund

1. EDUCATED YOUTH AND THE PHENOMENON OF WAITING IN CONTEMPORARY KENYA

Introduction

I am a very diversified man. I am a young politician. I am a driver. I do private travel. I am a farmer. I am a member of a chama [savings group]. Then my profession is being a vet... [But] this farming I am doing, ni kwa sababu imenipata kwa njia, alafu nimeji-like on the way [It is because it has found me on the way/waiting, and I have come to like it] (Otieno, male farmer, Bondo).

Otieno (24 years), a trained veterinary officer in rural Western Kenya, had been unemployed for two years. The adversities of his job-seeking led him to embrace multiple identities and to pursue a variety of informal income-earning activities, to which he now claimed to be a diversified man. Regardless of the gains from the diverse identities and enterprises, Otieno viewed himself as a waiting man. The ambiguity of the national socio-economic conditions in which he was living had challenged his aspirations for attaining social adulthood – marked by finding a job, starting a family, and taking responsibility in society (Durham, 2004; Locke & te Lintelo, 2012) – and repositioned him to broaden his pathways towards a decent and distinguishable status in society. In some way, Otieno's diversified life acknowledged the dilemma for Kenya's educated young people to attain secure livelihoods in the context of a precarious and neoliberalized economy. Today, most Kenyan youth are like Otieno: in *waitthood*, continuously carving out survival strategies and seeking avenues for meaning making and transitioning into social adulthood. Their fervent search for alternative livelihood sources reflects the changing socio-economic conditions in Kenya and the responses of the educated elites who continuously reposition themselves to earn a living and maintain respectability in a precarious economy.

This thesis is concerned with the problem of youth *waitthood*, in particular how young people seek to navigate various *opportunity spaces* (the context that creates aspirations and expectations, and the resultant life choices and outcomes) to attain social adulthood and

respectability in Kenyan society. I focus on Kenyan educated youth, defined here as those aged 18-35 years and have acquired post-secondary education including degrees, diplomas, and vocational certificate courses. I argue that the generation of young Kenyans born after the 1980s, the period of structural adjustments, is one born into waiting. This demographic, previously socialized as the privileged intelligentsia of society and guaranteed white collar employment upon graduation, are encountering considerable insecurities caused by the unavailability of formal employment and skills mismatch in the labour market (Amutabi, 2003; Munene & Otieno, 2008; Zeilig, 2009). An estimated 15.7 per cent of 25-29 year-olds are unemployed, and it takes approximately five years for a graduate to secure a job in Kenya (British Council, 2014).

Consequentially, more educated youth are joining *waithood* – a prolonged and uncertain stage between childhood and adulthood that is characterized by inability to enter the labour market and attain the social markers of adulthood (Honwana, 2012). Graduates now spend long periods of their youth in job-seeking; temporary and un(der)employment; negotiating alternative income sources through high risk entrepreneurial ventures; and engaging in new forms of politics during and after school. Yet, waithood is not just a period of despair; it is a time in a young person's life when their aspirations for a good life might meet with an opportunity space created by the neoliberal economy that aims at reconstituting individuals into enterprising subjects for the commodity market. The opportunity spaces might also comprise a *vital conjuncture* – 'the socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around a specific period of transformation of a life or lives' (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:871) – enabling the young person to embody multiple identities towards attaining social adulthood. With the escalating economic changes, growing concerns over environmental change, particularly the impact of climate change on economic development and increasing food demands, there are claims, albeit few, that the educated youth might find 'green' livelihoods in the cognate areas

of environmentalism and entrepreneurial agriculture. Such ‘green jobs’ (UNEP, 2008) enable them to contribute to national goals of achieving food security, environmental conservation, economic development and youth employment (Filmer et al., 2014).

This study examines the practicality of these claims, interpreted as mechanisms for negotiating young people’s conditions of waithood by creating alternative livelihood strategies in new and previously stigmatized spaces of environmental activism and smallholder agriculture respectively. I provide an insight into the conjunctures that educated youth encounter in their waithood, a period that is becoming a permanent marker of their youth, and how their interactions influence their aspirations and expectations for the future. I further seek to explain the diversity and ambiguity of their livelihoods and their discursive opportunity spaces in moments of ambivalence.

This introductory chapter is divided into three sections. The problems faced by Kenyan educated youth are discussed in section one, where I contextualise the changing youth livelihoods within Kenya’s post-1980s neoliberal economic reforms. The second section explains the research aim and objectives and highlights the literature on youth waithood and subjectivities to which this study contributes. The third section presents a summary of the subsequent thesis chapters.

Kenya’s Youth Employment Problem

According to the 2014 Human Development Report, Kenya is among the countries on a path to accelerated development and wealth creation. Its Human Development Index (HDI) as at 2013 was 0.535, while its Gross National Income (GNI) per capita was at 2,158 (UNDP, 2014) – both recording a consistent progress in their indicators (education, life expectancy, and GNI) since 1980 (UNDP, 2013). Kenya’s development blue print, Vision 2030, aims at growing the HDI to 0.750 and overall remaining a competitive economy on the African

continent (GoK, 2012). The vision to attain a middle income status has been viewed by the rest of the world as an ‘Africa rising’ strategy, not just for Kenya, but also for most African countries (Munang & Mgendi, 2015). The World Bank and other financial institutions support these views by promoting investments in human capital especially of Africa’s bulging youth population (Filmer et al., 2014; World Bank, 2007).

Of Kenya’s estimated population of 46 million (NCPD, 2013), 78 per cent are below 34 years, while those aged 15-34 years constitute 35 per cent. However, even with youth (defined in the Kenyan constitution as those aged 18-35 years) forming 60 per cent of the working population, their contribution to economic growth remains significantly low posing a great challenge to sustaining the envisioned growth. For instance, in 2009, the National Human Development Report recorded a youth income index of 0.44 meaning a high dependency ratio and continued struggles for youth to earn a living (UNDP, 2010). The unemployment rate of Kenyan youth aged 15-35 years is 10.4 per cent while the overall unemployment rate of the country is 8.6 per cent (NCPD, 2013) varying across the regions, age, and gender. Even with an increasing number of young people completing primary and secondary education, only an approximate 200,000 students per year proceed to higher learning institutions, with a small fraction of these completing university and securing employment afterwards (Njonjo, 2011; Omolo, 2012). As such, Kenya’s population comprises of an increasing unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled youth workforce, all of whom have fewer opportunities to contribute to the economy and attain recognition as adults.

This research focuses on opportunity spaces for youth in two cognate areas of Kenya’s political economy – environmentalism and agriculture – that have significantly changed following Kenya’s adoption of the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Mugabe, Seymour, & Clark, 1997; Nzuma, 2013; Rono, 2002). These spaces have also been underutilized for studying youth aspirations.

Kenya received its first structural adjustment loan in 1980, opening up a process over the decades of cutting down the state expenditure in major social sectors such as health, education, agriculture and transport and liberalizing markets (Gibbon, 1992; Rono, 2002). A major drawback was in agriculture where the reforms led to a sharp decline in exports leading to a collapse of the cash crop economy, a rise in the cost of inputs, and the entry of cheap food imports competing with local producers. Poor governance that resulted in weak infrastructure and lack of policies to protect local producers escalated these problems (Nzuma, 2013). Land fragmentation, climate change and its resultant drought, floods, and new pests and diseases (Muyanga, 2013), further worsened the situation causing reduced agricultural productivity. Climate change has greatly affected crop productivity as different parts of the country have experienced severe frost, prolonged dry seasons, and hailstorms in recent years (Kristjanson et al., 2012; Thornton et al., 2008; WFP, 2012).

Government and donor investments in agricultural research and development have resulted in some successes, such as the control of weeds, introduction of new and resistant species, and improved soil and land use management practices (Franzel & Scherr, 2002; Kristjanson et al., 2012; Tiffen, Mortimore, & Gichuki, 1994). However, there is no significant improvement in the net productivity of the smallholder agriculture and those in the rural areas, solely relying on agricultural livelihoods, remain subjected to poverty and vulnerability to environmental disasters. According to the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), an estimated 9 million Kenyans are food insecure, and the country still relies on food aid and imports. To date, even though agriculture contributes 25 per cent directly and 27 per cent indirectly of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (through linkages with manufacturing, distribution and other service related sectors), the national budget allocation remains significantly low at 5 per cent of the total expenditure (GoK, 2013). Furthermore, the sector has also failed to revitalize itself to attract and retain skilled

human capital that has the potential to transform it into profitability and sustainability. In fact, most youth are still educated out of the *maisha ngumu* (hard life) in the rural agricultural areas and are socialized to aspire to white collar jobs in the urban areas.

On the other hand, environmental adjustments in Kenya took two interconnected forms. First, they were partly an outcome of the World Bank and IMF political conditionalities that pressured the Kenyan government to commit to governance in key natural resources such as wildlife and forest areas (Mugabe et al., 1997). Secondly, environmental adjustments stemmed from the localization of the global environmental movement in the early 1990s that steered activism against environmental change. Both of these adjustments have produced different outcomes in Kenya's natural resources management and environmental conservation landscape, and have significantly influenced the environmental subjectivities emerging in Kenya. To the former, the degradation of natural resources has been exacerbated by the changes in land use practices; the lack of proper environmental impact assessments and monitoring; forest excision; illegal logging; and human encroachment (UNEP, 2013) among others. High population densities exist in the 13 per cent of Kenya's arable land, leading to increased land pressure and subdivision (KNBS, 2014b). Kenya's neoliberal conservation efforts have promoted an increase in protected areas and ecotourism as a way of ensuring biodiversity conservation (Bruyere, Beh, & Foster, 2011). However, conservation efforts often conflict with national development policies: for instance, the allocation of land to communities and their later eviction from the Mau forest (Klopp & Sang, 2011), the use of forest land for development projects (Njeru, 2012) and the leasing of land for biofuels production (Hunsberger, 2014; Krijtenburg & Evers, 2014) have all led to major conflicts between the state, communities and environmental groups in Kenya.

Kenya has ratified most of the multilateral environmental agreements and passed national laws and regulations on environmental management. The state adopted the Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) in 1999 and established the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in 2000. Articles 42, 69 and 70 of Kenya's 2010 constitution emphasize the primacy of environment in human and economic development. Kenyans have a right to a clean and healthy environment and its protection for the benefit of present and future generations (GoK, 2010). Article 69, obligates the state to '(a) ensure sustainable exploitation, utilisation, management and conservation of the environment and natural resources, and ensure the equitable sharing of the accruing benefits; (b) work to achieve and maintain a tree cover of at least ten per cent of the land area of Kenya; and (h) utilise the environment and natural resources for the benefit of the people of Kenya'. Every Kenyan citizen has a responsibility and 'duty to cooperate with State organs and other persons to protect and conserve the environment and ensure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources' (ibid). Additionally, Kenya has over 500 organizations claiming to carry out environmental projects ranging from international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutes, community organizations, religious groups, advocacy groups, youth organizations, and a growing number of student-led clubs.

This research focuses on the latter, university student groups that emerged at a critical moment in the intersection of environmentalism, youth identity formation, and livelihoods in contemporary Kenya. Prior to this, the most common student groups were Student Unions organizing campaigns against the state and university administration since the late 1960s. There is extensive literature on this form of student activism which has been linked to the effects of structural adjustments on social life (Klopp & Orina, 2002; Zeilig, 2009). However, the rise of student groups within the environmental movement is relatively new – dating from

the early 1990s – especially in its distinctive form away from the normative student politics¹. My first concern in this thesis is with the formation of the student environmental movement, here referred to as environmental clubs, and their influence on student identities and environmental activism in Kenya to date. The second concern is with how the ideals of environmentalism and the emergent subjectivities travel to other narratives of youth livelihood formation, such as in agriculture, as examined in this thesis.

Central to this study is the role of education in shaping the aspirations of young people in a context where the changing labour markets offer limited opportunities for the educated youth workforce. Kenya's 8-4-4 education system follows eight years of primary schooling, four years of secondary schooling, and four years of university education. Vocational training and tertiary institutions offering certificate and diploma courses are available for those who do not proceed to university. Whereas enrolment into primary and secondary schools has increased due to the free and compulsory primary school and free secondary school education, there are no commensurate numbers of young people enrolling into vocational, tertiary, and higher learning institutions. Following the Universities Act No. 42 (of 2012), public universities increased from seven to 22, while private universities increased to 30 resulting in a 35 per cent increase in student enrolment in 2013. The government budget allocation towards vocational and tertiary colleges has also increased since 2012 with the aim of increasing education, training and employment opportunities for young people (KIPPRA, 2013). Even though the specific figures of graduate unemployment are unknown, across the 25-29 age group as a whole (the range corresponding most closely with recent graduates), the unemployment rate is 15.7 per cent (British Council, 2014). Furthermore, there are concerns

¹ There are other views that student clubs emerge as a result of environmental education in universities and colleges which also started in the 1990s

over access, affordability, and quality of education, coupled with claims of skills mismatch in the current labour markets (F. N. Chege & Arnot, 2012; World Bank, 2009).

The government narratives of youth livelihoods are built around temporary work and self-employment in the rural areas and the informal sector, spaces which normally exclude the privileged educated youth who aspire to white collar formal employment. For instance, in 2009, the Kazi Kwa Vijana (Jobs for Youth) (KKV) programme was launched to accelerate the creation of temporary youth jobs (Muthee, 2010). This Ksh.15 billion programme aimed at creating 500,000 jobs annually, a majority in environmental restoration and infrastructure development. These jobs were labor-intensive, temporary and emphasized capacity development rather than job security (Ombagi, 2011). By 2012, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF, here referred to as the Youth Fund), also launched during the President Kibaki regime, had spent Kshs.6.5 billion to fund 141,316 youth enterprises through incubation services; entrepreneurship training; loans and grants; securing foreign jobs for young people; facilitating formation of youth Savings and Credit Cooperatives (Saccos); providing market support systems; and linking young entrepreneurs to large enterprises (ibid). In 2013, under the new constitution and a new government regime of President Uhuru Kenyatta, who, in his early 50s, is politically young, Kenyan youth received more agency. The new government provided for a 30 per cent budget allocation to women, youth and people with disabilities in all government procurement and established an Uwezo Fund targeting skills development and entrepreneurship (GoK, 2013:89). The Youth Fund expanded its loan facilities and since 2013, it has exclusively promoted the AgriVijana Loans, a public-private partnership programme providing credit greenhouses and training to youth groups to practice ‘modern’ farming (YEDF, 2015).

Among most educated youth, rural-based occupations, as those promoted by the KKV and the Youth Fund, are stigmatized as dirty and demeaning work for the poor and uneducated,

against the prestige promised by white collar employment (Lewa & Ndungu, 2012). While literature shows that indeed young people in the past have been educated out of farming (White, 2012), there is also growing research that examines how to ‘entice’ young people into rural-based occupations and into self-employment (Anyidoho et al., 2012; Brooks, Zorya, Gautam, & Goyal, 2013; Leavy & Smith, 2010a; te Lintelo, 2012). The prevailing narrative of ‘youth in agriculture’ includes frames such as making agriculture ‘cool’, ‘sexy’, and ‘lucrative’ (FAO, 2014; Rowling, 2014). The presumptions of these narratives segue with neoliberal frames of entrepreneurship and have produced ‘agribusiness’ as the new opportunity space for respectable youth self-employment (Sumberg et al., 2014; Van der Geest, 2010). In particular, agribusiness is made attractive to educated youth for its combination of entrepreneurship and the potential to expand opportunities beyond the farm to professionalizing agriculture along the value chain, such as in agricultural service provision, processing, and marketing (Proctor & Lucchesi, 2012).

Besides, in a new paradigm of development that promotes a green and inclusive economic growth, youth employment discourses have introduced the narrative of ‘decent work’ defined as ‘gainful and productive employment in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity’ and ‘green jobs’, indicating jobs that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality (Dalla Valle, Klemmer, & Fotabong, 2011:14). My emphasis is on greening livelihoods rather than creating green jobs – a concept embedded in ongoing efforts to achieve inclusive growth through a green economy in Kenya. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (UNEP, 2011). Green jobs are the pre-requisite of a green economy and are defined as ‘work in agricultural, manufacturing, research and development, administrative, and service activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring

environmental quality' (UNEP, 2008: 3). They include jobs that protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high efficiency strategies; decarbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution (ibid).

These discursive frames – greening the economy, and hence green jobs for young people – somewhat camouflage the reality of youth unemployment and precarity of changing economies. Nonetheless, as this thesis will show, these narratives have also become projects for young people to reconstitute themselves as subjects capable of offering products and services associated with a green economy whilst meeting their needs for alternative livelihoods, elite distinction, and eventual transition into social adulthood. Indeed, student environmentalism and entrepreneurial agriculture become images of decent and green youth livelihoods, best understood in the context of youth negotiation of the conditions of waitthood.

With approximately 42 per cent of Kenya's GDP deriving from natural resources, there are claims that investment in resource conservation and agricultural capital will lead to increased agricultural productivity, employment, and will almost double the GDP growth rate (UNEP, 2014). UNEP estimates that a green economy will enable Kenya to achieve a 5 per cent average annual GDP growth rate, in comparison to the 3.7 per cent under business-as-usual between 2010 and 2030. This will in turn reduce poverty by 3 per cent, carbon emissions by 15 per cent, and increase agricultural production by 23 per cent, higher than the Vision 2030 projections (UNEP, 2012). In line with these visions, for the past five years, Kenya and donor partners have accelerated their momentum in developing policies and programmes that aim at greening the economy as a strategy for implementing the second phase of Vision 2030. Young people have also become the focus of these strategies, with programmes in environmental restoration, waste management, agriculture, and renewable energy being

framed as green jobs opportunities for young people. For instance, the Green Schools Initiative, a programme coordinated by the Ministries of Environment and Education encourages tree planting in learning institutions as a strategy of increasing youth participation in the ‘greening’ process. The programme has been successful owing to the vast amount of land owned by most public schools, and the student population which guarantees high survival rate of the trees (NEMA, 2012). Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has incorporated green and decent narratives into their youth employment programmes with a recent Youth Entrepreneurship Facility claiming to create an enabling environment for young green entrepreneurs in Kenya (ILO, 2012). Over a period of five years, 5,000 youth in high schools, universities, and in the informal sector participated in the programme through green competitions, training, mentoring, and financial support. Inevitably, these two programmes have successfully publicized a common perception of youth entrepreneurship in natural resource sectors as green entrepreneurship. By assessing the reconstitution of ‘green’ as a narrative of publicizing certain forms of entrepreneurship, we can understand how educated youth are attracted to previously stigmatized occupations, and how they refashion them to maintain their desired elite status in society.

Research Aim and Objectives

This study’s overall aim is to investigate the spaces within which Kenyan educated youth refashion their life trajectories and future aspirations during conditions of waithood, arising from the precarious economic conditions present in contemporary Kenya. Engaging with the globalized notions of environmentalism and agricultural capitalization, both of which are localized and interlink in the Kenyan context, I investigate ways in which such agendas become generative spaces for adjusting life trajectories and reimagining youth futures. The study addresses three main objectives:-

1. To explore how post-1980s neoliberal reforms have affected young people's livelihood options

Today's Kenyan youth could be labelled as the precariats – 'lacking occupational identity, even if some have vocational qualifications' in an economy characterized by intermittent employment, shrinking public sector, expanding informal sector and declining productive sectors (Standing, 2011:12). I illuminate the effects of economic reforms and political changes on youth aspirations against a backdrop of growing concerns for the impacts of environmental change, global food crisis, population growth, and urbanization on youth livelihoods. I particularly assess these effects in the context of a shift from a past narrative of educating youth out of agriculture to one which promotes agricultural entrepreneurialism. I explore how educated youth identify and cope with such changes, and themselves contribute to these changes.

2. To analyse the various ways in which young people develop new subjectivities in the precarious Kenyan economic conditions

The research is interested in how educated youth adjust to self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and competitive individualism in order to reconstitute their aspirations for the future in the precarious economic conditions of neoliberal Kenya. I examine the constitution of *neoliberal subjectivities* – the outcomes of changing global and local economic outlooks, and the changing relations between the state and its citizens that emphasize market freedoms and self-responsibility (Gonick, 2015) – and investigate how these cause individuals and collectives to exploit judicious opportunities and accumulate diverse capitals (that is, knowledge, networks, economic capitals, and elite distinctions) and hence, avoiding desperate waiting.

3. To examine how changing youth livelihood opportunities affect their aspirations and expectations for the future

This objective interrogates how twenty-first century youth make use of diverse social identities to manage the uncertainties of a neoliberal life trajectory. I am concerned with how the ideology of an enterprising individual interacts with notions of associational life to produce spaces for designing neoliberal life trajectories. I further examine the strategies of greening livelihoods, reconstituting gendered norms, and performances of individualism and collective action.

This research on educated youth waitthood adds to studies devoted to understanding ways in which young people come to be recognized as a distinguishable group in society and how they negotiate for social markers of adulthood (Christiansen, Utas, & Vigh, 2006; Johnson-Hanks, 2005; van Dijk, Butter, de Bruijn, & Cardoso, 2011). Previous studies that have focused on youth in violence, war, sex work, religion, pop culture, radicalization (For example Abbink & Kessel, 2005; Ashford, 2007; Cole, 2007) often produce a sense of negativism and youth as a time of crisis (Vigh, 2010). However, this thesis provides a deeper exploration of the productive spaces and pathways within which young people negotiate waitthood. Besides being a critical indicator of a nation's politics, economy, social and political state, Honwana argues that 'studying youth involves not only studying the lives of young people themselves, in all their diversity, but also understanding the social, political, economic, and cultural concerns of adults *and those in authority*. The two generations (*actors*) are entangled in complex processes of construction and reconstruction, the making, and remaking of society' (Honwana, 2012: 3 emphasis added). Literatures reflecting these views are explored further in Chapter Two.

Summary of the Thesis Chapters

The subsequent chapters comprise of the literature review, methodology, five empirical chapters, and a conclusion. In each of the empirical chapters, I extend the conceptual understanding of neoliberal youth subjectivity as the process of negotiating waitthood and attaining multiple youth subjectivities in Kenya.

Chapter Two: Pathways out of Waitthood: A Repertoire of Livelihood Strategies

In this chapter, I review existing scholarship on youth waitthood, aspirations, and livelihoods in the contemporary period more generally and with respect to Kenya specifically. I examine the various conceptions of African youth and discuss different forms of youth waiting in developing countries. I review literature on greening youth livelihoods, particularly focusing on environmentalism and agriculture. The chapter also develops the conceptual framework for neoliberal youth subjectivities and youth livelihoods using Bourdieu's theory of capitals and social practice.

Chapter Three: Insider Research with Educated Youth

The chapter first discusses insider research design techniques, including developing questions, selecting participants, and field sites. Secondly, I present the various qualitative methods applied: vignettes; focus group discussions (FGDs); interviews; and participant observation, followed by data entry and analysis using computerized qualitative data analysis methods. I discuss my reflexive position as a young female researcher, affiliated to Oxford and researching my peers; the ethical processes of obtaining research permits and approvals; the ethics of relations with my respondents; and the limitations of the research.

Chapter Four: Educated Youth and Waithood: Navigating Insecure Livelihoods in Kenya

This chapter analyses educated youth livelihoods, by looking into the effects of economic liberalization on the aspirations of Kenyan educated youth, who, prior to structural adjustments, were the privileged intelligentsia educated out of farming (and rural life) and guaranteed high status white collar jobs after graduation. Drawing on empirical data, the chapter examines the mismatch between job market and the education system in contemporary Kenya and the resultant insecurities and market opportunism among educated youth that involves portfolio occupations, *tarmacking* (job-seeking), and *side-hustling* (additional livelihood sources). It finally evaluates how relatively recent environmental change and agricultural transformation agendas have influenced the creation of new opportunity spaces and emergence of new subjectivities of student environmentalists and educated young farmers.

Chapter Five: Actively Waiting: The Making of Student Environmentalists

This chapter examines Kenyan university students' environmentalism as a generative space for negotiating alternative youth futures, in the context of localization of global environmental agendas and youth unemployment. I explore what necessitates student environmentalism and the extent to which it influences the construction of multiple identities among university students. I first examine the nature student environmentalism and its linkage to the notions of youth waiting in Kenya. I discuss how the environmental club was useful in the constitution of neoliberal environmental subjectivity by motivating students to pursue individual and collective strategies of *professional socialization*, *certified experiences*, and nature romanticism. Finally, I critique students' anti-political environmental actions as a strategy for maintaining their distinction as respectable environmental professionals and to resist the prevailing negative perceptions of student activism.

Chapter Six: Farming into Adulthood: Producing Educated Young Farmers

This chapter presents the argument that given the precarious times of youth unemployment, coupled by an increasing demand for food security and economic growth, Kenyan educated youth are seeking out opportunities in agriculture; a sector traditionally associated with the uneducated rural poor, but which receives considerable developmental attention and is closely linked to environmentalism in Africa. The chapter first explores the process of changing the perceptions of agriculture among educated youth, and then proceeds to illustrate how agricultural occupations become spaces for diverse market opportunism as evidenced in their *kilimo biashara* (agribusiness), tarmacking, and side-hustling strategies. I further elucidate how the various performances of young farmers enable them to have a sense of accomplishment and effectively distinguish them from the stigmatized poor smallholder farmer by affirming new and diversified identities as social entrepreneurs, social change-makers, and ‘rurbanized’ elites.

Chapter Seven: Gendered Youth Identities, Individualism, and Collective Action

This chapter discusses how ideologies of competitive individualism and collective action interact with gendered youth identities in the context of student environmentalism and youth farming. I first discuss how producing a competitive individual involves hard work, is dependent on one’s access to capitals, and may also involve performing hope. I examine how gendered identities among young people are produced, contested, and changed in an effort to remain competitive. The final section analyses the various forms of collective agency amongst student environmentalists and young farmers, such as clubs and *chamas* (investment groups), and how this agency is applied to advance gendered identities and individualism.

Chapter Eight: The Paradox of Greening Youth Livelihoods

The idea of greening youth livelihoods is explored in this chapter as an opportunistic and self-improvement strategy for the young people. I first contextualize greening youth livelihoods as social navigation and then proceed to evaluate different shades of green jobs claimed, aspired, or performed by student environmentalists and young farmers. I discuss the challenge of greening youth livelihoods in a jobless economy, and finally examine how greening livelihoods is equally a process of reworking youth aspirations in uncertainty.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

The concluding chapter links the main arguments to the conceptual framework of neoliberal youth subjectivities, Bourdieu's theories of capitals and opportunity space. Revisiting the research questions, I summarise my key arguments relating to educated youth aspirations, their changing life trajectories, and the changing social and physical environments in which they live. I also highlight key contributions to policy and further research questions that might be explored in the study of educated youth livelihoods.

Conclusion

In summary, this research approaches the notion of youth livelihoods from two conceptual fronts. First, young people are aware of the uncertainty of their futures in the changing socio-economic landscapes that reduce opportunities for transition from school to work and increase their time of waiting. In their waithood, however, young people resourcefully carve out strategies of survival and flexibility. This research investigates how they create opportunities for work and meaning through environmentalism and farming in Kenya. Secondly, there is concern over the future of Africa's economic growth amidst, among others, increasing impacts of climate change, political instability, rapid urbanization, declining agricultural productivity, increasing inequality in incomes, depletion of natural resources and,

most importantly, a growing and unemployed youth population. Different actors claim that the youth bulge in Africa presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Providing meaningful work opportunities for the growing youth population, therefore, reduces risks of insecurity and political instability and potentially increasing the human capital base required to drive inclusive economic growth. As such, the notion of youth livelihoods requires an understanding of the perceptions and actions of the young people as well as the opportunities provided by different actors. Essentially, this research seeks to understand the varied ways of negotiating youth futures from the young people to the different actors who claim concern over young people. By explaining the alternative life trajectories of Kenyan educated youth, this thesis shall contribute to the scholarship of youth waithood as discussed in the next chapter.

2. PATHWAYS OUT OF WAITHOOD: A REPERTOIRE OF YOUTH LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

Introduction

The chapter aims to demonstrate how environmentalism and agricultural transformation have become important opportunity spaces for studying youth navigation and identity formation in contemporary Kenya. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explores and contextualizes the distinctive ways in which youth is defined across Africa. The second section reviews literatures on how young people in developing countries and Africa in particular, post-1990, have negotiated waithood by altering their occupational aspirations and reconstituting their gendered identities. The section further reviews literature on the physicality of youth navigations, including on green livelihoods. The third section presents and develops the theoretical framework for understanding neoliberal youth subjectivities, capitals, and strategies. Here, I analyse a range of attributes of neoliberal subjects including market opportunism, self-making, flexibility, and distinction. I proceed to show how Bourdieu's theory of capitals and social practice can help to explain how young people, in all of their diversity, occupy multiple spaces on the margins of formal economies in order to attain decent lives, respectability, and hence adulthood.

Understanding Youth in Africa

To be young in Africa came to mean being disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginal in the political and economic sense (Abbink & Kessel, 2005: 7).

African youth are perhaps the most complex to construct and to present in academic theory and in development practice. They have the capacity for rebellion, opposition, and counter hegemony, living in liminal sub-cultures, and caught in between childhood and adulthood (Honwana & Boeck, 2005; Sommers, 2010; van Dijk, Butter, de Bruijn, & Cardoso, 2011).

Whereas there is wide scholarship on the ‘problem of youth’, a new focus has taken root in the last ten years, concerning the African demographic dividend, youth mobility, ingenuity, and enterprising vitality (Langevang et al, 2015; Lavender, 2011; Porter et al, 2012). Alongside these characterizations are scholars who emphasize the resilience of young people through concepts such as social navigation (Vigh, 2006), subjectivity (Fokwang, 2008a), and new political formations (Honwana, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). Resilience, according to Bottrell (2007), is that which overcomes the negative and capitalizes on what is rationally feasible to the young person at that particular time. The intersection of problematic and resilient youth is then the focus of this review, aiming at showing the flexibilities and multiplicity of their identities in this century of waiting. Central to any analysis, first, is how young people are defined and contextualized in contemporary society.

The question of young people is so much of who they are in the social world, as it is about the sheer numbers of ‘youth’ resulting from institutional structures, social practices, politics, laws, and personal relationships, that prescribe them as persons aged 15-24 years (United Nations), 15-30 years, (African Union), or 18-35 years (Kenyan government) (African Union, 2011; GoK, 2010). Yet, as Bourdieu argues, ‘youth is just a word’ that grants certain things to the youngest and leaves many things to adults and those in authority (Bourdieu, 1993: 94). ‘Youth’ imposes limits which produce an order that one must keep, and which young people constantly negotiate to attain the indefinite adulthood (ibid). As such, defining African youth, whether falling within the age quotas or not is contextual, as ‘youth’ are shaped by the culture and politics of the people who define them at particular times and within particular spaces (van Dijk et al., 2011). Even after attaining biological adulthood, young people’s social statuses remain youthful as their transition into adulthood is constrained by lack of jobs, failure to start a family, or even sometimes social-cultural aspects (Cieslik & Simpson, 2013).

This thesis conceptualizes youth as the embodied experiences of young people as they negotiate, contest, and collude in the social world (Wyn & White, 1997). When a young person fails to find a job and establish a legitimate livelihood, they become marginal to society, not because of their youth, but because of the operations of socio-economic and political processes. I advance Honwana's views that youth is 'a time of growth, of searching for meanings and belonging; a stage for moulding characters, interests and goals; a process of constructing and reconfiguring identities; a creative period with both risks and possibilities' (Honwana, 2012:11). It is a time when young people in their heterogeneity of class, gender, age, life trajectories, and contextual experiences (Hansen & Dalsgaard, 2008) reconsider their here-and-now moments as individuals in liminality, relative to their anticipated futures and hence appreciate the processes of becoming and being (Wood, 2012; Worth, 2009). While adulthood is indefinite, youth involves being in a position where one continuously works towards attaining certain markers – a job, starting a family, and attaining respectability in society – capitals that give them power and influence in relation to others in society. Being youth in the twenty-first century, however, means living in a state of liminality, constantly exploring how to remain resilient and resourceful, and actively waiting for opportunities for upward social mobility.

This thesis also considers the vital conjunctures – the socially structured zones of possibility that emerge around a specific period of transformation of a life or lives – within which youth may be reproduced such as economic reforms, education, environmental change, marriage, death, or migration which alter, terminate or extend youthhood. Johnson-Hanks (2002: 871) argues that these are ambiguous moments 'about the contingent and anticipated future' which one can negotiate. She demonstrates how young women in Cameroon negotiated when to have children, get married, or remain in school, when faced with critical decisions of child bearing, education, and livelihood choices. When confronted with such moments of

ambiguity, young people embody a flexibility to accept the present situations and anticipate possible futures of becoming adults. For instance, a teenage girl on childbearing may become a mother (hence attaining adulthood), but upon returning to school, she may resume her youthhood, and thus reworking her career aspirations. Thus, vital conjunctures necessitate judicious opportunism, or what Vigh (2006:13) describes as social navigation – a complex ‘movement of the social environment, one’s own possibilities for moving through it, and its effects on one’s planned and actual movement’. Vigh advances Bourdieu’s theory of social practice by arguing that our navigation (or practice) takes place in a moving environment (habitus) (Vigh, 2010; 2009). Therefore, we can conceptualize waitthood as a period of social navigation when young people plot strategies of survival and ‘seem to act in the immediate as well as move towards positions in the yet to come, *and* seek to transform their situation not just accommodate change’ (Nielsen & Vigh, 2012:667 emphasis added). Their everyday lives are set between an immediate struggle to secure themselves a present livelihood, while at the same time attempting to figure out how to change the present social environment to result into viable life chances, social worth, and anticipated futures (Johnson-Hanks, 2002; Vigh, 2006).

Globalization and international ideologies shape the concept of ‘youth’, but also, young people tap into these narratives to indicate a process of embodying these specific domains of power that prescribe them (van Dijk et al., 2011). They make their voices heard by tapping into different types of symbolic, political, and ideational resources and reproduce ‘youth’ as a project that gives them distinctive features in a global society. These ‘self-ideologisation’ (ibid: 14) efforts produce new conjunctures where some youth have the capacity to manoeuvre, resulting in a form of resistance through their everyday lives. Bottrell (2007) categorizes youth as embodying *chosen identities* which are claimed, desired, and mainly associated with the norms and values of the margins and *unchosen identities* which are

ascribed, positioned, and those of how the outsiders (those in authority) see young people. These fluid identities reflect the tensions around youth where, on one hand, they are portrayed as a valuable resource for a country to tap into but, on the other hand, are presented as a problem and a risk to be managed or controlled (Abbink & Kessel, 2005; Honwana & Boeck, 2005). Sometimes they are captured and proclaimed as a measure of success in society while other times, they are dismissed as inadequate citizens (O'Brien, 1996). Some engage in illicit activities such as smuggling (Honwana, 2012) and war (Vigh, 2006), while others pursue new political formations (Honwana, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). Yet, other youth continuously create distinctive cultures of work and living (Weiss, 2009), reproduce place (Langevang, 2008), reconstitute socio-environmental challenges into enterprises (Oteng-Ababio, 2012; Thieme, 2013), and commoditize their bodies (Cole, 2007; Esson, 2013), producing new meanings and identities. As Diouf (2005) argues, in their twisted itineraries, these youth explore their own futures while at the same time interrogate the same society that tries to define their future.

The concept of youth is also gendered. Young men and women may consciously subvert gender norms and often face dual inequalities because of their gender and age (Evans, 2006). In most societies, female youth on childbearing or marrying, regardless of their age, attain adulthood as mothers and wives with responsibility to the household while their male counterparts may continue working towards attaining productive markers of adulthood, such as employment, building a house and taking responsibility in society. However, such gendered youth identities are now contested in a precarious economy where, for instance, young men and women use their sexuality to alter their marital relations (Chege & Arnot, 2012; Jones & Chant, 2009; Katz, 2004; Boehm, 2006); young unemployed men remain unmarried, thus retaining 'male youth' status; and employed young women start families without marrying, breaking the gender constructs associated with marriage and financial

independence (Boehm, 2006; Cole & Durham, 2007). Such performances produce new identities that challenge existing gender norms and restructure the prevailing gendered inequalities that limit young people's navigation of waithood.

Finally, this thesis theorizes youth as a fleeting moment (Makau, 2011). In one of the slums in Nairobi, Makau observed that young people joined youth groups with an aim of being empowered, but the individuals would eventually dissipate into different identities after certain periods of membership. The groups were platforms that facilitated the embodiment of multiple identities and those individuals who reconstituted as respectable (competitive and enterprising) would later leave to start their own businesses, go back to school, or find better work opportunities out of the slums. Nevertheless, some would also leave the group and return to criminal activities, while others migrated from the slums. Makau continues to argue that, the 'moving away' of the youth from the social organizations was actually the success of the group, which in essence was 'moving up' (similar to 'moving forward' and 'towards' in Locke & te Lintelo, 2012) and not the otherwise growth and expansion of social groups as evident with 'adult' organizations in the slums. This navigation through groups is evident in different forms of youth organizations. In student politics, the organizations facilitate students' immediate political contestations, but often, individual actions are designed in such a way that they propel one into anticipated positions of political leadership or patron-client relationships (Klopp & Orina, 2002). Research has shown that most politicians emerged from their student political activities where they gained not just the skills, but also built their cultural and social capitals. Mobility is, therefore, relevant in understanding youth as their status shrinks or expands as one moves across time and space; and rejects, resists or even performs certain identities that in a way pass for 'adult' or 'youth' than their actual age or society expectation (Gough, 2008; Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 2005).

Youth Waiting in Developing Countries

The claims that Africa is a waiting continent emanate from modernization and globalization narratives that produce individuals, societies, nation-states in relation to others and especially to those with more economic power and global political authority. Africa became a developing poor continent (R. L. Bryant & Bailey, 1997) with a 'floating population' (Bayart, 2007:272), permanently waiting for quality education, health, democracy, and other forms of progress achievable through millennium development goals, human rights, and other international declarations. While this has coincided with the capitalism project (Harvey, 2005) which since the 1980s led to the liberalization of African economies through structural reforms of the World Bank and the IMF, most economies have rapidly changed and livelihoods become more uncertain, especially for the marginalized citizens. In these liberalized but constrained economies, young people are positioned in situations of limbo characterized by reduced formal employment opportunities, curtailed creation of new jobs and deteriorated social welfare. They are left to navigate menial and unrewarding activities to secure a living; and yet in their own ways desire the global images of prosperity associated with self-transformation, accumulation, and consumption (Standing, 2011; Thieme, 2013). Their waiting is thus of the identities associated with attaining social adulthood, but also of the globalized images of consumption and growth.

Unlike a few decades ago when transition from childhood to adulthood was marked by certain biological and cultural events, young people now find themselves at home, in school, on the streets, in indecent work options, or in betwixt and between uncertain life trajectories unable to attain adulthood (Christiansen et al., 2006; Honwana, 2012; Johnson-Hanks, 2005). Although waiting, they are constantly alert to possibilities of moving forward (Locke & te Lintelo, 2012) and towards imagined good lives. Youth waiting can then be conceptualized as

comprising of spaces and processes within which youth develop new identities and negotiate their indeterminate situations through individual and collective strategies of self-making, ranging from acquiring extra skills set, maintaining social networks, and engaging in new political formations (Honwana, 2012; Jeffrey, 2010; Jeffrey, 2008a).

This thesis follows Honwana's definition of waithood as the 'prolonged and uncertain stage between childhood and adulthood that is characterized by their inability to enter the labour market and attain social markers of adulthood' (Honwana, 2012:19). Referencing youth social movements and new forms of acquiring livelihoods in Mozambique, South Africa and Senegal, she argues that young people don't just wait for a situation to change on its own; they are 'dynamic and use their creativity to invent new forms of being and interacting with the society' (ibid: 4). The argument that youth don't despair posits waithood as facilitating diversity of socio-political identities that young people embody to transform their situations. She examines how young people, in their state of liminality, steer new political formations such as the Tunisian revolution, the Arab Spring, the Uprising in Senegal, and youth protests in South Africa and Mozambique (Honwana, 2012; 2013). Sometimes, the subjectivities of those in wait flourish and eventually enable them to alter or escape their predicaments while at the same time challenging entrenched privileges and social injustices (Fokwang, 2008a; Honwana & Boeck, 2005; Munive, 2010).

Honwana's conception of waithood goes beyond what other scholars have depicted as a state of suspense, boredom, shame (Mains, 2007), getting stuck (Sommers, 2012), moving around (Gough, 2008), or a period of de-skilling and dispossession (Ferguson, 1999; Katz, 2005) and instead presents waiting as a period of resilience in a young person's life. In Jeffrey's editorial note on 'Waiting' in the journal *Environment and Society*, he suggests that 'waiting must be understood not as the capacity to ride out the passage of time or as the absence of action, but rather as an active, conscious, materialized practice in which people forge new

political strategies, in which time and space often become the objects of reflection, and in which historical inequalities manifest themselves in new ways' (Jeffrey, 2008a: 957). Jeffrey studies educated young and unemployed men in rural India who identify with *timepass*: 'a form of waiting characterized by aimlessness and ennui, but which provides opportunities to acquire skills, fashion new cultural styles and mobilize politically' (Jeffrey, 2010:4). He argues that *timepass* offered the Indian male students a means of expressing their disappointments with higher education for failing to lead to salaried work, but also a means for the young men to orchestrate improvisations (*jugãd*) as income-earning strategies (Jeffrey & Young, 2014). Honwana and Jeffrey thus posit waiting as a productive engagement (either in the positive or negative sense) that enhances the perceived social worth of those involved and connects them with the outside world that they aspire for social recognition.

Similar studies explore waiting in the context of youth aspirations in changing economies and exhibit young people as resilient. Katz's ethnographic work in Howa, Sudan provides a good starting point to understand how children and youth respond to environmental changes resulting in part from structural adjustments. Here the introduction of agricultural development programmes expected to develop rural communities and address among other issues, girl-child education, food security, and economic growth, instead led to social reproduction of gender inequalities, environmental degradation, and even instances of increased poverty. Katz describes forms of youth waiting as 'just passing by' or 'marooned moments' where children and youth in rural Howa found themselves under triple pressures: they were excluded from objects of desire, such as education, marriage, and financial independence; they were incapable of moving into socially ascribed age-based categories, especially adulthood; and they were also unable to conform to dominant visions of how people should comport themselves with respect to time (Katz, 2004). Yet, as Katz argues, the young people in Howa were able to rework their aspirations and reconstitute their livelihoods

with the limited capitals at their disposal. For instance, young mothers educated their children in the hope that they would acquire jobs in the formal sector, while some young men migrated into other towns or countries in search of waged work.

The rural areas are becoming important pathways of negotiating upward social mobility as waithood has blurred the urban and cosmopolitan youth aspirations (Prince, 2006; 2013). Unlike previously when rural households relied on remittances from members living in urban areas, present-day life trajectories involve what Jeffrey has referred to as the ‘stretching of the local’ (Jeffrey, 2010:177), when urban-educated men return to the village to farm, often to accumulate economic capitals that help them to acquire certain urban credentials such as a car, a mobile phone and designer clothes and maintain relationships within their urban social networks. In Africa, these ‘stretches’ took place with urban dwellers who upon losing urban incomes, established and maintained economic and social links with the rural areas where they sourced food or where urban children were fostered (Foeken & Owuor, 2008; Potts, 2007). However, as Katz observed in Sudan, educated youth, whether in the urban or rural areas remain dispossessed of opportunities: they themselves have stigmatized rural occupations as demeaning work for the uneducated and poor (Lewa & Ndung’u, 2012), but neither can they find their anticipated white collar jobs in the urban areas as expected by society. Their need to ‘stretch’ is thus not just of the local, but also of opportunities that necessitate any mobility (Porter et al, 2010) and maintain their elite distinction as the privileged intelligentsia.

Gendered Waiting

Fokwang’s (2008a; 2008b) exploration of gendered youth aspirations exposes the differences of young men and women in waithood. His research during Cameroon’s *la crise* – a time of spectres of economic, political, and moral crises – explored how the aspirations of young men

and women for an elite distinction were negotiated through associations where they performed 'productivity' and 'moral uprightness' (Fokwang, 2008a). Men displayed signs of productive masculinity, often associated with their ability to work, provide for their families, and assume responsibility in society. Even when they were self-employed, young men identified themselves as 'applicants', meaning, they were waiting for formal work. On the other hand, young women aimed at exhibiting their moral uprightness through their sexuality and family relations which were considered indicators of attaining adulthood and respectability in relation to other members of society. While young men's waiting is characterized by endeavours to acquire capitals leading to social markers of adulthood, women's waiting is also grounded on their morality. Although the young women in Cameroon aspired to moral uprightness, other studies have shown that, in times of unemployment and resource scarcity, young women (and men too) may reject these moral barriers and use intimacy and their sexuality as commoditized livelihood assets (Chant & Jones, 2005; Cole, 2007).

On the other hand, some structural reforms have introduced gendered labour markets and altered waiting. For example, in Lesotho and South Africa, a decline of employment in South African mines dispossessed young men whilst a rising garment industry in Lesotho increased women's economic opportunities consequentially altering livelihoods and social relations (Boehm, 2006). While the women had several livelihood strategies that they could 'muddle through' in both rural and urban spheres, such as small-scale farming, marriage, boyfriends, waged work, brewing, hawking or receiving gifts from relatives, men were often limited to activities linked to the cash economy and masculinity and thus became dispossessed when such opportunities closed down (Boehm, 2006:166).

Whereas ‘male youth’ become men when they settle and are accepted by the generation of *patres familiae*² who are also their competition in their market for marriageable girls’ (Whyte, 2006:257), female youth become women when they marry or, in some communities, when they deliver their first child. As such, mobility reconstitutes waithood as young men negotiate prolonged youthhood and continued dependence (especially when waiting to inherit assets, or expected to contribute to household incomes), while female youth negotiate situations of ‘rapidly becoming old’ by seeking opportunities to prolong their identities as female youth and daughters (for example, by staying in school). However, gendered mobility becomes complex when female youth become income earners or choose independent lives as single parents (Boehm, 2006) thus introducing new values and individual preferences in social relations.

Additionally, in different African countries, gendered mobility has had significant changes in communities where men have lost foothold in the urban/cash economies and returned home to enterprising women, in either rural-based agricultural economies, feminized labour markets, or the commodification of their bodies (Boehm, 2006; Prince, 2006; Schroeder, 1996). Sometimes, young men marry older women (*sugar mamas*) or young women elope with older men (*sugar daddies*) leaving young men without means of marrying, gaining adult status, and establishing a family (Jones & Chant, 2009; Cole, 2007; Prince, 2006). Yet, in other cases, men and women have chosen occupations believed to be of the opposite gender, thus negotiating different entries into social adulthood.

² Patriarchal family members

Ku-hustle: Aspiring to Change

If we were to contextualize youth aspirations in Vigh's conception of social navigation (2009), then aspirations would be concerned with negotiating the conditions of present waithood and in anticipating a possible future, a situation that requires one to remain alert to possibilities, even when the present occupations are dissatisfying and lack any excitement. Aspiring would then comprise adapting to vulnerabilities, responding to constant crises in one's life, and preparing for anticipated future changes. In post-war Liberia, young people navigated their adversities by retailing all forms of commercial items on the town streets (Munive, 2010). Such acts of hustling were firstly a survival strategy, and secondly, they reproduced a meaningful existence of the young people as the enterprising individuals crafted a respectable identity by actively searching for profit and wealth accumulation opportunities.

In Kenya, several youth studies have suggested similar forms of navigation (*ku-hustle*) that enable young people to adapt to unemployment crisis and attain social adulthood. Thieme's hustle economy in Mathare slums is an exemplar of social navigation, involving deriving alternative pathways of attaining economic independence and respectability of once denigrated youth population by turning socio-environmental challenges into enterprises (Thieme, 2013; 2015). In her study, slum youth, often associated with crime and hanging out aimlessly in the neighbourhoods, became proprietors of waste dumped in the slums, a practice that was linked to youth associational life and a performance of new identities as hustlers and environmentalists. Hustling lies at an intersection of, on one hand, the capitalist ideologies of capital accumulation and growth, and on the other hand, the social norms of survival, getting by, and yet not exceeding one's means in liminal spaces. Thieme's views are similar to those of Prince (2013) who has documented how young people in Western Kenya moved between rural and urban areas seeking jobs (tarmacking), a strategy that also involved engaging in volunteer work to increase one's experience, hence becoming more competitive

in the job market. Other studies include those of Mutuku (2011), Makau (2011), Maina (2012), and Hope (2012) who focus on empowerment as a form of facilitating Kenyan youth to navigate their difficult situations through self-making.

Negotiating waitthood also includes cultural performances of modernity as illustrated by Weiss (2002) on the hip-hop culture of barbers in urban Tanzania. Young men expressed their aspirations for modernity and consumption through language, dressing, and art in their barbershops – spaces that were both a livelihood source and a resistance of uncertain situations (Weiss, 2002; 2009). Likewise, the intersection of modernity and cultural performances in Ghana altered and increased women's entrepreneurial activities in hairdressing and dressmaking (Langevang & Gough, 2012). In other contexts, the conditions of waiting are transformed by the performance of street culture. As Langevang (2008) and Thieme (2013) have observed, these 'bases' not only reproduce masculine identities, they are also places of constant motion as individuals interact, form strong bonds, strategize, and sometimes form associations from which they derive respectable identities in the community. Thieme adds that, even though the 'bases' involve forms of capitalist relations, rather than making rational economic decisions of wealth accumulation, the success of a hustler is contingent on the friendships and 'base' associations through which the individual and collective youth can commercialize particular 'corners', goods and services in their community (Thieme, 2015). Their everyday practices of 'hanging out' then become part of their hustle and an important aspect of their livelihoods as they manage their identity in the community and their relations with others especially those in authority where their activities might be illegal (ibid).

Other studies document how young people negotiate waitthood through sophisticated technologies of self (Ansell, Hajdu, Robson, Blerk, & Marandet, 2012). Such include the increased rate of school drop-outs among young men in Ghana to join local football clubs in

anticipation of eventually becoming international footballers (Esson, 2013) and hence escape the precarity associated with education and unemployment. These technologies of self are no different from the reproduction of *sugar mamas* and *sugar daddies* as seen in Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, and the Gambia (Chant & Evans, 2010; Cole, 2007; Honwana, 2012; Prince, 2006) which aim at making the individual a commodity and eventually transforming the moral society. Other self-disciplining efforts produce ‘enterprising individuals’ (Langevang & Gough, 2012; Munive, 2010), taking the form of *kukiya-kiya* (making do) in Zimbabwe (J. L. Jones, 2010), similar to the French notion of *debrouillier* (Waage, 2006) which suggests cleverness, dodging, and the exploitation of whatever resources with an eye for self-sustenance. Jones argues that *kukiya-kiya* goes beyond seeking survival strategies to radically re-orienting the economy by evading institutions like the state, the law, bureaucracy, permits for doing business, and even cultural norms (J. L. Jones, 2010). Similarly, Liberian youth hustlers were described as ‘revitalizing agents’ who used entrepreneurship as a way of moral regeneration but also to seek possibilities of moving on and shifting grounds from stressful environments (Munive, 2010). These notions of ‘a zigzag search for opportunity in the hardened face of reality’ (J. L. Jones, 2010:287) reflect the complexity of waithood, and the strategies employed by the individuals who find themselves in these situations.

The Physicality of Social Navigation

Contextualizing this study on environmentalism and agricultural transformation introduces a new approach to studying youth livelihoods that considers the physicality of spaces within which young people negotiate waithood. Such studies are not new. In Sierra Leone, for instance, decisions between farming and joining the war were contextualized on the ability of the young person to reclaim their respect and earn a decent living in the community after the war (Fanthorpe & Maconachie, 2010; Richards, 2005). In Mali, during the war, wildlife

conservation was promoted as a noble occupation for young men who could later become re-integrated into the community without the stigma associated with ex-soldiers (Canney & Ganame, 2014). Similarly, in Uganda, the adoption of legitimate livelihoods by child ex-soldiers was dependent on the potential for income generation and diminishing risks for renewed violence in the future (Drost, van Wijk, & de Boer, 2014). While these three studies suggest an inclination towards financial independence and social acceptability of young people, there is little attention paid to the physicality of the space within which these livelihoods are developed and sustained.

My interest in this thesis is not just how young people utilize the natural environment to establish alternative livelihoods, but also what effects their actions might have on the natural environments in which they derive these livelihoods. To illustrate, a study by Okali and Sumberg (2012) on young tomato farmers in Ghana fails to provide any evidence of the impacts of farming on the agricultural landscape. Similarly, Thieme's research with youth entrepreneurs in the waste sector discusses their hustling through cleaning toilets and trading in recyclable waste, but does not expound on the impacts of these actions on the slum and overall environmental justice in the informal sector.

A study by Thorn *et al* (2015) on the autonomous adaptation of slum communities to environmental change attempts to explain the intricate links between wealth and physical environments. Their study of adaptation in Mathare slums revealed that in times of varying environmental and economic changes, individuals and communities voluntarily, and sometimes involuntarily, adopted a range of adaptation strategies often drawing on their natural and social environments, such as relocating to temporary settlements, dumping waste along the river banks, upgrading to gated communities, and pooling resources through saving schemes among others. Their main argument was that planned adaptation is not possible in times of significant unpredictability, and as such, individuals and communities respond

through radical organization and innovations in their physical environments. Other environmental researchers, such as Nielsen and Vigh (2012), Katz (2004), and Gabrielson *et al* (2013) share similar views that unpredictability of the social world produces new subjectivities that alter the physical environments.

I argue for understanding (the process of negotiating) waithood in the context of changing environments as aptly demonstrated in Katz's study of Howa (Katz, 1991; 2004; 2005). Katz argues that, following the introduction of a new agricultural development project, Howa was not only economically restructured, but the environmental changes escalated with economic changes. As a result, the community, even though aware of the on-going environmental problems, were unable to respond because their lives were enmeshed and with few alternatives. The physical and socio-economic environments were indeed in motion – as a consequence of altering the physical landscapes – transforming the social relations of production, and tightening ties to the cash economy. As livelihoods from the physical environment were constrained and there was an increased demand for investment in a culture of consumption, there was an increased turn to a cash economy, which in turn relied on the changing physical environment. Consequentially, the means to adapt to a changing environment were often unsustainable and as Katz observed: families turned to charcoal production, girls were withdrawn from school to fetch water and firewood from longer distances; and children received less environmental knowledge as they spent more time either in school, or because some of the natural classrooms had been degraded (Katz, 2004).

In the study of the Lake Victoria Basin (LVB) of Kenya and Tanzania, Gabrielson *et al* (2013) examined the adaptive capacities of smallholder farmers to climate vulnerabilities. Like in the Sudan case, this study found that smallholder farmers adapted to vulnerability by diversifying their livelihoods into off-farm incomes often based on the physical environment and social navigation. Age and gender considerably affected the differentiated adaptive

capacities, as young men migrated in search of waged work, leaving women in vulnerable environments and with little means of survival. However, in both Katz and LVB studies, migration appears to have little impact on community adaptation, and thus families turned to withdrawing children from school, marrying off their teenage daughters, working collectively on the farms, brewing, burning charcoal, selling livestock and other products made from the natural environment.

Nielsen and Vigh's (2012) study in Biidi village in Burkina Faso makes similar observations of the links between environmental change and social navigation. A marginalized village in Northern Burkina Faso, the inhabitants faced rising food prices linked to ongoing environmental changes, global food crisis, and the inadequacies of the state. In response to these crises, the community's navigation strategies included seeking waged incomes from development projects and mining in a nearby region, as well as selling their livestock. They also used the government technologies to lobby for food aid and agricultural projects in exchange for their votes.

Evident from these three studies is the constant change of social and physical environments within which individuals and communities develop adaptive strategies and negotiate livelihoods in uncertain economies. The navigation strategies of the individuals and communities in these studies depended largely on their ability to identify and craft alternative livelihoods from the (neoliberal) opportunities at their disposal. For instance, Biidi residents relied on development projects and political manipulation for food aid as forms of livelihood diversification; Howa families encouraged their children to go to school, and the young men to migrate to other towns; and in LVB, associational life and lobbying for agricultural intensification were considered viable adaptation strategies. Some of these navigations would have negative impacts on the physical environment and social relations, but in the present,

were considered the most feasible responses to the challenges of the individuals and the community.

Returning to the subject of youth livelihoods, a gap exists in the scholarship of the intersection between environmental knowledge and youth livelihoods. Within environmental research, studies of youth and environmentalism have broadly focused on environmental education and behaviour change ranging from how to develop positive environmental attitudes (Benckendorff, Moscardo, & Murphy, 2012; Lawrence, 2012; McDuff & Jacobson, 2000), analysing students' perceptions of environmental change (Bruyere et al., 2011; Campbell, Skovdal, & Campbell, 2013; Katz, 2004; Smith, 2014) and developing pro-environmental behaviours (Aydin & Cepni, 2010; Hood, Martin, McLaren, & Jackson, 2011; Lang, 2011) among others. These studies have limited young people's environmental agency to select activities, such as environmental awareness, recycling, tree planting, and saving energy as seen in Lang's description of American universities as 'hotbeds of environmentalism' (2011: 203). Lang illustrates university's environmentalism as the practices in recycling, energy conservation, alternative fuels, public transport, students' environmental groups, and a wide range of environmental-related academic and professional programmes. Yet, his study fails to illuminate the changes contingent of students' actions, or even the eventual occupational aspirations of students engaging in these environmentalisms.

A study of students' environmental actions in Ethiopia attempts to fill this gap by examining how students' experiences of the impacts of environmental degradation inspired their environmental actions (Campbell et al., 2013). Through school clubs, students acquired environmental knowledge and extra skills, adopted pro-environmental behaviours, and used these to negotiate environmental strategies for their local contexts. Similarly, Tsing's (2011) illustration of youth cosmopolitanism in the wake of environmental degradation, economic

‘miracles’ and political upheavals in neoliberal Indonesia is a nuanced illustration of youth livelihoods in the context of environmental and political change. At a time of political turmoil when university students were viewed in opposition to the government, the proliferating nature-lovers clubs in Indonesia became generative spaces to displace student political identities and to refashion new identities that reflected their apolitical choices and enabled them to accumulate capitals that they could draw on in the future (Tsing, 2011). Primarily, university students’ ‘nature-loving’ activities were informed by both the political quiescence of university students and the turn to internationally acquired romanticism of nature, which was reproduced as an urban distinction, youthful consumerism, and anti-political nationalism. Tsing argued that adventure hikes, mountaineering and camping, activities previously associated with foreign tourists, became ‘a process of identity formation, a realm of many meanings, and an avenue for passion and growth’ for most students (2011:153). In short, students’ actions as individuals and as a club influenced and were influenced by the changing physical and political environments of Indonesia at the time.

On the contrary, Smith (2013) illustrates how, in some contexts, social navigation in physical environments may be limited by power relations in society that alter how knowledge is expressed and in which spaces it is expressed, shaping the aspirations of those who hold the knowledge. Smith observed that high school students in Tanzania held modern environmental knowledge acquired through schooling and environmental clubs. However, due to their marginal status in the Tanzanian culture, their ‘environmental knowledge remained trapped in space, whilst the rest of community missed out on this knowledge because there was no avenue for its expression’ through intergenerational learning (ibid: 17). He concludes that without a mechanism to engage young people’s knowledge with that of the adults, young people remain disempowered and marginalized from society. This divide applies not just to knowledge but also in contestation of what is acceptable of young people’s transition to

adulthood by society. In this study, I argue that agricultural livelihoods provide a means through which young people can engage their environmental knowledge in adult practices.

Furthermore, this study is inspired by scholarship that suggests that hustle economies in the physical environment (such as those addressed by Thieme, 2013; 2015), even though shaped by necessity and last resort survival strategies, maybe reconstituted as social enterprises serving economic, social and sustainability needs in a neoliberal economy. In the prevailing narratives of sustainability and green economy, survival strategies such as collecting waste, cleaning toilets, planting trees, or farming may be transformed into social enterprises with the parameters of their success including social benefits and the ability of those involved to romanticize and repurpose their selves as enterprising subjects (Thieme, 2015). Such performances of survival and meaning-making inform the neoliberal subjectivities discussed in the next section.

Neoliberal Subjects and Bourdieu's Social Capital: A Theoretical Framework

What the above literature has revealed is the continued reproduction of youth livelihoods and multiple identities in a society of waiting. I will now turn to explaining the role of capitals and social practice in producing neoliberal youth subjectivities amidst socio-economic and physical changes. My point of departure in theorizing neoliberal youth subjectivities is the acknowledgement of the fact that everyday performances inform (and are informed by) one's positioning in the social world, and the anticipation for the future, relative to present day positions.

Diverse identities and opportunity spaces characterize neoliberal subjectivities broadly understood as the experiences of producing individuals or subjects through power and knowledge, and in a Foucauldian sense, also causing resistance of those being produced (Blackman et al., 2008). Producing a subject (or an individual) takes place within particular

social and economic contexts that are influenced and changed by people including those seemingly marginalized by relations of authority and domination (Pile, 2008). Using the concept of subjectivity to examine young people's livelihoods might help us understand how marginalized subjects resist but also reinforce neoliberal power relations and inequalities (Blackman et al., 2008; Pile, 2008).

I suggest viewing neoliberal youth subjectivities as the multiple identities created by young people as they resourcefully navigate the conditions of their waithood; the temporary and flexible positions they occupy and are forced to occupy when they are exploring mechanisms to continually improve their selves and attain social adulthood in a contradictory neoliberal society that promotes self-making, competitive individualism, and diversification (Gonick, 2015; Langevang, 2008a; Mains, 2007). Fokwang's doctoral work extensively explored youth subjectivities in Cameroon's *la crise* describing them as the 'social actors' thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, especially their senses of self and self-world relations' (Fokwang, 2008b: 158). He argues that rather than young Cameroonians despairing during the economic and moral crises, they formed associations through which they developed mechanisms of improving their lives and maintaining a middle class distinction by performing actions of moral uprightness and superiority (Fokwang, 2008a). Subjectivity involves making choices about one's identity and resisting those identities that are imposed by others (Bottrell, 2007). In the exploitation of their social positioning, including those that are marginalized, young people present themselves as active agents through titles such as young farmers, environmentalists, entrepreneurs, digital natives, cyber activists, change-makers among others.

Subjective positioning combines intentional strategy and judicious opportunism where maintaining one's options is the central aim of action (Johnson-Hanks, 2005). As their futures are evolving, neoliberal subjectivities remain fluid in nature and may be likened to the

embodiments of *go itirela* (making oneself) (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001; Durham, 2007); *hustling* (Munive, 2010; Thieme, 2013); *kukiya-kiya* (making do) (Jones, 2010); *kubaza-baza* (casual work) (Chigunta, Schnurr, James-Wilson, & Torres, 2005) or *jugãd* (improvisation) (Jeffrey and Young, 2014) among others. They often draw on an individual's bodily capitals as they become a unit of labour, such as footballers (Esson, 2013), sexual subjects (Chant & Evans, 2010; Cole, 2005), or employ other sophisticated technologies of self (Ansell et al., 2012). Anagnost *et al* provide a rich ethnography of neoliberal youth subjectivities in relation to future uncertainties in East Asia arguing that young men and women carry with themselves the burden of self-development and *life-making*, 'the investment in the self to ensure one's forward career progress as embodied human capital' (2013:2).

The concept of neoliberal subjectivities relates to that of precariats whose social identities are shaped and shape the prevailing economic landscapes (Standing, 2011). It is the generation that *self-makes* – to construct oneself socially 'as a person of influence and respect in a community' (Durham, 2007: 117); embodies multiple multi-tasking as the norm (Standing, 2011); and pursues new political spaces (Honwana, 2013; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2013). Referring to the rise of the precariat in the developed countries among the 20-50 year-olds, Guy Standing observes that both young women and men are 'increasingly immersed in multiple jobholding, combining what appear to be full-time jobs with informal side-jobs... done outside office hours or at home' (Standing, 2011:119). These side-jobs sometimes take more time than the formal jobs but remain as important as the formal jobs because they provide a form of economic and social security. In Africa, the side-jobs are largely in the informal sector and entrepreneurial (Herrington & Kelley, 2012). As young people are exposed to a global world of liberal opportunities and economic uncertainties, they compete in an open market, and for majority, it means carving out livelihoods using limited resources in few and highly risky sectors (Frederiksen, 2007; Langevang & Gough, 2012; Thieme, 2015).

Fundamentally, neoliberal subjects are products of the technologies of government that constitute self-disciplining individuals (Foucault, 1979) and which in the last two decades have positioned African youth as requiring empowerment – ‘creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others’ (Hope, 2012:227). Empowerment involves equipping individuals with structural, attitudinal, and cultural resources and capacities that lead to their competence, confidence, and self-actualization. Those in need of empowerment are constructed as active agents already ‘working hard to uplift themselves *and willing to act* with knowledge and responsibility and as managers *of resources/capitals*, modes associated with adulthood’ (Durham, 2007:107 emphasis added).

Drawing from these literatures then, I suggest the following attributes of neoliberal youth subjectivities:

The multiplicity of subjective positions: Multiple career trajectories and qualifications characterize the period of navigating waithood and paint the structural and institutional uncertainties (Christiansen et al., 2006; McDonald, Pini, Bailey, & Price, 2011) as well as the complex interplay between globalization, institutions and individuals (Langevang & Gough, 2012). The notions of vital conjunctures and mobility helps us to better conceptualize multiplicity of identities because as individuals navigate vital life events, they embody various identities across time and space, sometimes shrinking or extending their youth, rejecting gender norms, and seeking new meanings.

The entrepreneurial fervour (market opportunism): Neoliberal subjectivities are opportunistic of the market demands, but as Thieme observes, sometimes their economic opportunism is a hustle – ‘an expression of a capitalist relations, but performed and exercised in ways that defy central assumptions of capitalism related to particular pursuits of profit, growth, and rational

economic decisions' (Thieme, 2015:230). By becoming an enterprising subject, young people develop the confidence to take risks in bringing together capital, labour, knowledge, and skills to make a profit by producing a commodity or service that people want and are able to buy (Herrington & Kelley, 2012; Muir-Leresche, 2014). They can be described as 'creative agents who try to seize the available opportunities to improve their positions' (Langevang & Gough, 2012:248) by accessing opportunities that grant independent incomes and respect in society. Even where one's occupation is not necessarily their first choice, being able to start up an enterprise is regarded as a great achievement (Lie, Rich, Kurwijilac, & Jervelld, 2012; Mwasalwiba, Dahles, & Wakkee, 2012).

Self-making: Several studies, for example, Hope (2012), Durham (2007), and Mutuku (2011) have discussed the aim of empowerment as that of ensuring individuals are self-actualized through a process of self-making. Honwana and De Boeck's edited book (2005) on makers and breakers of Africa, is a unique compilation of the various ways in which children and youth subjectivities take shape in African cultures as individuals employ technologies of self through their own bodies:

Young people exercise their creative power discursively but also in and through their own bodies, setting in motion a process of self-realization and promotion of social status through consumption and expenditure, appearance, and fashion. This process is a matter of 'self-making', of capturing and 'fixing' the non-steady state of selfhood and identity in different cultural situations (De Boeck & Honwana, 2005:11).

Durham further elaborates self-making as 'to make oneself socially, as a person of influence and respect in a community of people' (Durham, 2007:117). It is pursuing independence while enlarging the circles of interdependence that constitute well-being, respectability, and leadership in society. In Botswana, self-making reflects the individuality to demonstrate competence for adulthood through material and immaterial gains. Young Tswanas, in order to

become adults, had to accumulate economic capitals, build relations with others, such as caring for the elderly, supporting the households, and participating in communal events, such as funerals, weddings among others, thus earning community respect.

Flexibility and temporality: Youth lives change as fast as the economies, environments, and social relations. The time spent on any one subjective position varies based on the gains expected in the present and future. There is flexibility in the use of time and multi-tasking and mobility enhance one's adaptability. For instance, flexibility, creativity, respectability ideals, and trickery characterized the strategies of young men and women in Ngaoundere town in Cameroon to cope with insecurity and unpredictability as they worked towards attaining better positions in society (Waage, 2006). Young men and women exhibited these attributes through every day struggles of becoming a female student, practicing Islam, migrating, or becoming motor-cycle drivers among other livelihood choices.

Distinctions: Every young person's aim when pursuing change is to stand out among their peers, in their family, and in society. To do so, they embody characters that attune them to individual competitiveness, but also that equip them with the symbols associated with certain classes of prestige. Particularly among the educated youth, there is a desire to retain an elite and urban distinction even where one is struggling to make ends meet (Fokwang, 2008a).

Gendered: Young men and women approach life from different perspectives, and this is reflected in how they perceive economic opportunities and how they seek to remain competitive and distinct in the social space. For instance, Prince and Boehm's studies have shown how women leveraged employment (even when the wages were low) to negotiate for independent lives and change social relations. We see in Fokwang's (2008a) study the performance of young men as 'applicants' and in Durham's (2004; 2007) studies, the claims

of youth to adulthood attached to gendered markers such as marriage and economic independence.

Importantly, neoliberal youth subjectivities emerge as self-made individuals pursue multifarious pathways out of waithood and re-imagine alternative futures in those moments of ambiguity. Their study then can be theorized in Bourdieu's capital and social practices as explained in the next section.

Capitals, Social Practice, and Youth Livelihoods

The sense of one's place, as a sense of what one can or cannot "permit oneself" implies a tacit acceptance of one's place, a sense of limits... or, which amounts to the same thing, a sense of distances, to be marked or kept, respected or expected (Bourdieu, 1985:728).

As neoliberal governments continue to encourage citizens to assume responsibility for their fates in increasingly precarious labour markets, young people find themselves conforming to the neoliberal philosophy of self-development through entrepreneurship (Gordon, 2013; Muir-Leresche, 2014); life-making (Anagnost, Arai, & Ren, 2013); flexibility (Standing, 2011; Waage, 2006); commoditizing their bodies (Esson, 2013; Honwana, 2012); hustling (Thieme, 2013); forming social groups (Fokwang, 2008b; Langevang, 2008); or just moving around (Gough, 2008; Porter et al., 2010) and sometimes getting stuck (Sommers, 2012). Neoliberal youth subjectivities attest that young people's lives are no longer a progression from one life stage to another: they involve strategies of flexibility and opportunism to venture into alternative spaces (habitus), build new social relations, and perform new political actions so as to gain new knowledge, adopt new roles, and become respectable in society (Jeffrey, 2008b; Standing, 2011; Waage, 2006). This thesis is concerned with understanding the strategies – spaces, social relations, and political actions – that produce neoliberal youth subjectivities. If the argument that neoliberal youth subjectivities are dependent on the country's socio-economic conditions is true, (Anagnost et al., 2013; Honwana, 2012;

Langevang & Gough, 2012; Sommers, 2012), I then seek to understand how the strategies are leading to alternative life trajectories of Kenyan educated youth. Bourdieu's theorization of social practice and capitals help us understand neoliberal youth subjectivities and the generative spaces which educated youth occupy while waiting, or in anticipation for a time of waiting, for independent livelihoods.

Capitals form the foundation of social life and dictate one's position within the social order. The more capitals one accumulates, the more powerful position he/she is able to hold in society economically and symbolically. One accrues capitals through social practice characterized by structural constraints and strategies in a field (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu makes use of three concepts to explain social practice theory: field, habitus, and practice. Fields are domains of power and the sites of struggle between holders of capital that are constituted by the distribution of different forms of capital and power within them. According to Bourdieu, the social world is divided into a variety of distinct fields of practice such as art, education, religion, law, etc., each with its own unique set of rules, knowledge, and forms of capital. While fields can certainly overlap, each field is relatively autonomous from the other with its own set of positions (habitus) and practices (strategies), as well as the sites of struggles between holders of capital in that social field 'playing to win' the positions in that field (M. Barry, 2005; 2006; Bourdieu, 1986). Habitus distinguishes what one can do and not do: it is the position that one occupies in a field and that instils a sense of one's place, and influences one's behaviour. Each individual has an embodied type of feel for the social situations we regularly find ourselves in, and in the right situations, our habitus allows us to successfully navigate social environments. Bourdieu argues that habitus is the 'feel of the game to win' through dramatic performances, including self-improvement, that can lead to profitable gains in the field. Practice is the conscious interplay between habitus and field, where the strategies are less rigid than rules, and include rational calculation due to limited

resources (M. Barry, 2006; Husu, 2013). The strategies to accumulate capitals vary from field to field; and are distinguishable by class, age, and gender (M. Barry, 2006; Bebbington, 2007).

Capitals, in their diversity and contextualized value, are the resources that individuals and collectives mobilize, thereby determining their opportunities and well-being. Bourdieu has categorized these capitals into economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capitals. Cultural capital is embodied: As Bourdieu argues, ‘the work of acquisition of cultural capital is work on oneself (self-improvement) that presupposes a personal cost, an investment, a sacrifice and a socially constructed form of libido’ (1986:5). Cultural capital covers the whole period of socialization; its transmission starting when one is born, and continues through the institutions that one finds him/herself such as the school, the community, and the state. What matters most is when cultural capital is accumulated; the time spent on accumulation; and the economic and symbolic capitals accessible to those accumulating it.

Social capitals are the embodied relationships, the social networks, and the resources controlled within those networks (Bebbington, 2004). They are the products of social investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously and unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term (Bourdieu, 1986). They are maintained and reinforced in symbolic exchanges that are dependent on the objective relations of proximity to physical, economic and social spaces (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Social capital can be converted in certain conditions into economic capitals and sometimes become institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (symbolic capitals).

Scholars in development and youth studies have further developed social capital theory. Bebbington suggests that social capital is an ideology that promotes neoliberalization rather

than questioning it. The social networks offer a ‘governmental strategy by shifting the onus of development from the state to the civil society and to third-sector agencies working on its behalf’ (Bebbington, 2007:158), essentially highlighting how the relations of differences, power and domination are created, sustained, and how social actors operate within these sets of relationships. He goes on to argue that the field and habitus where capitals are accumulated or lost are in constant motion as they are shaped and shape the actors and their practices. By expanding the concept of habitus as a space in motion, Vigh and Nielsen (2012) argue for the consideration of the social costs and strategies involved in sustaining the motion.

Bourdieu’s capitals and social practice theory do not address in depth the aspects of gender, capital differentiation, and the limits of capitals. For example, development practitioners have constantly made the assumption that social capital is the capital for the poor ‘*women who are implicitly expected to have the time available to assume the costs of building and sustaining associational life that can underpin both coping strategies and micro-finance programmes*’ (Bebbington, 2007:157). This assumption has been extended to other marginalized groups, such as the youth, who are often encouraged to form associations to benefit from empowerment programmes and for political representation. Often, such programmes do not factor in the cost incurred by individuals in building and sustaining social groups until such groups can produce commensurate resources for their members. Cleaver (2005) discusses such limits of social capital in Tanzania where poor communities who, because of historical and geographical situations, were limited in the benefits they could obtain from belonging to social networks, and thus the development projects built around such.

On the other hand, some scholars sometimes fail to address the distinct forms of capital across gender, age, class, households, culture, but also as influenced by external institutions, and to which actors develop differentiated strategies to accumulate and maintain. For instance, access to family-based social capitals may be limited by the gender norms

distinguishing the positions of women and men, or even the cultural norms that limit certain powers to certain family members. Essentially, by understanding the social-relational contexts where social capitals are produced (habitus dynamics), then we are better able to understand how differences, domination and inequality affect accumulation and loss of capitals by members of the same social network. That way, we can also understanding the differentiated positioning of individuals in the social world.

Several researchers have used social capital theory to explore youth aspirations through socio-economic instabilities and development and have underlined the centrality of space-based strategies and social relations in the accumulation of capitals (Bassani, 2007; Coleman, 1990; Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Husu, 2013; Jenkins, 1983; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004; Weller, 2010). Space can be family, school, the government, *chamas*, social movements, the base, a lifestyle, or a language through which young people may relate with others, gain legitimacy, and take positions. As young people build social capital towards embodying new identities and contributing to social change (Jeffrey, 2010), their selves and the social space become hosts of significant capitals (power) that require strategies for maintenance (Husu, 2013; Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). In effect, young people are not only recipients of capitals; they are also involved in different strategies of creating capitals through their performances in these spaces (Fokwang, 2008b; McDonald et al., 2011; Worth, 2009). As Barry (2006) and Jeffrey *et al* (2008) advance, strategies enable young people to capitalize on their economic, social, and cultural capitals that enable their upward mobility. For instance, the financial capability of their parents, their social connections, and the nature of academic credentials (all forms of capital) are employed in the negotiation of new kinds of capitals and spaces, implying that those with higher education and family connections might benefit more from the social field than those with less educational capitals and connections.

Even though Bourdieu's intentions with capitals and social practice were to facilitate an understanding of inequality, social capital may, and has been reported, to be prejudicial to the interests of non-members by reinforcing the boundaries of particular groups and enhancing exclusion. As networks are created, capitals accumulated, and obligations become space-based, a neoliberal ideology of growth is implied and inequality is reproduced and thus requiring strategy. Young people, marginalized by the structural constraints and strategies of graduate employment, may become disconnected from their life aspirations if they fail to reposition themselves in the job market. This is perhaps what we are witnessing in this century: frustrated educated youth reconstructing their aspirations through a range of new social relationships and new political formations.

As such, this study focuses on the fact that 'socially known and recognized differences only exist for a subject capable not only of perceiving differences, but of recognizing them as significant, interesting, that is, only for a subject endowed with the capacity (*capitals*) and inclination (*social practice*) to make the distinctions that are regarded as significant (*habitus*) in the social universe in question' (Bourdieu, 1985:730). In principle, it is about one having a sense of place (subjective position), tacit of the place (self-improvement), and making the distances to be kept, respected and expected (distinctions).

A Justification for Neoliberal Youth Subjectivities

The underlying rationale for this conceptual framework is the future of youth livelihoods in a country where narratives of youth empowerment are inter-twined and sometimes conflicting, with the efforts to develop a sustainable economy. The framing of African youth as hopeless (Mains, 2012), stuck (Sommers, 2012), or at risk (Ashford, 2007) unfolds in the context of global economic crisis, political instabilities, migration, population growth, climate change among other social changes, which in the twenty-first century are being countered by youth empowerment and entrepreneurship policies. However, these counter-narratives do not exist

in isolation; they evolve in response to the on-going changes in society and among the young people themselves. Consequentially, young people adopt these narratives and self-discipline themselves towards attaining a good life, even in hustle economies where judicious opportunism is the only and perhaps the last resort strategy.

Hence, this study significantly contributes to the perceived promise of African youth owing to the demographic dividend expected to last the next four decades. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 43 per cent of the world's population who are below 25 years could potentially contribute to economic development and positive change given good education, health, and decent working conditions (UNFPA, 2011; UNFPA, 2014). However, a large proportion of these youth, 18 per cent in Africa, remained unemployed in the last decade leading to political instabilities and social strife (Anyanwu, 2013; Azeng & Yogo, 2013). In response, international organizations are constructing youth as assets and promoting approaches that ensure young people's abilities are strengthened to meet their needs; their vulnerabilities to economic, political, and social instabilities are reduced; and sustainability of livelihoods is ensured by promoting ownership and building of capital (UN & DFID, 2010:6). Guided by the African Youth Charter, most African countries have developed national youth policies which focus on youth empowerment for self-employment, participation, and development. The national youth policies promote 'helping young people make the right choices, protect them from exploitation and neglect, and ensure their participation in all spheres of society' (UNESCO, 2004:5). These policy instruments emphasize investment in key areas of youth development: freedoms, family, education and skills development, health, employment, leisure, culture, peace and security.

Additionally, the 2012 African Human Development Report broadens the notion of youth as an asset noting that Africa has three promising assets for its development: the bulging youth population, advances in innovation, and the promise of agricultural transformation (UNDP,

2012). Young people in this report are presented as capable of applying new knowledge and innovations in agriculture and rural sectors and becoming self-employed (UNDP, 2012). Similar notions of youth as important human capital in Africa's productive sectors are presented in international publications (such as Dalberg, 2013; FAO, 2014; Filmer et al., 2014; The Montpellier Panel, 2014). Importantly, it is the proposition of young people as the measure of success of achievement of millennium development goals and as key actors in their implementation (UNFPA, 2010) that triggers this exploration of the emerging neoliberal youth subjectivities. These narratives are held at international and national policy-making levels and influence state and non-state actors' positioning of young people. This study will provide critical evidence to challenge such assumptions of youth capacities and responsibilities.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has provided a review of scholarly and secondary literature on youth livelihoods and aspirations more generally and Kenya specifically and, using Bourdieu's concept of social practice and capitals, developed a conceptual framework for understanding neoliberal youth subjectivities. In the rest of the thesis, I will explore these concepts as follows. First, I will look at the spaces and processes that educated youth seek to maintain alternative livelihoods in a period of waiting. Secondly, I will examine negotiating waitthood as the reconstitution of existing power domains, by elucidating how educated youth reconstitute gender, individualism, collective action, and new narratives, such as green jobs, in an effort to attain alternative life trajectories. Thirdly, I will investigate waitthood as the reworking of the self so as to remain respectable in society and to attain the social markers of adulthood. In each of these three levels, I aim to show how Bourdieu's concepts of capital and social practices are relevant in understanding the opportunity spaces within which navigating strategies are employed in times of change.

3. INSIDER RESEARCH WITH EDUCATED YOUTH

Introduction

This chapter explains the process of designing and conducting multi-methods research with educated youth; my positionality as an insider; ethical practices; and research limitations. As stated in Chapter One, the study focuses on Kenyan educated youth who are student environmentalists and young farmers. Student environmentalists were public university students who were members of environmental clubs that I purposively sampled in 2012 and 2014. The educated young farmers were persons aged 18-35 years, with post-secondary education and engaging in agriculture as a source of income and whom I visited and interviewed on their farms in 2014.

I carried out fieldwork in two phases: four months in 2012 with university clubs contributing to the MPhil thesis and part of this doctoral work; and ten months in 2014 with university clubs and young farmers. In 2012, I conducted six focus group discussions (FGDs) with environmental clubs, 18 semi-structured interviews with student environmentalists, and eight key informant interviews. Further discussions were conducted with five of the clubs in 2014, and included vignettes of young farmers whom I was interviewing at the time. To study young farmers, I combined field visits with open-ended interviews and analysis of secondary data and social media information on educated young farmers. I interviewed purposively sampled 60 educated young farmers in Western, Eastern and Central regions and 23 key informants from state and non-state institutions supporting youth in agriculture programmes.

The chapter is divided into six sections. I first present the process of designing insider research and move on to explain how I developed research questions, identified field sites, sampled respondents and conducted fieldwork activities. The second and third sections explain how mixed research methods of focus group discussions, interviews, vignettes,

participant observation and qualitative data analysis, provided an in-depth understanding of the changing aspirations of educated youth and provided a critical analysis of how these youth interacted with existing power domains in a neoliberal economy. Section four elaborates how I managed my positions as a young female researcher affiliated to Oxford University, hosted by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), an international research organization in Kenya, and researching my peers in my home country. The fifth and sixth sections examine intricacies of research ethics to my relationship with my respondents and the methodological and field limitations I experienced.

Research Design

The aim of this research design was to provide an in-depth understanding into how young people's lives were changing by responding to three objectives: *to explore how post-1980s neoliberal reforms have affected young people's livelihood options; to analyse the various ways in which young people develop new subjectivities in the precarious Kenyan economic conditions; and to examine how changing youth livelihood opportunities affect their aspirations and expectations for the future.* As several human geographers suggest that research questions can be developed from interactions with one's world (Delyser, 2001; Floyd & Arthur, 2012; McDowell, 2001; Whatmore, Rose, & Pryke, 2003), this doctoral research is an outcome of my experience working on different youth programmes and my career background as an environmental scientist. Young and working with youth organizations across Africa, I observed the zeal among university students, to carve out new identities so as to earn some income, supplement or access their only income source, in somewhat uncertain and entrepreneurial ventures. Kenyan public universities formed my first context of inquiry during the 2012 fieldwork where I examined the relationship between historical student activism, emerging student environmentalism, the narratives of environmental change and the aspirations of Kenyan graduates.

My point of departure was to examine beyond student oppositional politics into other forms of student participation that produced new identities, such as environmentalists and inspired new occupations of educated youth. Previous studies have provided an in-depth inquiry into youth agency for the environment especially among school-going children and youth (Campbell et al., 2013; Smith, 2013; Tsing, 2011). Tsing's encounter with student nature-lovers in Indonesian universities examines their participation in relation to oppositional politics, livelihoods, and changing economic spaces. Researching high school students in Tanzania, Smith's doctoral work offers an in-depth analysis of youth aspirations as shaped through participation in environmental activities (Smith, 2012). In Kenya, related research has been carried out in environmental education (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2010), school gardening (Foeken, Owuor, & Mwangi, 2010; Kanyi, Vandenbosch, Ngesa, & Kibett, 2011), and wildlife conservation (Bruyere et al, 2012; McDuff & Jacobson, 2000). None of these studies, however, has focused on university environmental clubs despite their existence since the early 1990s and their potential in shaping educated youth aspirations. My research, therefore, provides a profound account of university environmental clubs and their role in reconfiguring graduate identities in a Kenyan society where formal work and respectability of educated elite is changing. In this regard, the thesis of student environmentalism contributes to a growing body of knowledge on the role of young people's associations in reshaping their aspirations.

My second context of inquiry emerged from my interactions with young people in 2012 where I encountered the notions of self-making often described as *side-hustling*, *doing something for myself*, *tarmacking*, or *having something else on the side*. In the second phase, I aimed at investigating these emerging subjectivities of educated youth and providing a broader perspective of young people's individualism and collective action beyond what was exhibited in student environmentalism. This coincided with the 'youth in agriculture'

narrative that was gaining traction among Kenyan youth in 2013 and extensively discussed in the public space as policies and programmes of the Kenyan government, the private sector, and a range of international, regional, and national organizations. I paid particular attention to those initiatives focusing on youth employment in agriculture, some even advocating for agriculture as an opportunity for decent and green jobs. I observed the increased momentum to rebrand agriculture as an agribusiness and its promotion as a lucrative and decent work opportunity for unemployed Kenyan youth. Self-employment, modern farming methods, new crops, niche markets, climate-smart agriculture and value-chain approach, were all part of the new language that I encountered in the renewed efforts by state and non-state actors to address youth unemployment. My interest in this context, however, was more inspired by the similarities between the student environmentalism and youth in agriculture narratives as they emphasized empowering the individual to become successful by tapping into opportunities provided by a natural resource base. The thesis on educated young farmers, therefore, contributes to the body of knowledge on youth livelihoods in the context of natural resource use and the implications of social-relational differences on such endeavours.

The initial stages of designing this research were further influenced by the growing online community of young people encouraging one another to invest in agricultural side-hustles. *'The Facebook Farmer'*, a presentation at the Global Landscapes Forum on the side-lines of the 19th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), highlighted a young Kenyan who had created a Facebook page, *Mkulima Young* (Young Farmer), as a platform to inspire his peers to become farmers (Jayaweera, 2013; Mkulima Young, 2013). Within ten months, the page had reached 24,000 likes and had daily interactions. As the blogger noted, by using social media to share successes and failures of young farmers, Mkulima Young *'had* proven that social media can not only engage, build dialogue, create opportunities and bring together fragmented

communities but also make individual and national dreams come true' (Jayaweera, 2013). This idea of 'youth in agriculture' becoming an individual and a national dream was evident in the nature of government and donor-supported youth employment programmes established in Kenya in the last four years. Comparing the interactions on different media platforms and the rising national and international interest on youth in agriculture, I observed a growing collective and individuals engaging with each other, sharing new knowledge and learning from one another how to overcome the stigma of farming and remain 'successful' young farmers. These aspects of an emerging successful young farmer were similar to the environmental clubs I had researched in 2012 where students embodied local and global narratives of environmentalism to redefine their individual aspirations for the future. The research, therefore, set out to address the why and how agriculture had immediately become attractive to educated youth and to what extent their multiple identities had further implications on their interactions with the environment and the economy.

Research as an Insider

My choice of educated youth aged 18-35 years effectively made me an insider researcher, 'the practice of research within a group with which one self-identifies as a member' (Anyidoho, 2008: 28). Born during and after the structural reforms of the 1980s, my respondents and I experienced economic and environmental changes during the same period. Asking questions to such respondents, whom I reckon we had been socialized in similar settings, perhaps schooled in similar Kenyan education systems, and tarmacked for jobs in the same cities, was an intriguing yet reflective moment that required continuous reflection in how I structured my thoughts and expressed my feelings of the field of inquiry. That my departure to study abroad had led to my new identity as a researcher did not imply that my eventual return to Kenya had made me an outsider researcher. I found myself reflecting on my university days as I visited each of the university clubs and recalling my participation in

similar students' clubs. I also reflected on the alternative livelihood options I might have considered if I had not departed for postgraduate studies. Importantly, I found that my researcher identity was a conscious ethical reflection on the relationships I developed with my peers, my approach to collecting data, analysing it, and eventually writing this thesis. The differentiated social positions of my respondents and I made it possible to probe them and produce worthwhile scholarship on youth livelihoods.

My experience as an insider researcher informs my reflection on whether young youth researchers should be limited to the traditional argument of whether insider scholarship is legitimate and worthwhile, or if we should consider the benefits (academic and social) emerging from the mutuality of co-production of knowledge among peers with differentiated social positioning in the field. In my case, some of my respondents became enthusiastic about my research because they viewed it as a space for mutual exchange of knowledge. As I benefited from the interactions that are the foundation of this thesis, my respondents often identified with the opportunity to freely interact with their peers and the open platform provided by my research where their voices could be heard. I argue that, I was not only conducting research towards attaining a doctorate, but my respondents imagined me as a gatekeeper to their eventual exit from marginalization through politically and socially relevant answers that would emerge from this research. They would often call back to enquire about scholarships, internship opportunities, new farming techniques, new markets, joining youth organizations, or just keeping in touch to maintain social networks.

In essence, insider research is equally an academic encounter as it is a representation of a shared struggle of the researcher and the respondents as they occupy multiple positions across time and space. As Anyidoho (2008) suggests; 'it's therefore not just what I stand for, but also where I stand' in this thesis. Furthermore, the research process required gaining trust, establishing a reputation and maintaining credibility with my respondents (Heath & Walker,

2012: 15). It was important that I made my respondents comfortable enough (Bagnolli, 2012) that they could say what they really thought of sensitive topics, such as income inequalities, gender disparities, political instabilities, and their fears and hopes of their changing life trajectories. On the other hand, such openness to an extent, reflected on my real life experiences, requiring my critical reflection and response in relation to my research. My short departure from the field enabled me to reflect on my respondents and to develop an unbiased inquiry into their lives in a space that I also belonged. My departure did not imply that part of my identity was erased as a member of that group; however, one might argue it was intentionally displaced to give space to this study.

Developing Research Questions

The research questions in 2012 aimed at contextualizing student environmentalism in the scholarship of youth associational life as I explored the nature of environmental clubs and their relation to Kenya's environmental politics. Consequentially, students' expressions of uncertainties and limited hopes exposed a wider gap on the under-researched alternative livelihoods for educated youth which informed the questions I asked in 2014. I first aimed at understanding the diverse strategies that educated youth were employing to redress their livelihood uncertainties. Secondly, I questioned the prevailing youth in agriculture narrative which offered entrepreneurship as an alternative to formal employment and thirdly, how this was being redefined as decent and green jobs opportunity. Fourthly, I interrogated the extent to which gender and other social differences, such as individualism and collective action were influencing young people's alternative livelihoods and future aspirations. I used these overarching questions to prepare research instruments that included guiding questions to focus group discussions, interviews with students, young farmers, and with key informants (Appendices I to III).

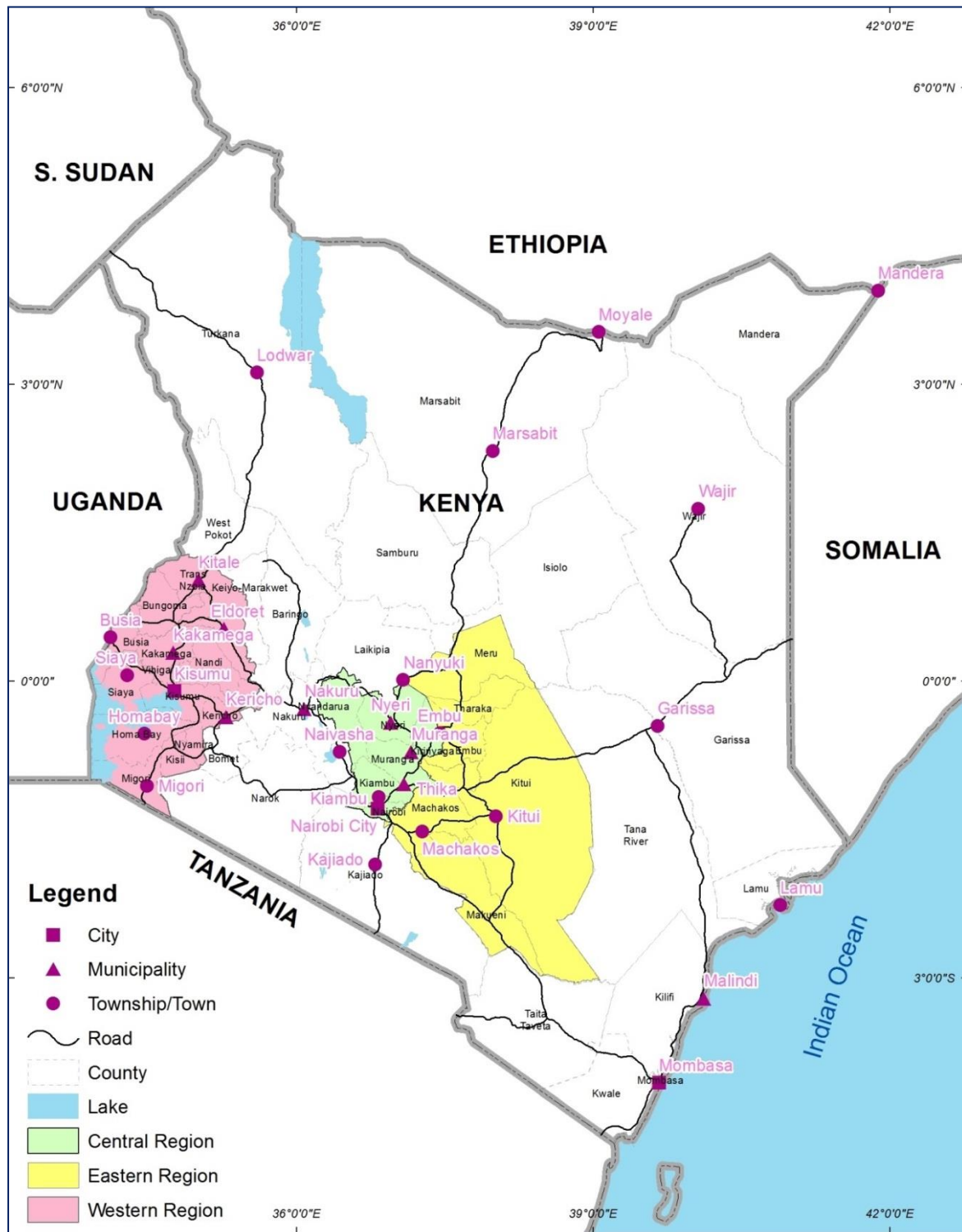
Brockington and Sullivan (2003:73) argue that in qualitative research a ‘methodology may just mean a series of meetings with people, but if researchers are appropriately self-aware, and meetings are characterised by good listening, and conversation, we will have much to learn about the world in which we live’. By employing this principle in designing and asking these research questions, I found that it was critically important that I managed my encounters with my respondents, listened keenly to their conversations, and tried to locate my pre-set questions in their narratives as much as possible. Using different approaches, I would ask the same question, seek clarification, and interest my respondents to provide counter-arguments. I later analysed and interpreted these conversations into relationships, explanations, conflicts, similarities, and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) which inform the narratives developed in this thesis.

Selecting Participants and Study Sites

The field comprised of six public universities and three geographical regions – Eastern, Western and Central regions³ – (Figure 3.1) representing the diversity of Kenya’s high agricultural potential areas. The choice of public universities was first because student activism – the basis of my argument for changing social identities of educated youth – originated from public universities and secondly because environmental clubs were formed in the 1990s in the same public universities where student activism flourished. University clubs and societies form part of university students’ life and are mandated to carry out students’ professional development and social activities within and outside the university. Student environmental clubs identify as ‘professional clubs’ to distinguish themselves from the normative Student Unions which are associated with student politics and protests.

³ These regions are not equivalent to the previous administrative regions of Western, Eastern and Central provinces but were pre-determined through purposive sampling as highlighted in Figure 3.1

Figure 3. 1 Field study sites in Kenya



They are membership groups mostly comprising of undergraduate students and organized along common causes such as health, music, sports, entrepreneurship, science, community development, environment, and theatre among others. The target environmental clubs were

unique in their close link with the teaching of environmental courses, their public environmental activities, and their collaborations with environmental organizations in the country. Club membership ranged from 30-150 members mostly drawn from the departments of environmental studies or natural resources management. Clubs elected their leaders and appointed a patron, often a senior faculty member, and well-linked to environmental organizations.

I purposively sampled educated young farmers from Western, Eastern and Central regions as indicated in Figure 3.1. The Central region, which had most of the young farmers accessing and actively using social media included Nairobi, Nyeri, Murang'a and Nyandarua counties. This region contributes a significant amount of food consumed in Kenya and exported due to its high agricultural productivity and infrastructure development. The Western region comprised of Homabay, Busia, Siaya, Kericho, Trans-Nzoia, and Kisumu counties with Kisumu city, Busia, and Eldoret towns being the largest markets. In Eastern region, I sampled respondents from Machakos, Makueni, Embu, and Kitui counties whose towns were the major markets⁴. The three regions are high agricultural potential areas receiving an annual rainfall ranging 600-2000mm but with severe land degradation, soil nutrient depletion (Shepherd & Soule, 1998), land subdivision due to high population densities (Muyanga, 2013) and changing weather patterns (Thornton et al, 2008). Most farmers depend on subsistence farms ranging from less than one acre to 10 acres of mixed crop/livestock farming systems with main staples being maize, beans, potatoes, cassava, and sorghum and animals being cattle, goats, sheep, poultry, pigs, donkeys, and rabbits. Cash crops grown in these areas included tea, coffee, sugarcane, and horticultural crops. Indigenous vegetables

⁴ Due to the limited numbers of educated young farmers, it was difficult to attain a representative sample from each county, thus the sampling was based on identifying a pre-determined number of twenty participants from Western, Eastern and Central regions.

were most common in the Western region, while fruits and drought resistant crops such as pigeon pea, cowpea, and sorghum were common in Eastern region. Cereals were grown in large scale in parts of the Western and Central regions while intensive dairy and poultry farming was common in the Central region or in close proximity to urban areas.

My strategic sampling of the three field sites was not to provide a comparative analysis of the sample, but to enhance a complementary explanation across different geographical locations. I intended to identify different elements from each of my respondents in each region which gave a broad sense of the totality of youth livelihoods in Kenya. I was also interested in studying how rural and urban youth performed their farming identities and if other factors like technology, climate, and proximity to markets had any influence on the young farmers in each of the regions.

Fieldwork

While still in Oxford, my imagination of the field which is also my peers and my home country included days of good weather, free time on weekends and good company with other researchers at my host institution. However, in both phases of fieldwork, I encountered both exciting and challenging moments that required some form of flexibility. University students protests often leading to violent confrontations with the public and police were still a common phenomenon in public universities and this affected my access to environmental clubs. In 2012, I accessed six of the targeted seven public universities, while in 2014 I accessed five of them in both cases having to reschedule appointments. In addition, the variance of university calendars and double intakes⁵ affected the students I would access at

⁵ In 2012, all public universities were required to make two enrolments of first year students to cater for a backlog of high school graduates not joining universities and reduce the time between completion of high school and enrolling to universities from one and half years to six months. As a result, some students have to take extended holidays so that the university can make room for another cohort of students.

any one time in the universities. In 2014, the anticipated ease with identifying young farmers, turned into a constant pursuit of research participants. I realized the idealized successful young farmer on the media was an aspiration rather than a reality. Whereas thousands of ‘young farmers’ subscribed to sites such as Mkulima Young, most were ‘fans’ who did not own farms, but ‘liked’ the idea of farming. Those farming and active on social were mostly located in the Central region and, therefore, I added new criteria to consciously diversify my sample to Western and Eastern regions. Moreover, I had to pursue young female farmers in all the three regions because they were less active on social media and were fewer in number. Once identified, interviewing the young farmers spread over three geographical regions involved extensive road travel from Nairobi into the rural areas. Table 3.1 below from my fieldwork journal notes gives an impression of the fieldwork practices.

I had a part-time research assistant in 2014 who had previously worked for ICRAF in developing youth agribusiness models. Coming from a management background, I trained her on how to conduct social research, contacting respondents, ethical practices, and data entry. Herself a student in one of the public universities, she shared her experiences of *side-hustling* where she baked and sold pastries on weekends and worked with me during her long holidays to raise her university fees. She eventually became a peer and a colleague in my field encounters accompanying me to the focus group discussions as a co-facilitator and to most of the interviews as a note taker, photographer, and sometimes asking clarifying questions. Our co-facilitation of the FGDs allowed the students to relate with her as a student and myself as a researcher, thus breaking the barriers of power between the respondents and us (Gough, Langevang, & Namatovu, 2014).

Table 3. 1 Managing field practices

Anticipated practices	Fieldwork realities
Step 1: Identify young farmers as potential respondents from youth networks, organization databases and social media platforms	Reality 1: A long process of getting young peoples' contacts and confirming their eligibility for the research. Spend time talking to people in organizations, government, through websites, calling former colleagues, or the friend of a friend who might know someone who might introduce you to a young farmer. Attend different kinds of events hoping to meet young farmers or someone who might introduce you to young farmers. Spend your free time on social media 'checking out' profiles of young farmers to determine their eligibility for the research.
Step 2. Contact identified young farmers, introduce yourself and the research, request their participation, and book an appointment to visit their farms and interview them	Reality 2: A long process of asking a stranger during a first call their age, education level, what/where they are farming and located. Trying to be as convincing as possible about the research interview, but also keeping a distance so that you don't impose the research on them. Ensuring they know your motive is to conduct research and not to promote their farms or finance their initiatives. Calling repeatedly to book appointments, reschedule, get directions, ask about road accessibility, sometimes even about nearest shopping centres where you might eat or sleep while in the field. Realizing that most young farmers on social media are located in one region, and therefore, flexibly using key informants and gatekeepers to introduce you to young farmers in other regions.
Step 3. Visit the young farmers for field observations and conduct open-ended interviews	Reality 3: Accepting the disappointment of cancelled and rescheduled appointments. If lucky to finally drive to the farms, get lost because even the driver is new to the region, the rough roads, there are no signs, and Google maps are not updated for such regions. You are stuck when it rains or the car breaks down; arrive late for the interview, and sometimes, fail to reach the destination due to inaccessible roads. Adjusting your earlier conceptions of educated youth when you are introduced to an educated young farmer who is over 35 years, and are eager to be interviewed since they are the educated young farmers in their community. Sometimes <i>hustle</i> your respondents to share contacts of other young farmers they might know. Often you delay leaving the field because you arrived late for the interview. You wake up the following morning and realize you have no scheduled interviews and have to start the process all again. Realize that despite all your efforts, you did not achieve the intended gender balance or perhaps the lack of it is a new turn in your research.

Qualitative Research Methods

Proponents of mixing qualitative research methods emphasize the subjective positions and multiple dimensions of both the researcher and the respondents. Multi-methods are desirable because in real world, situations are highly complex and the interventions required often involve several phases (Mingers & Brocklesby, 1997; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). A multi-methods approach allows for triangulation, complementarity, and multi-dimensional explanations of such situations and interventions (Heath & Walker, 2012:13). My inspiration to use mixed qualitative methods came from the works of various youth researchers who have used mixed methods to provide a wider methodological horizon and address ethical issues (Abebe, 2009; Ansell, Robson, Hajdu, & van Blerk, 2012; Gough, 2008; Hansen & Dalsgaard, 2008; Langevang, 2007). Particularly, I was intrigued by the depth of knowledge produced by mixing methods such as discussions, interviews, participant observation, life histories and photo imagery evident in Langevang (2007), Worth (2009), and Chege and Arnot (2012). Similarly, Fokwang's work on associational life of young Cameroonians combines participant observation, interviews, and discussions in exploring new spaces, social relations, and political actions, eventually producing a rich description of youth subjectivities (2008). Therefore, I combined focus group discussions, interviews, and participant observation with an aim of gaining an accurate picture of the changing youth aspirations, exploring the diversity of their strategies to seek alternative livelihood pathways, and eventually resulting in an integrative explanation of the social phenomenon of youth futures (Heath & Walker, 2012).

Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are widely applied to capture group dynamics and viewpoints (Gough et al., 2014) and produce socially constructed knowledge as the multiple meanings that people attribute to places, relationships, processes, and events are expressed and negotiated (Cameron, 2010:154). They are participatory allowing small groups of 6-10 persons to

discuss a particular topic in an open space without intimidation (Mutuku, 2011). The researcher facilitates conversations, manages of the range of views produced, and sometimes encourages disagreement among the participants. FGDs are interactive, allowing the participants to offer their views while learning from each other, and at the same time refreshing the researcher (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003).

Applying FGDs to environmental clubs, my intentions were to ascertain the motivations behind student environmentalism as a new site for identity formation. I directed the club leaders to identify a quota sample of nine club members to represent the different academic years, gender, degree courses, leaders, and members. However, my new identity as an Oxford student attracted more students to the research, requiring me to organize extra discussions in 2012. In 2014, I applied a workshop approach, where all club members were invited for a presentation on the findings of my MPhil research, and thereafter, a purposively sampled group of 20 students participated in two focus group discussion sessions.

Despite a well-developed sampling method, it was difficult to attain a representative group from the clubs as the students available were determined by the university calendar, gender balance, and domination of certain degree courses in club membership. Extra discussions were conducted with a group of young professionals attending an international sustainability course in Naivasha in 2012 and another with a youth group in Embu which was involved in greenhouse farming. In total, I conducted thirteen FGDs, eleven with university clubs, one with a youth group, and one with an international group of young professionals.

Conducting these discussions involved a process of preparing guiding questions which were reviewed before and after each discussion. I would start by introducing myself and the research which was followed by the introduction of the participants, signing of informed consent forms, and entering of biodata. I would then start the discussion by inviting the

participants to respond to a list of guiding questions and to explain points highlighted by other respondents. As the discussion picked up and participants felt free to contribute to the arguments made by others in the group, my role would turn into managing the time each participant contributed, giving a chance to those who were less talkative and inviting the participants to offer contrasting views, clarifications and introducing new questions into the debate. As Barbour (2007) argues, FGDs allow participants to debate issues within the context of their own shared cultural backgrounds, I found that the 2012 discussions generated vigorous debates on issues of environmental politics, quality of education, ethnicity, climate change, the role of environmental NGOs, and emerging entrepreneurial opportunities. Of particular interest in 2012 was the debate on the government evictions of local communities from Mau Forest, a debate which centred on corruption, ethnicity, poor governance, and highlighted the depoliticization of students' environmental actions. In 2014, the students debated issues of a green economy and the ability of students to engage in 'green' entrepreneurial activities. These issues – Mau forest evictions, green economy, and youth entrepreneurship – were public discourses in 2012 and 2014 showing the influence of the socio-economic contexts on young people's aspirations and emerging subjectivities.

Using vignettes in focus group discussions

My plan to introduce a discussion on agriculture among student environmentalists in 2014 was supported by the use of vignettes which I prepared from the interviews I conducted with young farmers. Vignettes are useful if the respondents lack personal knowledge or experience in the matter but could potentially have significant contributions (Barter & Renold, 2000). I structured the discussions as a three-hour workshop comprising of a presentation of previous MPhil research, sharing of stories of young farmers, followed by two discussion group sessions. I first presented the findings of my MPhil research which I had conducted with the same clubs, a session which helped maintain my relationship with these clubs as a researcher.

After that, I would present my new research aims and narrate three life stories of young farmers I had already interviewed. After a short break, I would facilitate two sessions of focus group discussions, each lasting one hour and consisting of up to ten students.

The vignette technique was instrumental in creating a context for discussing youth agricultural livelihoods, clarifying the concept of self-making and exploring students' perceptions on farming as a green job opportunity. In three of the universities I prepared power-point slides of selected young farmers while in the other two I invited young farmers to narrate their stories. The introduction of vignettes and real life stories allowed the participants to think of the subject matter before the discussion took place (Mutuku, 2011) and gave them an opportunity to develop their own opinions which they expressed through the discussions. I found that the use of live rather than hypothetical characters was instrumental in strengthening the context of the discussions on youth in agriculture, particularly in highlighting aspects of land tenure challenges, work-time balance, sources of capital, markets, infrastructural challenges, and overall profitability of agriculture.

In-Depth Interviews

The richness and the depth of the life and work stories of young people narrated in this thesis are an outcome of in-depth interviews conducted with university students, young farmers, and key informants. Semi-structured interviews with students were selected for their complementary role where I could ask further questions in response to replies obtained during the FGDs (Bryman, 2008). They offered an in-depth understanding of the students' future aspirations and their immediate expectations from the club. I interviewed 18 students who also took part in the FGDs trying to identify any patterns or differences between male and female aspirations, their political views, and how education and clubs were shaping their identities. With the young farmers, I took an open-ended approach whereby having called them several times before our first meeting, I started the conversation as soon as I arrived at

the farm. Respondents would often disclose a lot of important information when walking around the farm which I would capture as much as possible in the field journal. I later asked open-ended questions which started with a narration of one's life story. As Gough and others (2014) have observed, the reflection of one's past allowed us to understand the key life events that influenced their decision to become farmers, how they developed into an enterprise, and their aspirations and expectations for the future.

Essentially, in-depth interviews 'reveal how employment trajectories, entrepreneurship motivations, practices and aspirations are closely intertwined with changes in socio-economic environment, social networks and family relations' (Gough et al., 2014:304). I would ask questions to clarify certain points raised and follow-up on observations made on the farm or on their social media activities. I would also ask questions to clarify specific issues of research interest, such as gendered norms, their perception of the state, and future aspirations. I would constantly cross-check my list of guiding questions to ensure that satisfactory responses had been offered and stop the interview when no new information was generated. I audio-recorded all interviews and later transcribed them into verbatim, provided pseudonyms, and coded using manual coding processes and NVivo.

Key Informants

Bryman (2008) argues that key informants may play the role of gatekeepers in social research as they may strengthen the researcher's ties with the place and allow future access to the respondents. They also provide details that are necessary in contextualizing certain research questions. In 2012, the university faculty, education officials, and staff working in NGOs provided a good context of how university clubs were viewed within and outside the university. I interviewed the club patrons who were often senior lecturers or heads of departments and had direct access to university administration and an external pool of 'partners' for the clubs. In 2014, I relied on ICRAF's researchers to identify young farmers in

Eastern and Western regions. I also identified international, regional, and national organizations which funded youth programmes and interviewed their representatives to gain a better context of their involvement.

Participant Observation

Studying youth livelihoods in a fast changing country like Kenya meant keeping up with the dynamic nature of my research subjects by attending numerous meetings, following online conversations, reading print media, listening to local radio stations, and watching television channels that broadcasted programmes on young people. I participated in a range of agriculture, environment, and youth events to familiarize with on-going youth policy and development perspectives. I attended club meetings to observe members' participation, structure of meetings, and the issues discussed. Of interest was the level of commitment with which every student contributed to club activities, but also the gender disparity in active engagement where very few females attended club meetings, or contributed to planning club activities. I attended the Student Sustainability Summit (S3) in 2012, an international students' conference whose theme '*Promoting Student Leadership and Innovation towards a Green Economy*' had attracted financial support from various government offices and international NGOs (WSCSD, 2012). I was also invited to Careers Days which provided opportunities for club members to interact and network with environmental professionals and club alumni and receive advice on how to apply for jobs, internships, scholarships, and research projects.

In following their use of social media and visiting their farms, I observed how young farmers distinguished themselves from other smallholder farmers in the community. I also participated in various regional meetings relating to the African Union Year of Agriculture in 2014, meetings to review the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and the African Agribusiness Forum. I used social media sites as a source of

contacts of young farmers and for observing how youth were reconfiguring their identities rather than a main source of analytical data. Whereas I have recorded over 30 websites, blogs, and articles, video channels and micro-blog activity over the research period (Appendix VIII), I have intentionally limited the use of social media information to my respondents' online activity. I have omitted all the links and real names of their online activities to maintain their confidentiality.

Field Journal Notes

I maintained a field journal from the time I started designing the research until the writing stage which contained notes on phones calls, email correspondences, new reports, online sites visited, new appointments made, or observations in the field. I trained my research assistant on note-taking and regularly compiled these into a single file which was then analysed alongside the field data. We maintained a shared spread sheet of all respondents with daily entries of calls made, feedback received, and action required. This helped us to make follow-up calls on key issues that we thought would be important to the research. I also wrote reflective memos which highlighted keywords, themes, and arguments that I identified from each day's research activities. I used these to update my pre-developed themes and concepts and elaborate data sorting and coding processes.

Data Analysis

I have collated and sorted all data types and analysed using NVivo and manual coding procedures. The data corpus comprises of texts from transcribed interviews and discussions; field journal notes; photographs; newspaper articles; reports; and a database of social media sites. A total of 198 students participated in the focus group discussions: 100 in 2012 and 98 in 2014. Of the 100 respondents in 2012, I interviewed 18 of these, half with club leaders,

and five with female students. I interviewed 8 key informants in 2012 and 23 in 2014. Only a third of my participants in 2012 and 2014 were female (Table 3.2).

Table 3. 2 Total sample size

2012 and 2014 Sample Sizes						
	2012			2014		
Sample type	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
First Years	2	8	10	6	10	16
Second Years	14	22	36	5	14	19
Third Years	12	13	25	12	22	34
Fourth Years	11	15	26	10	16	26
Fifth Years	0	1	1	2	3	5
Total	39	59	98	35	65	100
Key Informants	0	8	8	9	14	23
Students	4	5	9	0	0	0
Club leaders	1	8	9	0	0	0
Young farmers	0	0	0	20	40	60
Total	5	21	26	29	54	83

In 2014, I went to the field with a generic understanding of educated young farmers as those youth aged 18-35 years, had acquired any form of post-secondary education, and were involved in productive agriculture meaning, their farms were an important income source and were not necessarily a contribution to domestic consumption. Such a category of youth is small in Kenya as most educated youth are encouraged to migrate to urban areas to tarmac for white collar employment. However, as observed in Table 3.3, the conception of who was young and educated varied in the three regions. In Eastern Kenya, educated men and women with no or very young families (mostly with children below the age of 10 years) were considered youth. In Western Kenya, some of the primary school leavers who had attained a vocational training were considered educated. Young women falling within this age bracket but married considered themselves adults and declined taking part in the research. As such, the definition of young farmers employed in the rest of this thesis is contextual and relational.

Table 3. 3 Distribution of young farmers in Eastern, Central, and Western regions

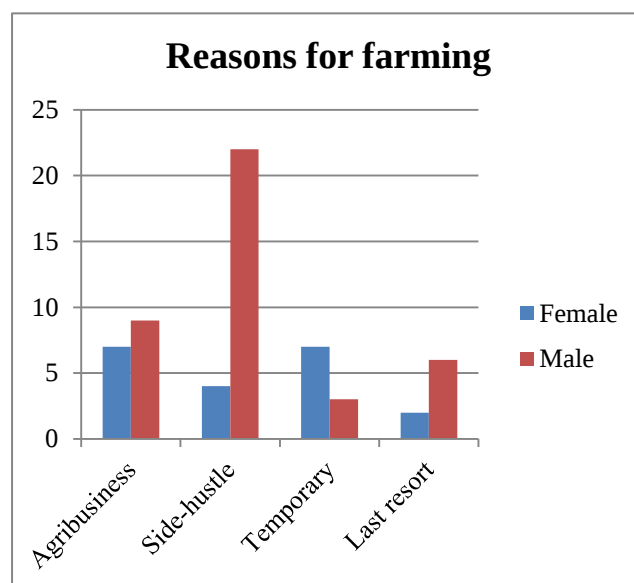
2014 Sample distribution and characteristics					
Variable		Eastern	Central	Western	Totals (N=60)
Age of young farmers	Below 20	0	1	0	1
	21-25	2	8	5	15
	26-30	4	7	10	21
	31-35	5	4	6	15
	Above 35	5	0	3	8
Level of Education	Masters	2	3	3	8
	Bachelors	9	13	6	28
	Diploma	3	0	7	10
	Certificate	2	3	1	6
	High school	1	1	6	8
Family Status:					
	Married				
	Male	6	2	10	18
	Female	4	2	4	10
Single	Male	1	13	4	18
	Female	1	3	3	7
Household head/ Single parent	Male	2	0	2	4
	Female	2	0	1	3
Dominant Crops	Horticulture	8	15	22	45
	Cereals	7	5	10	22
	Tubers	2	0	0	2
	Fodder crops	4	5	4	13
	Fruits	7	6	5	18
	Cash crops	0	1	3	4
	Trees	6	2	4	12
Dominant Animals	Poultry	5	5	3	13
	Rabbits	1	3	1	5
	Cows	5	4	4	13
	Fish	1	0	2	3
	Piggery	1	2	0	3
Source of land	Family land	7	14	10	31
	Own Land	6	2	4	12
	Leased	3	4	10	17
	Others*	0	1	0	1
Number of registered agribusinesses	Male	5	10	7	22
	Female	2	3	2	7
Sources of capital	Family/ Friends	5	6	6	17
	Groups	0	2	3	5
	Personal Savings	11	12	15	38
Reason for farming	Agribusiness	5	8	3	16
	Side-hustling	9	6	11	26
	Temporary	1	3	6	10
	Last resort	1	3	4	8

*Farming on riparian land

A total of 60 young farmers participated in the in-depth interviews. Fifty-four were interviewed on their farms while the remaining six were interviewed in public places as their farms were inaccessible at the time due to poor infrastructure or due to their day-job schedules. Only a third of the young farmers were women with half of them married and three of them single parents. Table 3.3 shows the distribution of young farmers across different variables.

Young people expressed four main reasons as to why they were becoming farmers: 26 were farming as a side-business; 16 identified as entrepreneurs; 10 were farming as a temporary occupation as they tarmacked for other livelihood options; and eight were farming as a last resort survival strategy. However, last resort strategy as I will later discuss, also resulted from other socio-cultural norms such as marriage, rural contexts, or being a first born child.

Figure 3. 2 Reasons for farming



Most educated young farmers had transitioned from school to salaried work then to farming. In cases where farming and schooling were co-current activities, farming incomes provided university fees and met other financial needs for the students. Young men were more likely to transition from school to farm particularly due to land tenure issues and prospects of making

profits in agribusiness. Females were more likely to turn into salaried work and or return to farming after marriage or failing to find a job. Across the range, most respondents referred to their desire to advance their education either in specialized skills to improve their agribusiness or higher education to enable their progress into other professional careers.

Table 3. 4 Transitions from school across gender

Transitions from school across gender			
Transitions	Female	Male	Total
School to work to farm	10	15	25
School to farm	5	17	22
School and farm	1	4	5
School to work and farm	4	4	8
Grand Total	20	40	60

These differentiated transitions were mainly caused by lack of permanent or decent work options for both young men and women, access to land and capital, and family relations, such as marriage or death of a parent. Farming remained the second source of income for most young farmers and especially those who had acquired university education. Certificate and high school graduates were more likely to transition from school to farm as an only source of income while university graduates first worked and then moved into farming as a main source of income or a *side-hustle*.

To understand the role of collective action in pursuing alternative livelihoods, I asked young farmers if they belonged to groups. Thirty-six young farmers belonged to social groups, such as non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, and *chamas* (savings groups). Almost all of them were using online social networks that they considered important in connecting them to their network of friends and colleagues.

Land tenure rights affected one's choice of farming. Half of the farmers farmed on family land with only 12 of them having inherited or bought their own land. The rest were farming on leased land with land sizes varying from as small as five by five metres space for

hydroponic farming to 10 acres of wheat or tree farming. Those with short-term land leases ranging from three months to one year often grew short-season horticultural crops. Those owning land or with long-term leases of one year and above invested in long-term projects such as poultry, dairy, cash crops, tree growing, fish farming and supplemented this with short-season vegetable farming. Integrated and sustainable farming methods were common among those owning land and had progressively invested in agribusiness.

The dominant short-season crops were water melons, tomatoes, onions, kale, spinach, coriander, and indigenous vegetables. Poultry and dairy cattle were the most common animals kept. A few were growing perennial crops like strawberries, sugarcane, coffee, tea, stevia, and bananas. Those keeping dairy cattle would also grow certain crops like vegetables, sorghum, and maize as fodder, and for those with more resources invested in lucerne, barley, napier grass, leguminous crops, and fodder trees. Three farmers had fish ponds: two in Western region targeting the local market and one in Eastern region targeting a Nairobi market. Besides farming, some youth offered on-farm services to other farmers in their community, sometimes at a fee. These included:-

Training in organic strawberry farming
Training on dryland farming
Installation of drip-irrigation systems
Training on urban gardening
Training on hydroponic farming
Construction of hydroponic structures

Animal breeding
Training on fish farming
Construction of poultry houses
Training on dairy feeds management
Training on poultry keeping
Training on agroforestry

Young farmers considered the agricultural markets when choosing what kind of agriculture to undertake. Most in the Central region specialized in short-season high value crops, poultry, and dairy animals that fetched a ready market in the larger Nairobi metropolitan. Most farmers in Western region grew indigenous vegetables and sorghum which fetched a good local market in the region. One farmer was investing in stevia in Kitale, a new crop fetching high returns in the export market. Three young farmers in the Central region had acquired a

Global Good Agricultural Practice (GGAP) certificate so as to export their produce and a few others targeted markets in the East African region. Some of the markets accessible to young farmers included:-

Urban markets in major towns and cities
Regional markets in Uganda and Tanzania
Export markets of horticultural and cash crops
Niche markets e.g. organic, packaged, and home deliveries
Local markets to neighbours, trading centres, and nearby rural towns
Specialized markets of quality seeds and seedlings, quality animal breeds etc.

Water availability was essential to the kind of farming adopted. Sources of water included streams, rivers, irrigation canals, boreholes, water pans, piped water, and rainfall. Almost all crop farming was irrigated through furrow, sprinklers, or drip irrigation methods. A few of the farmers practiced water conservation strategies such as greenhouse farming, rainwater harvesting through water pans, mulching, farming in *zai* pits, growing drought resistant crops and precision farming.

Paid labour was a challenge for both young men and women with only 54 per cent affording paid casuals or waged labourers. Those farming as a side-hustle could afford to pay farm workers from their day jobs, while for others, their farms were small and did not require additional labour, explaining the high number of ‘no paid labour⁶’ in each cohort (Table 3.5).

Table 3. 5 Types of farm labour

Types of farm labour among young farmers				
Reason for farming	No paid labour	Casual labour	Waged Labour	Grand Total
Agribusiness	6	5	5	16
Side-hustle	11	9	6	26
Temporary	7	3	0	10
Last resort	8	0	0	8
Grand Total	32	17	11	60

⁶ This includes the unpaid labour contribution of family members

Those with well-established agribusinesses also invested in training and housing their waged workers. However, supervising farm workers was a difficult task for most young farmers especially the women, those living away from their farms, and those with no skills or experience in farming. Besides the lack of skills, educated young farmers described their farm workers as lacking the enthusiasm towards farming as a decent livelihood option. Most of them were the uneducated and unemployed youth in the rural areas that would normally perceive farm work as nothing more than just getting by and a temporary survival strategy that required no effort in perfecting.

Thematic Coding with NVivo and Manual Coding Procedures

The process of data analysis occurred throughout the process of fieldwork, data entry, analysis, and writing stages. I recorded memos of emerging themes and concepts that later informed the initial coding process of the research questions, background literature, and categories inherent in my data. I later developed interpretive codes as patterns, relationships and differences arose from the data (Cope, 2010). The transcribed discussions and interviews, typed field notes, photographs, databases, social media information, and secondary data constituted the data corpus that I analysed on NVivo and manually.

I applied a thematic coding approach to identify common patterns, significant differences, and important insights that emerged during the interactions in the field and developed these as themes and concepts throughout the research (Baxter, 2009). Codes are like ‘searching aids’ allowing the research to distil large amounts of data along key themes and concepts, and organize it into meaningful narratives (Cope, 2010). Through coding on NVivo, I organized my arguments, searched for specific phrases, and compared responses from different respondents (Kuckartz, 2014). Being self-critical throughout the process, I sifted through the texts, saturating relevant themes and concepts and adding memos where necessary (T. Bryant

& Charmaz, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Dunne, 2011; Glaser, B., Holton, J., 2004). I focused on the conflicts and power relationships between young people and other actors and searched for similarities and differences between young men and women responses on specific questions. I looked for descriptive indicators of consequences, for instance, where respondents referred to vital conjunctures, such as marriage, death of a parent, migration, or education. I also identified *in-vivo codes* from the actual words of respondents. These are ‘descriptive codes that come directly from statements of subjects or are common phrases found in the texts being examined’ (Corbin & Strauss, 1990 in Cope, 2010: 283).

As Corbin and Strauss (2008) note, the more one works on data, the more likely they can gain new insights, possible meanings, and ask new questions of that data. I found myself revisiting the research questions, asking them in different ways and interpreting my data in reference to the emerging concepts. I re-organized the data and pre-developed categories to ensure I produced a meaningful narrative and interpretation of my respondents’ lives. I also went back to literature to find supporting text (Barbour, 2007) to accompany my developing concept of neoliberal youth subjectivities in this thesis. In doing so, I did not fix my analysis to the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis softwares, but rather supplemented this with manual coding processes, which included revisiting the audio tapes, viewing photographs, editing the codes, re-organizing the categories, and contrasting them.

Occupying Reflexive Positions

As earlier highlighted in the chapter, managing my research position while in the field was critical due to my identity as a young female researcher working with my peers and in my home country. Dowling (2010:31) defines reflexivity as ‘the process of constant, self-conscious scrutiny of the self as a researcher and of the research process’. Not only did I need to analyse my own situation in relation to my respondents, I also found that these situations were contingent of ‘chance connections’ (McDowell, 2001) where I relied on access to

certain groups of people and events. To start with, I chose ICRAF as my host organization because of their ties with rural smallholder farmers in Western and Eastern regions. At ICRAF, I could access on-going research on smallholder agriculture in Kenya as well as remain connected to an international network of researchers and policy makers who were interested in youth development issues. Secondly, my affiliation to Oxford and to ICRAF had different implications on my respondents. Whereas most students thought an encounter with an Oxford student was an important life event, I found that the young farmers expected that ICRAF would become interested in their farming activities, eventually extending financial support to them⁷. Thirdly, researching educated youth with whom I shared the same sub-cultural background, I was constantly aware that my identity would influence the nature of our conversations (Delyser, 2001; Jeffrey et al., 2008; Platt, 1981; Whatmore, 2003). Some respondents perceived me as a colleague and discussed openly their views, while others expected my expert contribution to their careers. Fieldwork then became a continuous process of managing my respondents' expectations by explaining my research goals and ensuring that they remained enthusiastic about participating often with no immediate material gains. This included my reminders of the difference between my research and the on-going coverage of 'successful young farmers' by the media.

Thirdly, growing up and having worked with young people in Kenya, it was an obvious assumption that I would easily fit in with my respondents as a peer and insider researcher (Anyidoho, 2008; Delyser, 2001). Nevertheless, for ethical purposes, I made distinct research-respondent relationships by observing certain limits. Even those respondents whom I had previously known, I followed the same procedures of officially contacting them, requesting for their informed consent to take part in the research and the use of their social

⁷ Owing to the fact that ICRAF works with smallholder farmers and occasionally supports farmer groups in research and development projects

media data. All phone conversations relating to fieldwork were made during the day-time and every time, noting any new information that a respondent provided in a shared database with my research assistant. We recorded any messages received on this database to ensure both of us had access to the same information and that we avoided attachment to some respondents.

Ethics as Practice

The research has adhered to ethics procedures at Oxford University where I went through a research ethics training and travel risk assessment process during the two phases of fieldwork. In Kenya, I acquired postgraduate research permits with the National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) for each of the phases (Appendix VI). I was co-hosted by the Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2012 and by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in 2014. Fieldwork activities were funded by St. Hilda's College Research and Travel Grants; David Frederick Research, Conference and Travel Grant; and ICRAF. I prepared and discussed the informed consent with all my respondents who signed in duplicate the forms (Appendices IV and V). I have provided pseudonyms for all my respondents and anonymized the key informants, organizations, universities, and clubs. I have omitted social media information that might link to my respondents and instead have provided a general database of social media sites visited during the research period.

Ethical practices can sometimes be subsumed within bureaucratic procedures of ethical reviews and research governance, which have little to do with research ethics. However, Heather and Walker (2012) argue that the main challenges of ethical practice occur in the everyday interactions of the researcher and the encounters in the field and the process of analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of research. Valentine (2005:345) advances this debate by noting that, 'it is not only a question of having a rubber stamp from the ethics committee, but it's also the socio-political commitment that one gets into with the one being

researched – whether vulnerable or not’. Insider field experiences like mine meant building friendships and mutual trust with my respondents and maintaining these throughout the period of fieldwork. I observed that friendships could sometimes become an ethical concern, for instance, when my respondents requested for the contacts of other young farmers I had interviewed. Bound by the informed consent, I often became the intermediary where I would call back to request the permission to share their contacts with other youth. Some of those introductions led to positive results as the two young farmers would eventually visit each other’s farms for information sharing. In a way, I assisted in the building of a network amongst the young farmers while still keeping within the ethical practices.

Additionally, my attachment to ICRAF, an institution with a mandate to conduct socially relevant research, meant that my contribution to their solutions was negotiated alongside my academic obligations to contribute to a geographical body of knowledge on youth livelihoods (Anyidoho, 2008; Massey, 2005). I participated in producing organizational publications and developing research projects drawing from my field experiences. Essentially, the everyday encounters with the field, the data, the university, and my host organization, involved ethical reflections and practices that continue until the submission of this thesis.

Whereas my priority goal was to research young people, my research assistant and I were not immune to cultural practices from the families of young farmers and the groups of students we met. At one of the universities where we were invited to the Careers Day, the club presented us with paintings made by one of the members *‘in recognition of our contribution to the club through research’*. Young farmers would often give us farm produce and sometimes times offered a meal. While such gifts might be assumed to influence the relationship between the researcher and the respondent, we found it culturally relevant to accept them as in the Kenyan culture they signified the appreciation of one’s visit and friendship with the host. Eventually, these gifts were shared with our colleagues at ICRAF.

Finally, my research assistant benefitted from the fieldwork by developing her research and academic writing skills and eventually presented a conference paper at the end of the fieldwork period.

Limitations

The main limitations with conducting research with university clubs was the increased number of students willing to participate in the research; the interruptions of data collection by university strikes and calendars; and the already unbalanced groups of students in the clubs. With young farmers, the challenges revolved around time availability; unwillingness or increased enthusiasm to participate in the research; and the fear of disclosing confidential information to ‘the outside world’. Agriculture being their main or only source of income, some young farmers guarded some of their innovations from public access. In such cases, I relied on the credibility of Oxford and ICRAF to reassure my respondents that any information shared would remain confidential and anonymised.

Methodological limitations that ensued included the lack of gender balance and the limited time with the respondents. Even with a well-developed sampling method, I failed to attain the envisaged 50/50 gender representation in my data sample, which was a reflection of the gender disparities among young people. Few female youth were active in environmental clubs and in farming. Of the female students who participated in the discussions, most would contribute upon my prompting indicating to their feeling of inferiority in a male-dominated club. The low numbers of young female farmers could be explained by the overall challenges associated with young women’s access to land and confidence in commercial agriculture. I also encountered some young married women whose husbands identified as male youth while they identified as adult women and unwilling to participate in the research.

Finally, since the completion of data collection, many changes have occurred in my respondents' lives. Although I have not followed all the students who participated in the research since 2012, some have kept in touch through emails and informed me of their progress into searching for formal jobs, postgraduate education, and some, venturing into entrepreneurship. Among the young farmers, some have quit farming for other occupations, some have expanded and diversified their enterprises, while others have failed and are starting all over again. This information is conveyed through emails, phone calls, and through social media platforms.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined an interpretive research paradigm, mixed methods, reflexivity, ethics, and limitations of an insider researcher. Whereas I have elaborated my critical reflexivity and positioning as an insider researcher, I conclude that it would be erroneous not to acknowledge the reality of my continuous reflections as I have, and continue to, encounter circumstances similar to my respondents. I contend that conducting this research to earn a doctorate makes me immune to expressing similar fears, uncertainties and perhaps even performing the market opportunism in a precarious twenty-first century as my respondents did. The fundamental question I have frequently reflected on throughout this research has been to what extent I identify with the narratives and knowledge on youth livelihoods I produce in this thesis, and in what ways it has shaped my contribution to the wider scholarship on youth aspirations and consequential youth policies in Africa.

The next chapter is the first of the empirical chapters where I discuss the precarious economic contexts in which the subjectivities of Kenyan educated youth as environmentalists and farmers have developed.

4. EDUCATED YOUTH AND WAITHOOD: NAVIGATING INSECURE LIVELIHOODS IN KENYA

Introduction

We should become people who can think of how to set up something that can create jobs instead of walking out of the university with papers, looking for a job from one office to the other (Saitoti, male student).

Saitoti, only a first year student at the time of this study, was already aware that his prospects for formal employment were limited. He knew that attaining a university degree alone would not earn him the elite distinction desired of the educated intelligentsia; rather it is his ability to become self-reliant, *'to set up something that can create jobs'* that would lead him to acquire the social markers of adulthood (that is, a job, a family, and recognition by society). His membership to the environmental club was motivated by the hope that through his active participation, he would acquire capitals that would propel him towards self-employment or other alternative occupations in the absence of salaried work. Saitoti and his cohort, in their distinctive view of future careers, reiterate the changing occupational aspirations of Kenyan educated youth following the shrinking of the employment sector under neoliberal economic reforms. They demonstrate the emerging subjectivities of educated youth whose pathways towards adulthood are being shaped (and which they are also shaping) by the narratives of youth empowerment through self-reliance and whose perceptions of elite distinctions might now include self-making.

Combining an analysis of secondary data and interviews, this chapter examines how the aspirations of young people (in education, employment, and for the future) have altered and how through their negotiation of the changing circumstances, they have produced multiple and neoliberal subjectivities. I examine how the prevailing narratives of environmental change and agricultural transformation in Kenya influence the emerging subjectivities, characterized by portfolio occupations, tarmacking and side-hustling. Two particular

questions are addressed: *In what ways do educated youth interact and respond to precarious economic conditions; and how and to what extent can specific narratives produce new (neoliberal) subjectivities that reflect the reworking of the aspirations of young people?*

The chapter is organized in two main sections. I first contextualize how the re-orientation of occupational aspirations in the post-structural adjustment neoliberal economy has resulted in portfolio occupations, tarmacking, and side-hustling among Kenyan graduates. Section two looks specifically at how discourses and policy relating to environmental change and agricultural transformation create opportunity spaces for navigating strategies of student environmentalists and educated young farmers. I first present the context in which student environmentalists transformed from political identities into professional identities, especially the roles played by the intersections of national politics with global and local environmentalisms. I then examine the production of educated young farmers as envisioned in the prevailing narratives of African agricultural transformation that construct the potentials and opportunities for the African youth bulge through the narratives of youth unemployment *vis a vis* youth entrepreneurship and a ‘youth in agriculture’ paradigm.

The Precarity of Kenyan Educated Youth

In as much as Kenya’s claim on its youth dividend as the future maybe justifiable, majority of them remain trapped in intermittent employment conditions (UNDP, 2010). According to the Institute of Economic Affairs, 78 per cent of Kenyans are below 34 years, with an expectation of 15-34 years youth bulge in the next two decades (Njonjo, 2011). With increased access to education from primary to higher education levels, this generation is also more educated than their parents were, and with the advancement in information and communication technologies, they are more connected amongst themselves and with the outside world. Nevertheless, most do not possess the technical and professional skills or even

the work experience demanded in the new labour markets, resulting to an inactive 23 per cent of Kenya's working age cohort. Across the 25-29 age-group, the unemployment rate is 15.7 per cent, and on average, it takes a university graduate five years to secure a job in Kenya (British Council, 2014; Njonjo, 2011). These frustrations are further compounded by socio-cultural and political challenges, such as poor governance, ethnicity, gender, and political instabilities (Agwanda, Bocquier, Khasakhala, & Owuor, 2004).

For decades, Kenyan students have expressed their dissatisfaction with the education system through protests (Amutabi, 2002; A. M. Chege, 2009; Klopp & Orina, 2002; Savage & Taylor, 1991). However, an emerging category of students seeking to create alternative spaces of contestation, have pursued strategies of acquiring extra skills and transferable experiences in spaces such as youth organizations, professional clubs, volunteer work, part-time jobs, professional courses, and entrepreneurship among others. These non-political and every day activities equip young people with work experiences which have been found useful in job-seeking and in the workplace. Some reports have shown that due to job competitiveness, Kenyan employers seek graduates with leadership skills, volunteer experience, outstanding educational attainment, and extracurricular activities (CSS, 2015). Graduates possessing such experiences are seen as 'outspoken, team players, flexible and take initiative; while those who volunteer already understand basic employers' expectations and office etiquette and behaviour' (ibid: 8). Another report suggests that Kenyan graduates are increasingly seeking entrepreneurial opportunities as an alternative or a supplement to salaried jobs (British Council, 2014). This trend is linked to the scarcity of conventional salaried jobs and the positive attraction to the freedoms, creativity, and financial returns associated with self-employment. As this chapter will demonstrate, graduates may also identify with portfolio careers that include several supplementary forms of work in the public, private, one's own business, and voluntary work.

However, not all the Kenyan youth have the privilege of diversifying their occupations and many remain the target of national youth empowerment programmes which started during President Kibaki's regime (2002-2012). The establishment of the Ministry of Youth Affairs⁸ in 2003 and the adoption of a National Youth Policy in 2007 resulted in various youth programmes focusing on health, education, recreation, civic participation, skills training, voluntary service, and apprenticeships. Programmes such as Kazi Kwa Vijana prioritized temporary jobs in labour-intensive sectors, such as infrastructure development, public works, and environmental restoration (State House, 2009). The Youth Fund offered loans and grants to youth groups and provided opportunities for skills training in entrepreneurship and foreign labour markets. Most youth empowerment programmes have been criticized for 'managing' youth as a risk while some have also been associated with corruption and poor governance (Hope, 2012). The current President Uhuru regime has somewhat shifted from managing young people and, instead, has increased financing towards training youth to become entrepreneurs. Believed to be a '*kijana*' (youth) himself, Uhuru seems to dispel the notions of problematic youth and emphasizes the need for financial empowerment:

Many leaders have voiced anxiety over the implications of the demographic phenomenon of a 'youth bulge' on economic growth. As a result, policy proposals have devised solutions premised on a 'disaster management' narrative. I am not suggesting that the challenge presented by rising dependency, due to 43 per cent of Kenyans being under the age of 15, is light... That is why we have devoted significant resources to systematically confronting youth problems. We are increasing and improving youth skills as well as creating opportunity for them. Economic growth generally will create space for many youth to be productive. However, a deliberate programme for Youth Empowerment will accelerate growth and catalyse the creation of opportunity... To supplement existing youth financial empowerment programmes, I launched Uwezo Fund earlier month with 6 Billion Kenya shillings in seed capital to support youth and women enterprises (President Uhuru Kenyatta, 2013⁹).

⁸ Later becoming Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs in 2007 and then a department within the Ministry of Planning and Devolution in 2013

⁹ Speech by President Uhuru Kenyatta during the official opening of a high-level economic conference on Kenya, Norfolk Hotel, Nairobi, 17th September 2013

True to his views, Uhuru's government increased national budget allocations towards youth programmes (Table 4.1), revamped the Youth Fund, and created new programmes to increase youth access to financing and training for enterprise development.

Table 4. 1 National budget allocations to youth empowerment programmes

Budget allocations in Kshs.	2014/2015	2015/2016
Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF)	300 million	300 million
Uwezo Fund	200 million	850 million
Women Enterprise Development Fund (WEDF)	200 million	500 million
National Youth Service	8.1 million	25 billion
Youth Polytechnics	540 million	
Technical Training institutes	6.4 billion	3.0 billion
Higher Education Loans	5.7 billion	7.5 billion
University Education	55 billion	52.9 billion

Source: (GoK, 2014; 2015; KPMG, 2014; 2015)

Among the flagship projects in Uhuru's regime is the AgriVijana Loans, a public-private partnership between the Youth Fund and Amiran Kenya, a private agro-company, providing credit greenhouses and training to youth groups to practice 'modern' farming. Since 2013, the lending programme supports selected youth groups on what is presumably a 'modern', 'cool', and quick way of making money from tomato farming in small-scale greenhouse farms (YEDF, 2015). For youth groups to qualify for these interest-free loans, they must register with the Ministry of Social Services; have access to land with a permanent water source; demonstrate knowledge in agriculture; and contribute up to 10 per cent of the investment required.

While the idea is noble and has captured the attention of many rural unemployed youth, many others have questioned its feasibility particularly in generalizing what is already a high risk venture for most Kenyan smallholder farmers as 'modern' and 'cool' agriculture. One of the main challenges with the AgriVijana Loans model is that the targeted youth often lack adequate business skills or even the enthusiasm to develop farming into a profitable enterprise. Secondly, young people are unaware of the workings of the agricultural markets

and even when they do, they are prohibited by the infrastructural, environmental, and socio-political challenges that affect other Kenyan farmers. Thirdly, youth unemployment is not just the lack of jobs; it is a dispossession of the young people's social status linked to their limited access to other capitals such as land and investment capital. As such, only a few youth can raise and sustain the required capital investments to qualify for the government loans; thus the AgriVijana Loans remain a piecemeal project in comparison to the needs of unemployed youth.

Moreover, the AgriVijana Loans model poses a problematic assumption that unemployed youth are usually idle and thus could spend their time developing new social networks that result into agribusinesses. To start with, even though young people are indeed seen hanging out on the streets, corners, and bases, Thieme and Langevang (2008; 2013) found out that these spaces are in constant motion as individuals strategize and commoditize the space, their time there, and the social relations for their everyday survival. Furthermore, there is evidence that youth unemployment does not mean the lack of work: Brooks *et al* (2013) have shown that most youth are involved in household work without pay, and sometimes they may work as casual labourers as a means of survival. Additionally, the youth groups' model does not factor in the social costs that members incur when forming and sustaining new relationships relative to the expected economic returns (Cleaver, 2005).

These critics notwithstanding, and as millions of young Kenyans are still un(der)employed, some youth have succeeded in farming after accessing these loans as groups and eventually as individuals. However, some groups have dissipated after receiving such loans as their economic activities failed to sustain their livelihood needs as anticipated. The model has also attracted educated youth seeking alternative occupations after failing to find formal jobs. A

government official shared of the successes of a youth group led by educated youth which had received one of the government grants:

When we checked their papers, they were actually all graduates but they had never found jobs; engineers, teachers, very bright people. For such, if you gave them what they believe they can do, I am sure they will do it to the best of their knowledge... because it is a form of employment (Ministry of Agriculture employee).

That these educated youth found employment in a youth group is an indication of their timeless waiting and joblessness which did not simply imply their complete disenfranchisement; rather, it became the starting point for their reconstitution into enterprising subjects who utilized their capitals to negotiate for new spaces and strategically repositioning their identities towards pursuing new occupations. In the next three sub-sections, I explore the reconstitution of educated youth aspirations through development of portfolio occupations, tarmacking and side-hustling, concepts that I elaborate in subsequent chapters.

Portfolio Occupations

The multiple career trajectories and portfolio educational qualifications of the Kenyan educated youth are consistent with the changes in the global economies and local labour markets and the subsequent fractured transitions of young people from school to work and adulthood (McDonald et al., 2011; Standing, 2011). The ambivalence of education outcomes and the uncertainties of the socio-economic landscapes have significantly altered their life aspirations and expectations. As Lebeau observes, ‘there has been a tendency to imagine African universities as “ivory towers” and “citadels of learning” which consider students (at least until recently) as a privileged group (irrespective of their social background) and higher education as a passport to a middle class westernised standard of living and to influential positions’ (Lebeau, 2008: 146). However, economic conjunctures have affected the quality of education and job prospects and devalued the prior privileged student intelligentsia (Amutabi,

2003; British Council, 2014; Mutuku, 2011; Mwiria et al., 2007). This notwithstanding, neoliberal ideals and market-like behaviours have penetrated the university and the students who equally demand the academic credentials they believe to increase their competitiveness in the labour markets. The prevalence of the ‘diploma disease’ (Dore, 1976 in Jeffrey, 2010) is evidenced in the rising number of colleges and university campuses in major and small towns offering evening and part-time courses and with over 40 public and private universities authorized to confer degrees following a new Universities Act in 2012 (CEU, 2013). But as the numbers of graduates increase, the employment opportunities continue to shrink, and employers continually complain of the skills mismatch and inexperience of fresh graduates. Annually, only 25 per cent of the 500,000 young people joining the labour market find employment. Education, therefore, fails to offer the freedoms envisaged by the society (Jeffrey, 2010), frustrates the educated elite, but also enables their reconstitution to portfolio occupations. I draw on the life histories of two students and two educated young farmers to exemplify the range of portfolio occupations among Kenyan youth.

Leonard was a male student environmentalist, a ‘green economy enthusiast’, a club chairperson in 2012 and a young farmer in 2014. In the first year of his studies, Leonard lacked the enthusiasm towards his environmental degree and university life and was just passing time. Some senior students introduced him to the environmental club where he learnt the relevance of environmental studies by participating in the club activities. He soon became a passionate environmentalist, gained confidence in public speaking, became popular among the students, and was eventually elected a club chairperson.

I never thought of the course I would do when I was leaving form four. I did not know what this course was all about, so in the first year, I did don’t like it as much. I spent time wondering why I chose the course... I was studying blindly, but here in the club I learnt more. So I became active, I came to know myself; I started networking, gaining confidence to talk to people, and knowing about environmental stewardship. I realized that what I learnt in class is just a fraction of what I need to know to be an environmentalist (Leonard, male student).

Leonard was convinced that the club had transformed his perceptions of the environment and university education and had provided him a space to pursue alternative life trajectories. He now identified with an entrepreneurial occupation, *'I don't like working for people'* and a responsibility to address environmental problems in his community. Having learnt about the green economy agenda through the club's activities, Leonard planned to establish a 'green business' after university.

I think I will work for five years to get enough capital to start my own company on environmental businesses. I have read the green economy book on how to model the economy and I am looking at how I can develop my business in this line. I hope to come up with ideas to solve these problems (Leonard, male student).

However, after graduating in 2014, Leonard only worked for six months as a research assistant and returned to his village to start farming fish and vegetables on his parents land. When we talked again in 2014, he expressed being stuck in a presumably 'green enterprise' where unemployment had pushed him earlier than expected. He no longer romanticized about creating a green business and, instead, he viewed the farm enterprise as a judicious opportunity to fix his timeless financial insecurities as he searched for formal employment.

Janice was a female student environmentalist awaiting graduation and a certified accountant with an interest in an international career. I met Janice in 2012 at an international training programme for young professionals. She narrated about her blurred career aspirations since the completion of her studies.

I started my accounting after form four. I did not want to stay at home... Also, I had a strong interest in environmental planning and management but my parents felt I was wasting myself in that course... But I also felt that accounting was limiting... I felt I needed some freedom in my degree, travelling, and this I found in my environmental degree... The problem right now is, people are asking me, where are you? I have a degree in environmental planning and management, but also I am a CPA-K. They think I will ask for a lot of money if they employ me... Sometimes this gives me problems; they think I am over-qualified, so at times I leave out some of the qualifications. Right now, I don't have a job. I am now trying to network, going to conferences and trying to learn more (Janice, female student).

Janice claimed that her accounting qualifications had rendered her overqualified for most graduate-entry jobs. She was attending the three week international programme in the hope that such networks might open up for work opportunities in the future. *'Trying to learn more'* in this case referred to broadening her scope beyond formal education to having an international focus and meeting new potential employers. Leonard, Janice and their cohort, used their university time to participate in self-making projects such as club activities, trainings, conferences, and leadership positions in the hope of acquiring extra skills and broadening their professional networks to ensure their job competitiveness. Unfortunately, sometimes they were unsuccessful in their endeavours and had to rethink alternative livelihoods.

Joe was a thirty year-old married man with two degrees (veterinary science and media studies), a full-time business journalist in Nairobi, a young farmer in Kajiado, and operating several side-businesses on weekends. Joe was leasing five acres of land in Kajiado where he grew onions under contractual arrangements with an international seed company. When we met for an interview, it was just after his lunchtime news bulletin, and he was very excited that he would spend the rest of the lunch break talking about his farm and other 'side-businesses' he managed on weekends.

I went to university coz I passed with a good grade that could take me to university to earn a degree. But when I got there, I realized I was drawn to communications and not [veterinary] science. It was a long struggle... I didn't like it because we were doing it for a job... I don't really use it now... That's why we go to university; to identify what we really want to do... [So] when at the university I used to do a [radio] show on entrepreneurship and was encouraging young people to invest (Joe, young farmer, Nairobi/Kajiado¹⁰).

Our conversation started on the subject of his current occupation, journalism, only to find out that Joe was a trained veterinary doctor who never practiced. Not only did Joe choose an

¹⁰ Where two locations are indicated, the first refers to the place where the young farmer held a formal job, or lived, and the second is the place where his/her farm was located.

alternative career, he had also spent his university time developing his journalism and entrepreneurship skills, both of which defined his current portfolio occupations. After realizing his passion for communication, but failing to change his degree course, Joe had sought work at the university radio station where he broadcasted a weekly programme on youth entrepreneurship. This work experience landed him a post in journalism right after his first degree and enabled him to pursue a part-time second degree in media studies. Even though he was aware that his professional progress as a journalist depended on his educational qualifications; Joe was disappointed that the education system had failed to match his aspirations.

I think education is a hoax. It is not holistic; we are just passing exams and that doesn't really add value... I thought I will do a masters in media... but I am not sure anymore. The value of education is an enabler, not just to get a job; it is the competence. For me I think my struggle with education is that the way it has been wired it doesn't bring out the best and we end up just passing and getting into education statistics (Joe, male farmer, Nairobi/Kajiado).

Despite such criticism, to get a pay rise or promotion at his workplace, Joe needed to earn a postgraduate degree on which he was at the time of the interview considering to enrol. However, he expressed his discontent with the education system for failing to enable him to 'provide solutions to the society'. Thus, the side-businesses were creating an alternative route for him to contribute to society through capital accumulation.

Kaberere was a thirty-two year old married man, dropped out of university twice to become an entrepreneur, and quit a six-year career in journalism to establish a large-scale poultry agribusiness. Kabereere had resigned from journalism into fulltime self-employment as a poultry farmer a year before I interviewed him. I had first recognized him as a TV journalist and later met him training dozens of people at his poultry farm in Kikuyu. In contrast to Joe, Kabereere was an accomplished journalist yet he had dropped out of university twice. He

justified his dropping out of school with the feeling of ‘wasting time’ in university when he already had the skills required to earn a living.

Actually, in profession, I was an IT guru but I quit campus. When I cleared high school I was fixing computers already... so I quit campus and tried to do media. While I was still in campus, I was directing locally made movies, so when I went to media school... what they were teaching me is what I had been doing for two years. Again, I quit media and by the grace of God I got a job where I worked for six years and when my time came, I left... I got tired of that particular life... I started this [poultry farming] before even I was fired, coz I told you; I hate working hard, but I work smart (Kaberere, male farmer, Nairobi/Kikuyu).

Kaberere claimed that his grandparents had taught him to take individual responsibility at a young age and thus, he had operated informal enterprises since high school. After high school, Kabereere had started a business of repairing computers; skills he learnt by observing his elder brother. This led to his dropping out of a computer science degree to expand the business to selling used computers. In the process, Kabereere had also learnt how to produce local films; skills which led him to enrol into a media school. But while there, he also realized that he had the skills required for the workplace, and again dropped out of school. This time, he landed a job in one of the media houses where he worked for six years as a feature journalist. With his eloquence in speech, wide knowledge of international and local socio-political issues, and success in business, Kabereere was no way a representative of typical school drop-outs in Kenya; instead, he was an elite member of society. When we met in early 2014, Kabereere was an expert in rearing indigenous chicken; a skill he had taught himself in the first two years of his business. Unlike Joe whose career progress was linked to educational qualifications, Kabereere’s discontent with the nature of education led him to ‘work smart’ by finding alternative ways of acquiring skills that would enable him to be enterprising. He frequently visited other peoples’ farms, experimented on his own farm, and learnt from online agricultural information platforms.

Leonard, Janice, Joe, Kaberere, and other educated youth I will introduce in this thesis are part of the generation of Kenyan educated youth born during the economic reforms who are expecting to face difficulties in finding work and attaining adulthood. Some of these youth are aware that educational entitlements no longer guarantee a professional occupation in the labour market, but rather, they offer one the impetus to explore what diverse pathways might exist in contemporary society. As these youth demonstrate, after failing to get their first career choice from university education, one could pursue a range of occupations and thereby redefine their university time as a space for social navigation. Most of the educated youth I met expressed their disenchantment with the education system and the economic conditions; yet they used the same systems to develop alternative pathways towards their new occupations. For instance, Joe acquired a degree that he might not use but also pursued two other occupations (journalism and business). He even mentioned that he would still pursue a postgraduate degree so as to remain competitive in his profession. Kaberere dropped out of university twice because he felt he already had the skills for entrepreneurship, but also talked of eventually enrolling for a course to acquire only those skills that would enable him to improve his agribusiness. For Leonard and Janice, active club participation and networking offered them opportunities for acquiring extra environmental knowledge and skills and transferable work experiences which would increase their job competitiveness. All of them, however, reiterated their dissatisfaction with the education system and exhibited their emerging subjectivities motivated by the need to survive and manage unknown futures. Their portfolio occupations were strategies of navigating uncertainties of the job market and were facilitated by the opportunity spaces created by student environmentalism and agricultural transformation.

Tarmacking

Every Kenyan educated youth anticipates a period of tarmacking between completing higher education and finding a paying job. Tarmacking is job-seeking among educated youth who upon graduating from college or university are expected to migrate to urban areas and walk from office to another dropping application letters, attending interviews, and sometimes negotiating with potential employers for any form of work. It implies the long distances walked and extended times spent by a jobless graduate searching for a white collar job. The wearing out of shoes and the fading of clothes evidences the lack of money to buy new ones during the period of tarmacking. In the literal sense, it is walking on a tarmacked road in urban areas in the heat of the day signifying the contradictions of modernity and neoliberalism whereby those educated (the elite who ought to reap the benefits of a neoliberal economy) end up facing hardships when searching for opportunities in the same economy.

According to Prince (2013), tarmacking evokes a sense of trying to get by and indeed moving forward. She argues that ‘it is not simply a survival strategy. It is a search for paths that provide an orientation, that bring one into a spatial and temporal trajectory – one that is indeed moving forward and that places the self and its agency at the heart of development’ (ibid: 600). Often times, the moving forward is limited and might become just ‘*moving around*’ (Gough, 2008; Locke & te Lintelo, 2012). It is a time of ‘*being broke*’ and of social struggles as one adjusts to an independent identity without the accompanying economic capitals: an educated elite but lacking the means for independence and interdependence as expected by society.

Tarmacking might be timeless but active waiting; searching for work but not knowing when one would succeed. Fokwang posits young Cameroonian men performing as ‘applicants’ who were actively seeking for employment opportunities even though they were involved in

entrepreneurial activities (Fokwang, 2008a). Students established professional clubs as a way of refashioning their employability and thus shortening their periods of tarmacking. They expressed their fears of job-seeking and thus geared their activities towards increasing their competitiveness in the job market. When I asked a first year student what his ten-year plan was, he responded:

It will be six years after my graduation from here. First, I have this fear of tarmacking after getting out of the university. A graduate is not expected to be tarmacking. Secondly, I really wish I will be the Minister for Environment (Emmanuel, male student).

Even though educated youth held occupational aspirations, the changing labour economies meant that they remained uncertain about the consequences of their job-seeking. Additionally, tarmacking consumed one's economic and symbolic capitals. As one moved from place to place, joined professional networks, interned or volunteered, or even prepared for job interviews, they utilized their meagre capitals in anticipation that they would regain them once they found a job. Thus, one required access to basic capitals that guaranteed one's survival in readiness of the harrowing experiences of tarmacking. Pursuing entrepreneurial activities alongside job-seeking was treated as a form of active tarmacking that enabled individuals to manage the adversities of waiting for jobs.

They (youth) are out there tarmacking. Looking for jobs makes them see as if (their) education is not important... There are some [opportunities] in self-employment, and government should support those people who are creative and are doing their own businesses. It helps the youth to see the importance of education (Cherono, female student).

We might construe tarmacking as an indicator of non-neoliberal life that seeks a neat progression from school to work. However, such a neat transition rarely occurs for most youth in the twenty first century as they encounter uncertain labour markets. Tarmacking is an integral aspect of neoliberal life trajectories where one continually seeks to improve his or her chances of attaining social adulthood through formal employment. It could be by positioning oneself in places where one is bound to meet potential employers such as

volunteering, joining professional groups, attending public events, or utilizing social media platforms to build an image. Some tarmacers may choose to go back to school to attain higher qualifications that increase their chances of getting a job while others may temporarily quit tarmacking to seek out other coping mechanisms. Some abandon tarmacking and establish new occupations altogether.

Side-Hustling

Young people are finding it increasingly important to draw on a range of capitals and invest in diverse activities and identities as resilience strategies under conditions of socio-economic uncertainties. Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered many youth in intermittent employment; job-seeking; and in school; who frequently referred to '*side-hustling*' or that which they did '*on the side*' and during their free time to supplement their incomes. As Standing (2011) notes, the current generation of (young) workforce have embraced a lifestyle of multiple multi-tasking where leisure time is transformed into productive time of additional work. Thieme (2013) extensively discusses the notion of hustling as the everyday practice of young people carving out alternative niche strategies in extreme economic landscapes which come about as a last resort survival opportunity, a livelihood strategy, and a contestation of existing structures of authority. A hustler gets involved in a 'portfolio of income generating activities that feature sophisticated entrepreneurial capabilities and individual specialized skills-set' (Thieme, 2013: 399). Hustling can be a response to state failure to create work opportunities for the growing labour force but it might also be an indication of the start of changing the conditions of waitness as in reality, 'there is no waiting for job opportunities or more just policies' (ibid:390) to ensure decent youth livelihoods.

While Thieme's work focused on urban youth in the informal sector, I find it relevant to illustrate how educated youth navigate unemployment in Kenya. To my respondents, to

hustle meant to seek alternative livelihood strategies on the margins of a constrained economy; these could be income-generating in the present, or could have the potential to lead to an economic gain in the future. Hustlers resist the identity given to unemployed youth by those in authority as being desperate and lacking opportunities and instead view hustling as offering them a good life on their own terms and enabling them to maintain an elite status in society even in precarious economies. Earlier on, Munive argued that youth hustling was a form of moral regeneration as enterprising individuals shifted grounds and felt revitalized to address social ills and work towards attaining independent livelihoods (Munive, 2010). Hustling reflects the intentional strategies, ingenuity, and social networking towards attaining a gainful occupation. It is an integral aspect of neoliberal subjectivities that depicts one's ability to identify challenges and device astute ways of overcoming them (Honwana, 2012; Munive, 2010; Vigh, 2006).

I differentiate the hustling in Thieme's and Munive's work from side-hustling among educated youth by observing that educated youth often have (but not always) a displaced source of income (or possibilities of such in the future) and portfolio of other capitals which facilitates them to invest in a judicious opportunity in the present leading to an income or accumulation of other capitals. Young people willingly manage diverse work options and identities in anticipation of increasing chances of financial independence and attaining adulthood. Their lives are characterized by multiple uses of space and a transformation of their leisure time into a time of self-improvement and re-fashioning new identities.

Side-hustling was viewed as a supplement of certain white collar jobs that some young people found unappealing due to their low wages, temporary contracts, skills mismatch, lack of personal development opportunities, and sometimes long working hours. Dissatisfied, they turned to side-hustling to recreate work as something decent, transformative, flexible, and yet

giving them agency in the labour markets. Nevertheless, for a majority of my respondents, side-hustles were genuinely and primarily a livelihood strategy carried out alongside schooling, an internship, a job, or when tarmacking. The choice of a side-hustle was determined by one's availability, expected gains, and one's access to capitals necessary to make such an investment. The main goal being to earn an income, these youth remained flexible to drop and pick new side-businesses as necessitated by expected opportunities and challenges.

Side-hustlers worked towards remaining economically active and presenting themselves as hardworking, respectable, and persons of influence in society. Side-hustling has become deeply entrenched in the Kenyan culture and its fast spreading as socially acceptable among young professionals, students, those tarmacking, working on their first or temporary jobs, and even those in somewhat stable occupations. Side-hustles are one's chosen identity as opportunities of self-advancement present themselves in a rather precarious society. Journalists, teachers, civil servants, doctors, and even politicians talk of side-hustles when informally sharing about that which they do on the side to supplement their monthly incomes or just to excite their life.

Ka-hustle (a side-hustle) is the new language and symbol for 'making ends meet' among the young people that I researched. They used phrases like '*I also have a ka-farm¹¹ back in the village*' and '*I am thinking of my next side-hustle*' to explain their supplementary income sources. While it surpasses class (even though class-based side-hustles exist) failing to side-hustle was construed as laziness or feeling too 'posh' to earn extra income from obviously available economic opportunities. Nevertheless, side-hustles were often difficult, involved

¹¹ 'Ka' here means something small and on the side

risk-taking, and like any other entrepreneurial or occupational activity, they were also uncertain. Sometimes, they were regarded as the short stints spent in profit-making ventures as a way of accelerating one's accumulation of extra capitals towards attaining social markers of adulthood. Even so, often times they were just possibilities of just moving around rather than moving up from the economic uncertainties that the young people faced.

Opportunity Spaces for New Subjectivities

To focus on the emerging subjectivities of student environmentalists and educated young farmers, we must first draw on the changing youth occupational aspirations and expectations against the opportunity spaces created by the changing neoliberal economy. Young people's aspirations and expectations are determined by the existing broader geographical, socio-economic, and political circumstances, such as financial crisis, education, technology, migration, urbanization, environmental change, and social-cultural norms among others (Leavy & Smith, 2010b; Nwagwu, 1976). Within these contexts – *opportunity spaces* – a person's aspirations are constantly changed and their expectations are formulated to reflect what is possible and rational in the present and the future (Leavy & Hossain, 2014). Sumberg *et al* (2012) define opportunity space as 'the spatial and temporal distribution of the universe of more or less viable *work* options that a young person may exploit as she/he attempts to establish an independent life. The opportunity space of a situated young person is a function of global, national, and regional factors including institutions, policy, and *market* demand; place; and social and cultural norms' (Sumberg, Anyidoho, Leavy, te Lintelo, & Wellard, 2012: 5 emphasis added). By applying this concept in the study of changing educated youth aspirations, I argue that through opportunities created by the changes in the environment and agriculture sectors, individuals can earn an income; negotiate a professional identity; contribute to the broader discourse of economic development; and in doing so, earn back their elite distinction (Leavy & Smith, 2010b).

Environmentalism and agricultural transformation as opportunity spaces are factors of the on-going and anticipated socio-economic changes and a person's status in society. Additionally, they are also determined by socio-cultural norms and values, class, and gendered identities. For example, young men marry and return to rural areas to farm and/or build a house in order to attain social adulthood in that community while the young women may choose to work on their parents' or husbands' enterprises instead of holding a job in the urban areas so as to maintain their moral status. These factors were considered in an earlier research on young people and agricultural aspirations in Kenya which concluded that educated youth were interested in agriculture but were limited by lack of resources to join the sector (Mbaga, 1996). Similar research in Malawi came to the conclusion that youth aspirations are never in reference to the agricultural sector occupations but moving out of poverty, of which the rural environment and agriculture are considered part of (Chinsinga & Chasukwa, 2012). Researching smallholder farmers in central Kenya, Muyanga observed that the educated and young farmers were more likely to stay in agriculture, to adopt agricultural innovations, and to join groups which were considered central to the transformation of their occupations and statuses (Muyanga, 2013). Nevertheless, in most rural places, farming remained an undesirable 'last resort or not an option at all' occupation for some educated youth (Tadele & Gella, 2012), a 'boring activity' (Lewa & Ndungu, 2012) and a means to earn 'quick money' (Okali & Sumberg, 2012).

Sumberg and Okali (2013; 2014) categorize opportunity spaces with reference to their types and densities of remuneration and ability for personal development and social inclusion. The continuum of opportunity spaces proposed ranges from last resort survival strategies (including preventive and protective work) to opportunity-driven strategies (including promotive and transformative work) that result in real incomes, enhance capabilities, address social equity and exclusion, and offer livelihood diversification opportunities. Several studies

of youth livelihoods in Africa reveal these dynamisms and variations of opportunity space. For instance, in Cameroon, Waage (2006) explains how young people in Ngaoundere town used the opportunities created by culture, ethnicity, and religion to negotiate for coping strategies and meaningful identities as students, motor taxi-drivers, porters, water-carriers, and doughnut-bakers. Johnson-Hanks (2005) study on vital conjunctures of young Beti women provides an understanding of opportunity spaces as judicious with reference to women's negotiation of reproduction and marriage following the economic and moral crises in Cameroon.

Langevang and Gough's (2012) study on female entrepreneurship in Ghana demonstrated how the contradictions of neoliberalism and modernity opened up entrepreneurial opportunities in hairdressing while closing up others in dressmaking in response to the prevailing technological and westernized urban cultures. A recent study on youth opportunities in artisanal mining in Tanzania (Bryceson, 2014) shows how young people, inspired by the prospects of economic empowerment, negotiate the trade-offs of pursuing education with long-term benefits versus mining with short-term benefits; gaining autonomy from parents and elders versus a lack of parental oversight; and traditional family coherence reinforced by bride wealth and strong ties to rural kin versus physical mobility, casual relationships, and urban lifestyles. This study also points to the relevance of the varied forms of mobility (and immobility) which may bring one closer or draw them further away from their opportunity spaces. Such include physical mobilities which facilitate access to new livelihoods and evading of adult surveillance (Porter et al., 2010); technology, such as mobile phones, which alters physical mobility, social networks and provides business opportunities (Porter et al., 2012); and even reconfigurations of gendered relations through feminization of labour (Boehm, 2006).

Environment-based opportunity spaces emerge from the institutionalization of global environmentalisms into academic programmes and environmental laws, policies and regulations resulting in government ministries, environmental NGOs, and programmes. For instance, a study on the perception of wildlife conservation among students in Samburu (Bruyere et al., 2011) revealed their perceived economic opportunities from wildlife conservation and their changing occupational aspirations towards conservation-based careers. In Mathare slums, Thieme has shown how opportunity spaces created by the problem of waste and slum life reproduce identities of hustling and social entrepreneurship among unemployed youth who organize in groups and ‘bases’ (Thieme, 2013; 2015). In Tanzania, Smith’s (2013; 2014) study of environmental education among high school children shows how opportunities for environmental action were displaced to unknown futures because of the socio-cultural norms that limited the participation of children and youth in decision-making.

Indeed, opportunity spaces facilitate navigation of waithood by enabling young people to garner capitals and to develop strategies which might succeed or fail to fulfil their prior intentions. I explore in the next two sub-sections how the discourses and policy frameworks of environmentalism and agricultural transformation were being reconfigured as new spaces for producing new subjectivities that embraced the neoliberal ideologies of entrepreneurialism but who also were seeking last resort survival strategies and a means of maintaining their status as the privileged intelligentsia of society.

From Student Politicians to Student Environmentalists

It is argued that the post-independence students of the mid-1960s were politically disengaged due to the buoyant economy that provided free university education, stipend, and assurance of employment (Amutabi, 2002). However, as the socio-economic and political disjunctures started building, students were motivated to engage in oppositional politics and resist the

changes. Several authors have documented the rise of student activism between 1965 and 1998 (Amutabi, 2002; A. M. Chege, 2009; Hughes, 1987; Klopp & Orina, 2002; Savage & Taylor, 1991). Generally, student discontent arose from the overall repressive socio-economic policies, which lowered the quality of education, increased graduate unemployment, and reduced the social welfare (Hughes, 1987; Okolie, 2003; Savage & Taylor, 1991). As Savage and Taylor note, students complained about housing, food, unsafe roads, student allowances, overcrowding of university facilities, and widespread mismanagement and corruption of state resources (Savage & Taylor, 1991: 312). In the absence of an official opposition during the Presidents Kenyatta (1963-1978) and Moi (1978-2002) regimes, university students imagined themselves as the opposition and asserted their opinions through the Student Unions which then coordinated students' protests (Klopp & Orina, 2002). They became a voice for the voiceless and the intellectuals who presented alternatives when genuine socio-economic alternatives seemed unattainable in Kenya. Additionally, the neoliberal ideology of reducing state intervention and the emphasis on free markets led to academic capitalism, whereby institutions secured external financing through introducing new degree programmes and recruitment of higher paying private students leading to overcrowding in universities (Munene & Otieno, 2008).

In the 1990s, after the introduction of university fees, increased student enrolment, and mismanagement of universities, student activism was more concerned with the autonomy of academic institutions and protested for the removal of the president as the chancellor of all Kenyan public universities. It was also the beginning of a new struggle for poor students whose only social mobility was a public university education that they could no longer afford and neither did it guarantee a job in the shrinking labour markets. On the other hand, democratization struggles in the country led to the passing of civil society legislation in 1992 which opened up spaces for youth civic participation through emerging non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). Students joined or formed local NGOs where they could voice their concerns and actively engage in other socio-political landscapes. Wamucii argues that involving young people in groups enabled them to ‘advance their personal interests as well as those of the community simultaneously’ and eventually ‘exposed *them* to knowledge that *was* likely to create critical consciousness on important issues, thus allowing them to engage in debates from multiple perspectives’ (Wamucii, 2012:40).

The emergence of university students’ environmental clubs in the 1990s coincided with the institutionalization of environmentalism in government and in academia, the rise of the civil society, and the weakening of university students’ activism (through introduction of ethnic student organizations) which itself was a form of negotiating waithood through new political formations (Amutabi, 2002; Ndegwa, 1996). Students first participated in environmental activism in the 1992 protests against development of Uhuru Park followed by the 1998-1999 protests against development of sections of Karura Forest (*Nation Team*, 1999). In 1998-1999, the demonstrations by the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University students led to confrontations with the police, injury, arrest, and eventual closure of the universities (Njeru, 2012). Of interest to this study, was the shift of student activism from traditional state politics to politics of environment as Njeru highlights:

After noting how the student fraternity had been keenly following campaigns by Maathai and other activists to save Karura, a university student leader, Joshua Nyamori stated: ‘We are now convinced that students must join in the fight against grabbing of public property (Njeru, 2012: 25).

Soon after, the new governance models inspired a cohort of students in the early 1990s to form alternative ‘professional’ students groups that seemingly depoliticized political participation while embracing the politics of specific issues that promised what they perceived were alternative life trajectories. Similar to student political organizations, these professional groups played a significant role in enabling students to self-actualize their own

desires; giving a sense of occupational identity; and forming the foundation of politics of the powerless (Abbink & Kessel, 2005; Diouf, 2003; O'Brien, 1996; Youniss et al., 2002). The diversification of students' political interests can be partly explained by the constraints of the political and socio-economic systems; the membership to other groups besides Student Unions; and professionalization of student political perspectives. Professionalization of activism gives a sense of occupational identity and involves learning highly specialized knowledge and skills in anticipation of occupying a professional position in future. It is possible to then think that professionalization and politicization are divergent; but as I elucidate in the subsequent chapter, professionalization served to depoliticize issues in the present and displaced the youth political identities into the future.

The Theatre of Trees

Public pro-environmental behaviours are noticeable in the diverse national celebrations and an environmental movement that gathered momentum in the 1980s with the emergence of global environmental problems – biodiversity loss, global warming and ozone depletion – and a narrative of interconnectedness of environment and development (J. Barry, 1999; Nixon, 2007; Njeru, 2012). Unlike the conservation organizations which promoted colonial conservation narratives (Brockington, 2008), the emerging environmental movement, such as the Green Belt Movement (GBM), embodied environmental justice and citizen participation (Carter, 2004; Nixon, 2007). Brockington argues that the colonial-inspired African conservation narratives were peculiar in rewarding white celebrity conservationists while the black Africans were downgraded to the roles of poachers, game guards, corrupt politicians, or poor communities unable to conserve their environment (Brockington, 2006; 2009). In contrast, the environmental movement of the 1980s emphasized the agency of local communities in environmental conservation efforts. Rather than protecting the environment

from human activity, the environmental movement showed concern for the local communities who were depleting the finite natural resources, degrading their farms through unsustainable land practices, and cutting down trees to meet their fuel needs. As the late Prof. Wangari Maathai¹² shared in her biography, environmental challenges were significant to people's livelihoods.

While I was in the rural areas outside Nairobi collecting the ticks, I noticed that rivers would rush down the hillsides and along paths and roads when it rained, and that they were muddy with silt... that is soil erosion... We must do something about that. I also observed that the cows were skinny... The people too looked undernourished and poor and the vegetation in the fields was scanty... It became clear to me through these observations that Kenya's and whole region's livestock industry was threatened more by environmental degradation than by either the ticks in the cow's ears or the parasites in the ticks' salivary glands (Maathai, 2008:121).

Maathai established the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in 1977 as a grassroots environmental organization to educate and empower local women to participate in reforestation programmes and improve their livelihoods. Whereas tree planting might be viewed as purely an ecological project, she argued that it provided a space for local communities to discuss pertinent socio-economic and political issues such as land grabbing, poverty, and poor governance (Maathai, 2009).

Nixon (2007) discusses the work of GBM as the theatre of the tree: symbolizing political resistance and articulating the allegations of land degradation to a deeper narrative of corruption and power of the unheard voices. Tree planting was the flagship activity of GBM; and for Maathai, it represented her ideology of doing 'little things' to make a difference¹³. She was convinced that by planting trees with the communities, she demonstrated to them and the government alike, that the little things that each individual was capable of doing could change the environment and society. Tree planting activities were also discursive

¹² She is the founder of the environmental movement in Kenya.

¹³ For example, in her story 'I will be a Hummingbird' https://youtu.be/-btl654R_pY

moments with the communities when she educated the women on civic matters, thus facilitating the political socialization of rural communities (Maathai, 2003).

In 1989, the Kenyan government had earmarked Uhuru Park in Nairobi's city centre for the construction of a sixty-storey business complex. Maathai and other environmentalists opposed the project as environmentally unsound and denying the city residents a recreation facility. Although organizing peaceful demonstrations and planting trees at the site, their actions provoked the government to put stringent controls on all NGOs and the police arrested and mistreated Maathai and other environmental activists. The then MPs criticized NGOs for overrunning the country and '*operating outside the system*' essentially challenging the one-party Moi regime at the time (Ndegwa, 1996). They categorically positioned GBM in planting trees and not engaging in other political matters. Paradoxically, GBM viewed their work as political resistance while the political regime insisted on their non-political role in '*just planting trees*' and with no voice in the country's socio-economic and political agendas (Ndegwa, 1996; Nixon, 2007).

Moreover, tree planting was an ecological and socio-political project that resonated with global environmental narratives and reflected new governance models of collective action and citizen participation (Nixon, 2007). Ndegwa and Nixon argue that through her work, Maathai reproduced a political consciousness for the multitude of underprivileged citizens dependent on the environment that the neo-colonial government plundered. She also inspired a nationwide environmental movement that mimicked global environmental movements in their emphasis on behaviour change, citizen participation, mobilization across class, expression of multiple subjectivities, and the resistance to associate with the government regime (Carter, 2004; Maathai, 2003; 2008; 2009; Ndegwa, 1996). Other environmental NGOs were established across the country and followed the same philosophy to create their

networks of influence and push for change locally, nationally and internationally. Eventually, Maathai became a national and international celebrity in environmentalism, influencing public and private pro-environmental behaviors. By the time she was being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, GBM had established over 6,000 tree nurseries; employed over 100,000 women to plant and nurture trees resulting to over 30 million trees in Kenya and other African countries; and significantly contributed to international environmental politics (Green Belt Movement, 2013).

Even though other environmental challenges such as pollution, waste management, and human-wildlife conflicts exist and significantly contribute to environmental change in Kenya, it is tree planting that remains iconic to Kenya's environmentalism and as a way of expressing a desire for socio-political change. Tree planting is not just a symbolic act of environmental awareness; it is a form of resistance to capitalism and a livelihood strategy for individuals and organizations who now trade in trees and tree-products, engage in restoration of degraded environments, conduct research in forestry, promote agroforestry, engage in carbon trading and payment of ecosystem services among other neoliberal environmentalisms (Nixon, 2007; Njeru, 2012; UNEP, 2009). It is under these conditions of environmental and political change, and corresponding neoliberal economic changes, that student environmentalism emerged emulating the ideology of Maathai, assuming a renewed role of student activism, and operating in a depoliticized and professionalized space.

Emerging Educated Young Farmers

The narrative of a young farmer is both old and new in Kenya and in Africa with post-independence education socializing young people to distance their identities from the rural areas, especially the subsistence agriculture sector. Paradoxically, the Kenyan education system of the 1980s to 1990s emphasized educating students for self-reliance and included

practical subjects, such as art and craft, agriculture, home economics, and music. It also incorporated school clubs, such as 4K¹⁴ and Young Farmers clubs in primary and secondary schools respectively which were essentially to introduce modern farming skills and motivate learners to contribute to food production and household enterprises (Foeken et al., 2010; Lewa, 2012). Students who did not proceed to secondary education would enhance these skills in vocational and village polytechnics and later join the growing *juakali* (informal) sector (King, 1996). However, as structural reforms occurred in the 1990s and the education system focused on increasing student enrolment and academic performance, most practical subjects were removed from the curriculum and funding towards the school clubs and polytechnics was cutback. With privatization of education, the goals of learning institutions changed to reflect the need to increase enrolment as a way of meeting their financial needs, often at the expense of addressing the learners' academic needs. Reduced funding to agricultural research and development (and among other factors of educating youth out of the farm) further led to a decline in enrolment to agricultural courses at colleges and universities (Mbaga, 1996; Munene & Otieno, 2008). As a result, educated youth stigmatized occupations relating to agriculture and rural life not just because of their socialization but also because of their experiences of declining agricultural sector opportunities.

In the last decade, the need to create employment, reduce rural-urban migration, and boost food production has inspired a new approach of reconnecting young people to agriculture (Leavy & Smith, 2010a). This has been intertwined with an on-going discourse for an African green revolution where poverty alleviation and food security have become a technocratic neoliberal agenda involving market-oriented approaches to increase agricultural productivity (Mosley, 2002). The argument for an African green revolution as a pro-poor policy is one

¹⁴ Kuungana Kufanya Kusaidia Kenya, meaning collaborating to help Kenya, a model which encouraged students to work together and contribute to state building through agriculture

that is controversial involving on one hand, global agricultural markets, intensification and introduction of hybrid seeds and fertilisers (Juma, 2011; Moseley, Schnurr, & Bezner Kerr, 2015); and on the other hand, a small community of donors supporting smallholder agricultural practices (Sanchez, Denning, & Nziguheba, 2009). These discourses have significantly transformed smallholder agriculture from subsistence farming into a farm enterprise where returns upon investment are expected (Juma, 2011; Sanchez et al., 2009) and where farmers become integrated into global value chains trading their agricultural commodities in export markets, supermarkets, or in more developed urban markets (Muyanga, 2013).

It is in these contexts that educated young farmers emerge drawn into the labour- and capital-intensive and individualized opportunities in the global value chains of agriculture that connect smallholder farmers with agro-chemical industries, agro-processing firms, and niche markets (AGRA, 2015; Koira, 2014; The Montpellier Panel, 2014). Previously socialized to disconnect from the rural areas, unemployed young people are now enticed to create alternative livelihoods in the agriculture sector. The notion of agriculture as demeaning and labour-intensive is replaced by the perceived benefits of being ‘*liquid in the pocket*’ as one male young farmer shared:

Many of my friends don't embrace farming. They think when you get into farming you are finished. They want clean jobs, but you need to be liquid in the pocket. You would rather be dirty and have money in the pocket (Masika, male farmer, Siaya).

At 37 years and with a diploma education, Masika had failed to find a decent job in the urban areas to adequately support his family. He returned to rural Siaya where he was expected to care for his ageing and ill parents, educate his siblings, and support his wife and children. He was farming indigenous vegetables and rearing fish which he argued were earning him more than he had earned in waged work. His ‘returning’ to the farm and engaging in ‘dirty’ work was indeed ‘moving forward’ rather than the ‘moving around’ he had experienced as a casual

labourer in the informal urban labour sector (Locke & te Lintelo, 2012). Thus, Masika was an emerging educated farmer whose perceptions for agriculture had changed.

The emerging educated young farmer is produced by narratives of ‘enticing youth into agriculture’ as has been documented by many African governments, donor agencies, development organizations, and the private sector (For example AGRA, 2015; FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2011a; The Montpellier Panel, 2014). This thesis summarizes these narratives into one that encourages young people to transform smallholder agriculture into agribusinesses (farm enterprises), thereby, becoming self-employed. The main argument in the last five years has been how to tap into Africa’s demographic dividend – young people most of whom are unemployed, living in rural areas, or migrating to urban areas, hence, potentially will cause political instabilities due to lack of economic opportunities. This argument has been supported by an agrarian argument of Africa as the main contributor to global food markets, and therefore, African youth are seen as the next generation of farmers, traders, manufacturers, researchers and policy makers in agricultural landscapes (AGRA, 2014). The narratives of poverty alleviation and food security further support the youth in agriculture narrative where young people are viewed as a valuable asset for increasing agricultural productivity and driving economic growth in Africa.

When these narratives are contextualized in the neoliberalizing African economies, young people are identified as requiring to be enticed and reconnected (Rowling, 2014), skilled (IFAD, 2011b), and facilitated to access financial resources, identify entrepreneurial opportunities in farming, and possibly, retained as agricultural labour force (The Montpellier Panel, 2014:7). Furthermore, the emerging educated young farmer is described in the context of a changing perception of agriculture as a redeemable livelihood opportunity and a lucrative business environment allowing for self-development and social recognition in society. This

conception is important because it shifts attention from a mere identification of livelihood pathways into analysing what constitutes those livelihood options.

These positive narratives notwithstanding, there are tendencies of those in authority to assume that young people are resource-poor, disconnected, and even empty and ‘free’ to be utilized as assets or tools for national development projects. One of the government officials managing a youth in agriculture programme shared with me, *‘Our core business is food security. So we get the youth and equip them with the necessary skills, equipment, coz they are resource poor. That way you contribute to food security and national development.* Another government official added that *‘Youth from their very nature are very impatient, so if you go to them with a project like coffee growing or planting trees... that is not the kind of business they would wish to do. So we are targeting horticultural crops whose capital investments are low and have high returns within a short time’.* While the programmes they were coordinating had indeed created agribusiness opportunities for rural youth, the challenge with such narratives is that they view young people as a homogenous youth who lack skills, enthusiasm, patience, and are disconnected from opportunities.

Furthermore, the above statements not only depict young people as impatient; but also, they tend to allocate certain kinds of agricultural activities to other actors, while young people are enticed to the ‘fast’ and labour-intensive horticultural activities. A similar observation was made with a regional agribusiness incubator programme that aimed at enhancing agribusiness education in African universities and mentoring graduate entrepreneurs. The programme framed educated youth as capable of adopting new agricultural technologies and establishing agribusinesses that could eventually employ other youth in the rural areas.

Because of the big [global] markets and the capacity of agriculture, all continents are scrambling for Africa. The future is in agribusiness; then, we are going to be in business [competitive] ... I am seeing success cases of young people who have finished college and are becoming billionaires. Our desire is to have these youth in the books of the richest people in Africa (International NGO representative).

I put two caveats in accepting these narratives as significant in realizing secure youth livelihoods. Using the case of the AgriVijana Loans, one of the government officials had emphasized the importance of the Youth Fund in introducing young people to a ‘lending environment’ with an aim of making them entrepreneurs:

If we can be able to begin to introduce lending into this culture, you know, of business and agribusiness, at that early stage, then, it will be for the good for the country and of course for the good of the young people as jobs are hard to come by (Youth Fund employee).

The lending model assumes that all unemployed youth can become entrepreneurs whom the government only need to facilitate through skills training and financing of their collective actions. This narrative is faulted for two reasons. First, lending to unemployed youth does not necessarily allow them to freely innovate and grow their enterprises; rather, they remain trapped in a patron-client relationship where their business growth is dependent on their credit-worthiness. Secondly, lending to already marginalized individuals and groups with little or almost no resources increases their vulnerability, as they start working towards paying their debts, rather than attaining independent livelihoods.

The second caveat I observed with these narratives was the alignment to international discourses of managing youth by retaining them in the rural areas:

There is an old song that used to be sung in Kenya. Turudi mashambani [Let us go back to the rural areas]. It is time young people actually took that advice and go back to the farms and why, because there is money in agribusiness and it is something that needs to come very clear now. People are making money in agribusiness. Two, this country actually requires food. I mean the responsibility of feeding this country right now has been left to the old people relying on outdated farming techniques. The old traditional methods where you just plant your seed and wait for the rains (Youth Fund employee).

In this statement, there is an implied profit in agriculture; but also, the burden of food security is transferred to the youth who are expected to adopt modern farming techniques and relieve the ageing farmers in the rural areas. One of the main contradictions of these narratives is that youth success is tied to their access to skills and financial resources; but the programmes

developed often remain silent about the systemic barriers in the wider agrifood sector, such as land, markets, climate change, infrastructure, and the policy environment.

Overall, these narratives show the economic benefits of agriculture despite the young people's background of growing up in an era of declining agricultural economies with *nalima tu* describing the everyday life of disenfranchised rural smallholder farmers. Young people, who were once expected to excel in education and escape the 'difficult life' in smallholder agricultural landscapes to 'a good life' of white collar employment in the urban areas, are now enticed to excel in manipulating the agricultural landscapes to create their own employment, produce food for the country, and in so doing, retain their respectability in society. That educated youth fail to find formal jobs, yet are expected to contribute to their communities drives them to pursue these agricultural opportunities, firstly to secure a livelihood and then, to maintain their respectable status. Their new identities are shaped by their conception of the self as a person of influence and the socially embedded contexts in which they develop a strong sense of community.

The livelihood strategies of educated young farmers point to their dual strategies to experiment with entrepreneurship as one pursued salaried jobs. Farming is seen as a complementary tactic that reduces the likelihood of total failure on the part of the young person, but also has the potential of increasing their chances of accumulating capitals. The multiple strategies allowed them to acquire diverse skills and develop different ways of thinking as revealed in their attitude towards work, economic success, and failure. Their entry into agriculture was triggered by the constraints of the job market but it also depended on their access to the capitals required to establish a profitable venture. As a matter of fact, their portfolio occupations were in reality a continuous search for secure livelihoods often

involving trial and error and shifting from one activity to another as one attempted to move forward, and not backwards (Locke & te Lintelo, 2012; Bryceson, 2002).

Emerging educated young farmers must also be contextualized in the continuing debates of large- vs. small-scale agriculture; the intergenerational tensions on land tenure; climate change; and inequalities caused by the corporate penetration into the agrifood sector (White, 2012). These issues are rarely addressed when designing youth in agriculture programmes; for example, temporary solutions such as land-leasing and short-season horticultural farming are promoted instead of addressing land tenure challenges. The programmes have also failed to address the agrarian inequalities caused by commercialization of agriculture and few youth with resources have succeeded in farming for the export market while the majority remain without such opportunities. These emerging subjectivities are further attuned to the neoliberal green economy which Cock (2014) argues that it often promotes markets, new technologies, and commodification of natural and human capitals. Reviewing the past and present youth strategies and programmes, there is more emphasis on making markets work, increasing the use of technology, and reinforcing individual competitiveness. Not just is establishing an enterprise important, it is how that enterprise remains competitive and relevant to the individual and his/her immediate society.

Additionally, a narrative of green livelihoods is prevailing in the youth employment discourse where phrases such as decent work and green jobs have become acceptable forms of describing youth entrepreneurship, not because young people always abide to the principles of decent work and green jobs, but because such frames facilitate the visibility of young entrepreneurs as economically growing and socially responsible. The promoters of these narratives, UNEP and ILO, also hope that by incorporating these principles in programmes aimed at creating youth employment opportunities, they might address both the immediate

need for decent youth employment while inspiring the young people to establish environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable enterprises and hence leading to inclusive economies (ILO, 2012; UNEP, 2008).

What is striking about greening livelihoods is that the state's efforts to create youth jobs are often limited and instead are linked to facilitation of their entry into entrepreneurship by encouraging the private sector to finance, provide infrastructure, skills, and education and to facilitate young people to form associations. These kinds of support mechanisms tend to transfer the pressure of employment and employability of young people from the state to the individuals who are then required to become competitive by acquiring skills, accumulating capitals, and building networks to enable them access probable work options. I argue that the emergence of an educated young farmer, as similar to the student environmentalist, shows an incline towards addressing youth unemployment but not necessarily in creating a sustainable solution to youth livelihoods or even fully addressing social exclusion in the neoliberal economy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has examined how educated youth developed strategies for navigating their changing aspirations through portfolio occupations, tarmacking and side-hustling, and how the emergent subjectivities were realized through student environmentalism and agricultural entrepreneurialism. I have developed the concept of opportunity space and shown the contexts in which my respondents pursued opportunities created by environmental activism and previously stigmatized agriculture amid incentives and disincentives in these sectors. In essence, as occupational aspirations are changing, educated youth broaden their pathways of pursuing livelihoods and attaining social adulthood.

5. ACTIVELY WAITING: THE MAKING OF STUDENT ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Introduction

You know I cannot finish my course and then I go back home and sit there. We have to go somewhere and look for something to do, like environmental activities (Keboi, male student).

Keboi, and many university students I met, are no longer the privileged Kenyan intelligentsia. They are born into and experience waiting all through their lives. Unlike their parents' generation, they enroll into universities knowing all too well the difficulties of finding white collar employment. Keboi was concerned that even after acquiring an environmental degree, a relatively new career in Kenya, chances were that he would return home in desperation if he failed to put effort in becoming competitive and diversifying his career options. Rather than wait for such uncertain moments, he sought after self-improvement opportunities – joining an environmental club – where he could diversify his occupational choices. As a student environmentalist, he expected to participate in environmental activities to acquire extra knowledge and skills and build strong social networks in the environmental movement. These portfolios of capitals would eventually enable him to navigate the precarious and competitive graduate job market. Thus, Keboi was actively waiting – acknowledging the precarity of the contingent and the anticipated, and developing day-to-day means of negotiating these uncertainties.

This chapter assesses student environmentalism as a form of active waiting and an attribute of neoliberal youth subjectivities, where the students embodied certain identities in the present in anticipation of uncertainties in their future occupations. The chapter elucidates the extent to which membership to environmental clubs influences students' aspirations and expectations in contemporary Kenya where globalization, economic restructuring and the transformation of the labour markets have radically changed the employment opportunities of

the current workforce. I explore the growing environmentalism among Kenyan university students as a generative opportunity space that produces subjects capable of establishing independent initiatives on the margins of a formal economy and within the context of a global discourse of environmental change. Three key questions are addressed: *what is the nature of associational life in environmental clubs; what motivates students to become student environmentalists; and in what ways does student environmentalism produce new subjectivities that reflect the future aspirations and expectations of university students?*

The chapter is organized in two main sections. The first section discusses the nature of student environmentalism by first illuminating the history of the clubs, their power structures, and then examines the motivations of the students and the benefits derived from club activities. The second section discusses how student environmentalism in Kenya results in (and is contingent of) the production of environmental subjectivities which intersect with and are superseded by neoliberal subjectivities characterized by capital accumulation, one's social positioning in the field and the prevailing opportunities to pursue flexible livelihood strategies. I discuss how associational life enables a portfolio of self-making activities, such as the romanticism of nature, *professional socialization*, acquisition of transferable *certified experiences*, and participation in environmental anti-politics. I conclude by arguing that the embodiment of self-making through environmental activism and social relations produces neoliberal environmental subjects that seek to transcend the precarity of waithood to attain social adulthood and remain distinctively elite.

The Nature of Student Environmentalism

The Clubs

I am taking an environmental science degree; that's what I chose. I always admired Wangari Maathai and I wanted to be like her. When I was taken to boarding school, I was in class seven and Wangari Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize. Then I wrote a letter to my father telling him, "finally my role model has got to receive an international award. I see that the next time such an award is coming to an African woman it has to be me" (Lilian, female student).

Students like Lilian help to contextualize student environmentalists as subjects produced by the events of early environmentalism and economic reforms in Kenya. She was the club chairperson in one of the universities I visited in 2014. Born in the early 1990s, Lilian witnessed Maathai's protests against the grabbing of Karura Forest which inspired her to become an environmentalist. Student environmentalists are part of the first generation of Kenyans who grow up experiencing the impacts of environmental, political, and economic transformations, changing labour markets, and the technological advancements. They are more aware of the need to 'act extra' (Demerath, 2000) in a precarious world by developing alternative livelihoods through socially-acceptable pathways even in the marginal spaces.

Student clubs provided a new space for 'figuring out' individual aspirations and repositioning in a competitive job market. As Student Unions remain the students' political arm, professional groups provide an alternative space that is concerned with specific causes such as health, business, and gender among others. These groups are registered with the Dean of Students and authorized to organize activities that enhance student life. Some have affiliations with national and international bodies such as the Red Cross, St. Johns Ambulance, Model United Nations, The Presidential Award, the Rotary Club, Engineers without borders, and the International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences (AISEC) among others. Students joining these clubs work towards familiarizing

themselves with the professions associated with the club, while at the same time developing specific skills in that profession.

Students' environmental clubs emerged in parallel with the teaching of environmental degrees in Kenya and were established by students who were motivated by the opportunities opening up in the environmental field. The clubs intended to enlighten the students on global environmental agendas and involve them in localized and student-friendly environmental activities. Although each club was established independently in each university in the 1990s and early 2000s, there were similarities in their governance structures, club activities and mobilization strategies. Membership was exclusive to those who paid the subscription fees (ranging from Ksh. 50 to 300) each academic semester entitling them to participate in club activities, elect leaders, and obtain membership certificates. Whereas all university students were eligible for membership, the clubs mostly attracted students of related environmental or natural resources degree programmes with 88 per cent of my respondents being enrolled in environmental degrees.

Clubs' governance structures resembled social movements in their insistence on democratic processes including the constitution, voting procedures, transparency, accountability and supremacy of members' views on club affairs. They held annual members' meetings and made public their annual work plans and financial reports. All duly registered members had voting rights, could hold leadership positions¹⁵, and had access to club official documents such as financial reports, membership registers, and activity reports. They were also entitled to reference letters at the end of their degree courses and/or when they were applying for work opportunities or academic scholarships respectively. Members contributed to weekly

¹⁵ In some universities, members holding leadership positions in the Student Union were not eligible for leadership in the environmental club.

club meetings; suggested and voted for decisions concerning the club activities; participated in club activities; and mobilized new members to join the club.

Club leaders managed club affairs: they organized and fundraised for club activities; recruited and motivated members to get involved; and maintained partnerships within and outside the university. Most clubs had a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, organizing secretary, and their deputies. Some clubs had specialized leadership positions, such as a newsletter editor, publicity secretary, Information Technology (IT) officer, auditor, and legal affairs secretary. Elections for club leaders were held once a year, with prospective candidates going through a process of nomination, vetting, internal campaigns¹⁶ and eventually elections. Eligibility for club leadership included exhibiting ‘a romanticism for nature’, commitment to the club vision, ability to represent the club to the university administration and external partners, and a disconnection from the university students’ politics.

The club’s success depended on the commitment of the club leaders to manage the club affairs outside the regular students’ life such as planning club activities, networking, and fundraising, while at the same time attending to their academic and social life. In some clubs, leaders invested their own financial resources, for instance, when one needed to use the internet or to travel to meetings that were not funded by the club. The appointed club patrons committed to using their positions and networks to increase the club’s visibility, credibility and partnerships within and outside the university. Clubs recruited new members during the first years’ orientation week at the beginning of each academic year; through regular advertisements made on student noticeboards; and during major club events publicized to the rest of the university.

¹⁶ Unlike student politics, candidates could only campaign during the official club’s events and through word of mouth to club members.

The club's credibility and visibility was determined by the vibrancy of their activities within and outside the university. Despite claiming to be the most vibrant professional groups in the universities, they operated on lean budgets often financed by student membership fees and other charges in the course of planning club activities. The lack of a regular financing strategy meant that clubs mainly depended on the aggressiveness of the leadership to seek financing from the university administration and external partners. Often times, members would be required to finance the activities such as their certificates, meals and transport. Students paid for club membership because they believed it was an investment in gaining new skills and building new social networks with other environmental professionals. However, such financial contributions limited the club membership to only those who could afford the membership fees and the charges for some of the activities.

Student Motivations

Two factors influenced student environmentalism. First, there was the experience of environmental change and a growing environmental movement in Kenya. Secondly, the changing educational aspirations that included globalized professions such as environmental scientists, planners, resources managers, and environmental engineers among others. Most student environmentalists had been motivated by the late Prof. Wangari Maathai – *Mama Mazingira*¹⁷ – whose life was the epitome of pro-environmental behaviours (Maathai, 2003; Muiruri, 1999). They claimed to embody her vision by studying environmental degrees and joining the environmental clubs through which they participated in local and national environmental activism.

Wangari Maathai. She was an ambassador for the environment and as I was growing up, I always wanted to be an ambassador for the environment... Most people were educated through her on environment. Having chosen this career, I can become a

¹⁷ Mother (of) environment

leader, I can do much to educate the people on environmental issues and have a better environment (Olivia, female student).

Students romanticized the environment as a place to be kept clean, green, and not degraded: ‘I cannot allow it [environment] to be degraded or destroyed. Every time I see people joking around, not taking it seriously, polluting, cutting down trees, I get motivated to do something (Echitwa, male student)’. These idealized views of a protected and serene natural environment were reflected in their interests in photography, sight-seeing, and hikes, but also through their environmental restoration activities such as tree-planting, clean-ups, waste recycling, and energy conservation. Students also wanted to protect the environment which they perceived as the basis for economic development. They imagined that with their university education and through the club activities, they would address the existing environmental changes, such as waste management, food insecurity, deforestation and energy conservation. These romanticized views were often expressed as a passion to do something for the environment and for the community as one of the students shared:

I looked at my passion; I had a love for the environment... After some research, I realized that the best platform was [the club] ... First, I was not comfortable because everyone was an E¹⁸ [environmental] student and I was the only D [Commerce] student... But now it gives me the platform to attend meetings at [international organization] and environmental celebration days. I can now do something for the environment (Kyallo, male student).

Motivation also came from the quality of university education and the expected career opportunities. Students complained about poor quality teaching claiming that the current university teaching only prepared them for examinations but did not equip them with practical skills for the changing job market. Those dissatisfied with the teaching often referred to their reliance on the club activities to explore the range of occupational choices available outside the university. There was an assumption that skills acquired through clubs

¹⁸ In this university, a letter abbreviating their degree course prefixed students’ registration numbers, for example, ‘D’ abbreviated Business students while ‘E’ abbreviated Environmental students.

would boost their academic performance and prepare them for alternative occupations in the future. As Oparanya explained, interacting with nature, people and institutions helped the students develop coping mechanisms, *‘When we go out for events we are exposed to many things which challenges the way we perceive the environment. We get this experience and we see various ways to cope with that’*. Thus, the clubs effectively enhanced the resilience of their members in a waiting society.

Furthermore, clubs provided a space for students to imagine what their future environmental professions would entail and prepare towards such. For example, Ritho came from a remote community that had not been exposed to diverse professions and thus their expectations for higher education were limited to common courses such as teaching, law, medicine, and banking: *‘In my community, when I tell them I am studying Environmental Sciences, they don’t understand what I will do or become when I finish school. They ask if I will be sweeping streets’*. As a result, Ritho’s participation in the club was motivated by the need to acquire extra knowledge and skills that would grant him the commensurate occupational confidence and enable him to demonstrate to his community the dignity of his new profession as an environmentalist. The environmental clubs helped students like him identify the multiple ways in which they would apply their environmental skills. Other students were motivated to *‘see things practically’*, understand the environment, and develop confidence in an environmental career path.

Sometimes when I am in class, I don’t understand what the lecturer is saying... but through the club, when I go out there, I can see things practically, and I can understand them. I can then say I am a student of ERC [Environmental Resources Conservation] and I can tell them what I do. I can articulate myself just like the doctors will do. You stop saying that you are studying trees (Janette, female student).

As Janette explained, she was able to articulate herself, gain occupational confidence and work experience that was essential in her anticipated competitive job market. On the other hand, students were exposed to *‘working conditions’* as they organized club events,

fundraised for club activities, conducted research, designed and implemented projects and worked as a team. Camilla, one of the female club leaders who had acquired a job before completing her degree, shared:

It [the club] is giving me the experience that I need. There is no way I will leave school, go somewhere and tell them I can do this and that and I have never tried it before. That post gives me the experience and knowledge; because in the club I get ideas from other people and as a leader, and I am able to learn more than other students (Camilla, female student).

Most importantly, the opportunities for self-improvement and associational life were the over-riding factors for joining environmental clubs. Student clubs are tight-knit social groups through which students maintain a network of like-minded friends, organize professional and social events, support one another through harrowing university experiences, and develop their future aspirations. Through weekly club events, students developed friendships, shared new knowledge, and jointly participated in club activities. They expanded their networks beyond the university and developed skills in public speaking, negotiation, leadership, time management, and communication.

Whereas the associational life was also a form of timepass, most students appreciated that the clubs also connected them with the outside world through global environmental issues and helped them re-imagine their futures beyond the university. As Mafukho shared, '*when you are in the club they organize events where you go outside. You find that you can network with other people, other organizations, and share ideas*'. Some youth scholars have argued that young people's search for a place to belong and explore their future aspirations might be measured through their contribution to that place (Wyn & White, 1997). As Sharon, a first year female student remarked, '*[The club] is more practical than looking at things under a microscope. I also need somewhere to belong, I need a community*', the associational life in the clubs inspired a sense of belonging. Her views were echoed by Kimani, a third year male student, who viewed the club as a space for propelling one another to action: '*I can say the*

opportunity of interacting with others here, it makes you think... We have brains here; knowledge. The only thing we need to do now is to propel them to do what is in their hearts. Each one of them has big ideas'. The authenticity of such a community was contrasted with the abstract nature of being in a laboratory, where one was out of touch with the romanticized nature and the social world. They desired a place where they could have agency and develop a shared vision to transform their physical and social environments.

The associational life in the clubs enabled the individual members to use their positions as student environmentalists to accumulate capitals (skills, experiences, networks, and certificates) that would presumably accelerate their entry into an environmental job market, start their own initiatives, or pursue postgraduate education. From a Bourdieuan perspective, clubs provided a field for garnering differentiated capitals which the students used to renegotiate their positions and remain competitive. Rather than '*studying blindly*' due to the despair in education and ongoing environmental and economic changes, student environmentalists were motivated to explore ways of widening the reach of these capitals through their associational activities. Essentially, clubs were collectives for developing individuals and provided a space for learning and sharing, building relationships, and for occupying multiple subject positions. I now turn to club activities and their derived benefits.

Club Activities

Club activities ranged from capacity building, environmental restoration, advocacy campaigns, and adventure activities among others as listed in Table 5.1. To implement these activities, clubs collaborated with the university and a range of environmental institutions usually referred to as partners. Twenty three institutions were mentioned as partners ranging from government agencies, non-governmental environmental organizations, other students' clubs, youth organizations, community based organizations, and private companies

(Appendix VII). Such partnerships were developed organically, such as through an invitation to participate in a demonstration, attending a workshop organized by such an organization, or inviting the organization to deliver a lecture at the university.

Table 5. 1 Types of club activities

Types of club activities in 2012 and 2014	
Capacity Building	Career Days; Training courses; Seminars; Workshops; Conferences; Mazingira Challenge; Volunteer work
Environmental Restoration	Tree-planting; Clean-ups; Waste recycling; Installation of Dustbins
Adventure/Nature romanticism	Field trips; Bird-watching; Hiking; Camping; Personal pro-environmental behaviours
Advocacy/Activism	Environmental Campaigns; Schools awareness programmes; Policy Dialogues; Green Week; Participation in cultural events; and Participation in university development and environment committees

Most club activities were used as a platform for sensitizing communities and negotiating for the respectability of university students.

People expect when you go to university, you are supposed to be respected by the society. We are the same people that society see us going to collect papers [litter], yet we are supposed to be respected. This is a way of sensitizing them that the environment needs to be respected too and we can have an impact on the people (Saitoti, male student).

Well-organized and high-level activities helped the clubs to boost their visibility within and outside the university and eventually to increase their membership. The club's reputation in organizing successful events was determined by the ability of their patron (and with respect to their seniority) to invite key personalities, such as heads of organizations and key government officials.

Our patron, being the Dean... ensures that all events are successful. His presence in every event makes them very successful. When we invite other important people they can't turn down our invitation if we have the Dean in attendance. For example, the Office of the Prime Minister was here telling us that there is money out there and we need to come up with ideas on green economy (Fuchaka, male student).

Inviting key personalities to universities was a win-win tactic for clubs: it provided individual members with opportunities for learning and professional socialization; enhanced the

credibility of the club as a vibrant professional group attracting more members and the attention of the university administration; and as well, boosted the position of the club patron, who would become the link between the key personality, the club, and the university administration.

Students claimed that every club activity contributed to the broader goals of national development and to international environmental policies. For example, tree planting activities were linked to the national policy of ensuring 10 per cent tree cover on each land holding as stipulated in Kenya's new constitution. Their advocacy and awareness campaigns on waste management were geared towards the right to a clean and healthy environment as stipulated in Articles 42, 69 and 70 of the Constitution (GoK, 2010). Their desires to become green entrepreneurs were linked to the country's climate change strategy, Vision 2030, and the green economy strategies. Whereas their activities might seem under-funded and having a trivial impact relative to the magnitude of the environmental challenges they discussed, students believed that what they were doing in the clubs prepared them for future environmental activism. This is true considering how they emphasized being known for their small actions through *certified experiences*.

In retrospect, they demonstrated similar attributes as Smith (2012) found out in Tanzania: that acquisition of environmental knowledge and engagement in environmental action may take place at different times of a young person's life as their power to act is sometimes subdued by those in power, and thus, they may often displace their action into the future. I also observed that the access to financial resources limited the extent to which university students would take environmental action. Only one university confirmed a budgetary allocation towards professional students groups and in the rest of the universities, clubs relied on *ad hoc* financial support from the university, members' contribution, sale of merchandise, and support from external partners. Most club activities attracted a participation fee to cater for

the activity expenses, such as transport, printing of certificates, and production of environmental awareness materials.

Clubs' maintained a good relationship with the university administration to ensure they had access to university facilities for their activities. Sometimes, the university administration would fund club activities especially where such impacted on the university community or contributed in public image of the university as a 'hotbed of environmentalism' (Lang, 2011). The university-club relationship was also a strategy to assert the club's anti-political and professional accomplishments in environmental issues. For instance, rather than confronting the university for failing to implement environmental policies (such as waste recycling or maintenance of green spaces); the clubs developed projects to address such problems in collaboration with the university. This way, the university would respond by either financing the club to implement the projects, or by implementing such projects independently. Two of the clubs had used this tactic to install dustbins in their universities. Upon proposing the project to reduce solid waste in the university, the administration responded by providing dustbins which were labelled with the club logo and installed in strategic locations in the universities.

Nevertheless, there were instances when clubs came out strongly against the university development projects especially if they were expected to contribute to pollution, establishment of new structures, or when they failed to meet environmental standards and regulations. Clubs would organize university-wide campaigns¹⁹ to put pressure on the university administration. However, such protests would only go as far as their dissent would allow them to continue operating as professional clubs and safeguard their identities as anti-

¹⁹ Protests against the university administration were often in collaboration with the Student Unions.

political students. For these reasons, none of the clubs mentioned any persistent crisis or opposition to the university administration.

In sum, clubs organized activities that motivated students to acquire knowledge, skills, the affective and material benefits of belonging to an environmental social group, and of performing environmental actions.

I was inspired by the members when I joined; they told me that the only way you can access jobs if you want to become an environmental scientist, you need to join a relevant club. When you want to get information about what is happening worldwide, this is the only place you can get the information, this made me join the club (Oparanya, male student).

That clubs were seen as the place that defined university students' competence as environmentalists is no surprise. They had become sites for exploring mechanisms of improving one's life by understanding the workings of the outside world and producing diverse subjectivities as individuals engaged in a collective of activities. Students used the clubs as sites of self-improvement through skills building (*certified experiences*), networking (*professional socialization*), and anti-political actions, traits characteristic of neoliberal subjectivities. However, one's ability to occupy different subject positions was dependent on their social positioning including their gender, geographical location, family background, cultural norms, and leadership capability.

I define student environmentalism as the processes and spaces through which university students engage in environmental activities as a collective and as individuals that embody opportunistic identity formation amidst socio-economic, political and environmental changes in Kenya. Student environmentalists romanticize nature, perform as competitive subjects using their positions to accumulate capitals that accelerate their entry into the already precarious job market, start their own initiatives or pursue further education. It is a process of identifying and diversifying one's avenues of growth and imagined futures, while at the same

time participating in everyday environmental anti-politics. Club activities attend to self-making needs and facilitate individuals to be recognized in their community as environmentalists. They consciously position the club as an anti-political movement so as to distinguish them from the political identities associated with the Student Unions. However, depoliticization must not be viewed as indicating a depoliticized environmental space in Kenya; rather, it portrays the hybrid positions that university students occupy so as to attain certain recognitions in society. Kenya's environmental movement remains highly political but the students displace their political perspectives into the future.

The Making of Student Environmental Subjectivities

Beyond the Romanticism of Nature

I joined the club to know different environmental organizations and to learn skills that I can use to give back to the society. Those skills that I can use as a student before I get a job, like starting an environmental project and initiatives towards environmental sustainability (Fuchaka, male student).

During the focus group discussions, one of the questions was why students chose their degree course and the club. Most students acknowledged the contribution of the club, first to their environmental knowledge, and then to addressing the intensifying national environmental and socio-economic problems. Fuchaka's views that he needed to '*do something else before*' he can get a job directs our attention to the complexity of the issues characteristic of present day graduate unemployment where the natural environment has become a basis for negotiating multiple identities and escape routes²⁰ for fresh graduates. While fundamentally, students' environmentalism was driven by a romanticism of nature, environmental subjectivity was a space for learning through action and eventually constructing alternative livelihood strategies in the absence of formal employment.

²⁰ In this case, the escape was from being jobless, inexperienced, or denigration by society.

The students produced two identities: first as university students who through university education would qualify as environmentalists with a responsibility to national and international environmental matters; and secondly as the privileged intelligentsia of Kenya who would be expected to contribute to their communities by the virtue of their university education. Whereas students' environmental perceptions included superficial phrases, such as *'the surrounding human and non-human spaces, the nature around us'*, they had a deeper understanding of local environmental challenges largely influenced by global environmental agendas as taught in their degrees and their own experiences of environmental issues in Kenya. Their views of the environment as *'something very precious'*, and *'it's me, my surrounding... whatever is within me, nature as a whole and the people around me'* were intercepted by a pragmatic need for urgent action *'it should be taken care of, very much'*. They claimed to understand the science, the consequences of environmental degradation, and the politics of change, and presented themselves as stewards who were *'doing something for the environment'* through the clubs.

Their desire to experience nature and to take environmental action inspired their romanticism and their range of environmental restoration activities. Their concerns matched global narratives of nature romanticism, as Echitwa explained: *'Mother Nature does not have a mouth to defend herself. It is upon us, we as the inhabitants of a place, to make sure we conserve it, we manage it, and utilize the resources wisely. Personally I have learnt to be responsible'*. To an extent, student environmentalists blamed humans for environmental degradation but their romanticism also came with the responsibility to restore the degraded environment. As one of the students shared, his experience of the environment was that of danger that needed to be redressed.

Mwaura: How would you describe the environment?

Samoe: Right now? It's disheartening.

Mwaura: Which part? What is that so disheartening?

Samoe: Kenya; we have the extreme weather conditions. We lose billions of shillings during floods and drought which are contributed by climate change. These make us food insecure. This is presented by the fact that we are straining our water towers and exploiting our forests unsustainably...

As a result of experiencing environmental threats, clubs designed their activities around providing solutions. One of the male students explained, *'the club tends to fit mainly in conservation because what we do a lot is planting trees which is afforestation or reforestation... But apart from that it also focuses in educating people and reaching out to the community'*. The club activities further reflected the diminishing role of the state in addressing national environmental challenges and emphasized the subjective role of individuals to act responsibly and influence others to protect the environment. They performed environmentalism by carrying their own shopping bags, avoiding littering, switching off lights, monitoring running taps, and maintaining green spaces in the university.

For the environment to be green and clean you don't rely on someone, or think the government should do this, collect this garbage, recycle this waste; they don't have the funds to do this. It's our responsibility, but this is lacking. Right now you produce a lot of waste, and just let it go, you are not responsible, yet you are the one who has produced it. You take this burden to someone else; you don't want to be responsible (Camilla, female student).

As Camilla explained, students' environmental actions were inspired by their changing perceptions of environmental change as an individual responsibility. They also resonated with the notions of youth empowerment, which emphasized self-development for increased independence and interdependence. They used phrases such as, *'our responsibility'* to show their competence in taking independent actions, and *'returning home'* and *'becoming environmental ambassadors'* to acknowledge their interdependent environmental subjectivity that demanded collective action in a neoliberal society.

I wish to mobilize my community and help them realize and understand the environment. Most of them don't know the impact of what they sometimes do. So I wish to be an ambassador for the environment, to champion for the environment and the protection of natural resources (Ngireva, male student).

Romanticism also came with a radical organization of environmental politics into participatory citizenship. Even though students were uncertain of their future jobs, they constantly imagined themselves as having an important role in national development owing to their elite status. For instance, they claimed to understand the country's national development plans and environmental policies, and their role in matters of environmental governance. While this may contradict with their expressions of frustrations of poor governance and unemployment, it might also be an indicator of the multiple subject positions that the students occupied in order to maintain respectability and attain social adulthood. They capitalized on the government failures and inadequacies to build new careers for themselves as environmental leaders, challenge the government through anti-politics, while at the same time, acquiring skills that enabled them to remain competitive in the job market.

We are the ones who are supposed to be so much concerned with tree planting as a way of trying to achieve Vision 2030... we have the know-how, we carry out research. We can convince the society of the dangers of cutting down trees and their importance (Njoroge, male student).

Nature romanticism revealed a neoliberal approach among the students to self-develop their environmental careers. Several authors argue that people living on the margins construct multiple identities and adopt plural strategies when in search of a secure livelihood, not because they want to, but because of the socio-economic failures that push them to the margins (Honwana, 2012; Johnson-Hanks, 2005; McDonald et al., 2011). Clubs activities became vital conjunctures for the construction of multiple and flexible identities that enabled the students to maintain their high status, even though they constituted a group in society facing most of the consequences of a shrinking job economy. Several alumni members had obtained employment soon after graduating whilst others had established their own organizations. They encouraged members to follow career paths shaped by this heritage of student clubs as a professional body recognized by environmental organizations in Kenya.

Students also refashioned leadership as a vital life event because it allowed them to gain skills in public speaking, time management, fundraising, communication, and networking, increasing one's competitiveness in the job market.

Being a leader I should not be worried... it has helped me to expand my network... I have been able to receive respect from people. When I go to a place, people refer to the many things I have done as the chair of the club... Those are the things that actually help me and will be a great opportunity for me (Echitwa, male student).

In sum, environmental subjects were produced through two activities: first in developing pro-environmental behaviours which informed students' collective activities. Secondly, through the use of the opportunity space provided by environmentalism to self-make one's social adulthood by accumulating capitals, building social networks and claiming respectability by performing 'responsible' actions in the community. Self-making here involved acquiring transferable work experiences through the range of club activities and professional socialization, actions which garnered different kinds of social capital and propelled one into social adulthood. Responsible actions were the individualized responses to environmental and social change including those that addressed community needs, such as clean-ups, tree planting and awareness campaigns among others.

Finally, environmental clubs attracted students who developed pro-environmental behaviours that entailed speaking as environmentalists, associating with other environmental actors, playing environmental anti-politics, but also re-orienting one's career as a result of skills and networks accumulated from the clubs. In the next three sub-sections, I will discuss how student environmentalists were re-orienting their careers by adopting market-based approaches of professional socialization, certified experiences, and depoliticization of environmental actions.

Professional Socialization

To be sincere I know it [the club] may link me to my future career employers, where I may get a secure job... So I expect the club to lead me to those people who can later employ me (Emmanuel, male student).

Emmanuel demonstrated that central to club participation was the ability to build a professional outlook that enabled him to navigate the competitive job market. He had only been a university student for a month when he participated in the research, yet he was already socialized into the workings of the club and expected that the associational life would eventually lead to future career opportunities. To many students like Emmanuel, the professional clubs were spaces for creating and accumulating different capitals and re-fashioning one's career trajectories as environmental specialists. In a country where graduate unemployment was increasing and complaints about inexperienced graduates existed (CSS, 2015), the opportunity to prove oneself as skilled and eligible for a job was inevitable and necessitated professional socialization.

Professional socialization is a sociology concept defined as the academic and professional interactions of students that provide learning opportunities, experiences, knowledge, and networks to help learners understand the workings of their university and after life, the importance of a well-rounded academic life, and the ethics and standards of their academic discipline (McKinney, Saxe, & Cobb, 1998; McKinney, Medvedeva, Vacca, & Malak, 2004). It is a process of acquiring certain values and behaviours associated with a particular professional identity (MacLellan, Lordly, & Gingras, 2011; Pei & Pek, 2012; Shinyashiki, Mendes, Trevizan, & Day, 2006). Those who join and actively participate in club activities can effectively apply the acquired skills and networks to improve their academic performance and professional identity (Yamashita & Davies, 2010). Professional socialization also occurs beyond the boundaries of the club as students pursue connections with professionals who stand out as role models and potential future employers. Through the interactions, students

develop a deeper understanding of the environmental field and its actors and acquire interpersonal skills necessary to articulate their capabilities in that field. Such interactions are believed to manipulate the barriers of inexperience and competitiveness by bringing the students closer to work opportunities where they confidently perform their environmental subjectivities.

Connecting with professionals outside the university was important for three reasons: first, students gained new knowledge and skills; secondly, their interactions with potential employers changed their attitudes towards environmental careers; and thirdly, some gained practical experiences through volunteer, internship and other work opportunities. For instance, Janette, as a result of the networks she created as a club leader, she had found a part-time job with one of the club partners. According to her, the club mediated the networks between its members and environmental organizations, for instance, by advertising career opportunities through the clubs or organizing joint events.

The club is a good platform for opportunities. You come to meetings and you are told first hand of opportunities for volunteer, internships, jobs etc. Through the club, you get to learn about them. If you were in your room, you would not have gotten these contacts. The major opportunity in the club is networking and gaining opportunities (Janette, female student).

Through professional socialization, students became aware of how global environmental agendas were being localized by various environmental actors and the emergent opportunities that they could pursue to enhance their careers. In being part of a professional network, they developed confidence to articulate their competence in environmental skills and their suitability for possible work opportunities to potential employers within those networks.

First, I have been able to develop skills in leadership, confidence, and socializing through meeting people in different organizations. Last term, I was with the managing director of [a national organization]. Meeting these people heading organizations and telling you the actual things on ground, as students, we read books, but they tell us what is actually happening in such places (Fuchaka, male student).

They also familiarized themselves with the future world of work and, therefore, could flexibly negotiate for available work opportunities. Furthermore, 'knowing who' was the potential employer, building friendships, and exhibiting competence were important aspects of professional socialization as Mugure shared:

There are many activities that we go for... It's the way you associate with people in these activities you can tell them you need and internship and you can refer to an event where you met. If you were friendly to them, you can get an opportunity, just because you were from the club which participated in that event (Mugure, female student).

Client-patron relationships prevail in most professional groups, and are among the main reasons why students joined environmental clubs. Students' membership and active participation in club activities was linked to the possibilities of attending environmental events, visiting environmental organizations, or even having the chance to interact with certain environmental professionals whom they believed were their gatekeepers in future employment opportunities. Clubs too thrived on these client-patron networks. They invited to their events high-status environmentalists or organizations first to grow the credibility of the club, and secondly to give access to their members of such networking opportunities. The more high-status personalities and organizations a club was able to attract, the higher the student membership and possibilities of collaborating with the university administration.

In one of the universities, the club had used their networks to invite a senior government official for a public lecture. Given the protocols of inviting key government officials to a public event, the official had then contacted the Dean and eventually the university had organized the public lecture on behalf of the club. The club's strategy here was to maintain a professional outlook and credibility in their communication with the government official and the university so that they could also be acknowledged as a professional group capable of organizing high-level events at the university. One of the patrons even prided at how his club had performed well that they had been recognized by various government officials for their

active engagement in national environmental issues. This eventually resulted in the creation of internship opportunities to benefit the club members.

Finally, clubs also emphasized maintaining contact with the club alumni who facilitated access to the job market through recommendation-based networks. The alumni would be invited to speak at club events, finance club activities, and sometimes were persuaded to offer work opportunities to club members. By joining an environmental club, one signed up to a life-long social network of environmental professionals who would use their social positioning to support one another in an uncertain job market.

Certified Experiences

The club has also contributed to my degree by adding more certificates. During the events, we are awarded a certificate of participation and it has really helped me (Chepruto, female student).

The core business of environmental clubs was equipping students with environmental skills and experiences that would eventually be useful in job-seeking. Clubs had adopted a ‘certification model’ which was indicative of one’s acquired skills set and experiences. Certified experiences are transferable evidences (certificates and *know who* relationships) that a university student had gained certain skills or experiences over a period of time and in a particular field. They are claimed within a club setting where one is awarded a certificate having completed a specific task or when one professionally socializes thus joining a ‘*know who*’ network comprising of potential employers. Just as a university certificate is important in ascertaining that one has acquired university education, club certificates are indicative of one’s experience as an environmentalist. These certificates were useful in job applications where one needed to exhibit extra skills and work experience, making the holders more competitive in the job market. Certificates affirm the self-making of neoliberal environmental subjects and clubs as spaces where the process of self-making takes place and is symbolically certified. They range from certificates of membership; of participation in workshops,

seminars and conferences; of completion of an apprenticeship; or recommendation letters when one is applying for an internship, a job, or scholarships.

The source and force of the certificates was also important. Members desired certificates of attendance to events organized by potential employers. Environmental organizations that invited club members to environmental events were requested to award them with certificates to attest that they had gained some skills or experience²¹. In most cases, it was the leaders who negotiated with the organizations to provide such certificates as this would attract more students to participate and would also enhance the club's credibility with the organization and the university fraternity. However, there was always a level of negotiation between the clubs and the organizations on the issuance of such certificates as some activities would be as simple as tree-planting and clean-ups or as complex as organizing environmental trainings or participating in policy review processes.

Being voluntary clubs, certificates were also awarded to appreciate members who volunteered their time and skills to organize major club activities. Students who paid and participated in select club activities would be awarded certificates of participation. At the end of one's membership period, they would be awarded a membership certificate as prove of their experience as environmentalists. In some clubs, exemplary members were awarded certificates for being the most active members. Club leaders received certificates of leadership to acknowledge and ascertain their service to the club and to demonstrate their leadership skills and experiences.

Being a leader, in my CV, I can attach such a club certificate, and it's going to add a benefit compared to others who only have the university certificate. Many things out there are motivating me, because that club certificate is very important and I can

²¹ Some leaders requested if I would allow them to offer certificates of participation for their members who participated in my research. To them, their interaction with an Oxford doctoral researcher counted as a form of research experience that required appreciation and symbolic certification.

easily get a job out there. With my course, I can also come up with ideas and with the certificate I can work with [a government ministry] (Omondi, male student).

Certified experiences were also acquired through the actual participation in club activities and in leadership. Students joined the clubs and pursued specific roles that they perceived would contribute to their desired future occupations. For instance, Mugo, who at the time was a first year student enrolled in an environmental degree, hoped that if elected as the club's newsletter editor, he would develop journalistic skills and work experience thereby gaining entry into an environmental journalism career after university. Similarly, Ndiguna, who hoped to become an environmental lawyer, had been elected as the legal affairs secretary of his club from where he hoped to develop his legal skills. Such experiences would be affirmed through certificates of leadership and recommendation letters when job-seeking. Mugo's and Ndiguna's strategy for developing new occupations are similar to Joe's pursuit of portfolio occupations (Chapter Four) that would be affirmed through transferable skills and certificates of leadership.

Certified experiences are not new to the world of work and recent reports show that student leadership and basic work experience is essential in the Kenyan graduate job market (British Council, 2014; CSS, 2015). The transferable experiences reinforce one's résumé when seeking jobs and in a way, substantiate the students' professionalism in that field. For student environmentalists, the certificates became even more important if one was a club leader, or if they were awarded by renown organizations or environmentalists. However, there exist contradictions on the role and credibility of some certified experiences. Proponents of certified experiences argued that the club's role was to propel individual competitiveness in the workplace and by rewarding their members for their time in the club activities, they were improving their position in the competition for limited work opportunities. As Omondi, one

of the club leaders, shared, *‘the club is well known. If you walk out, it is well known for environmental conservation efforts and that’s why some join just for the certificates’*.

Nonetheless, while certificates were indicative of one’s commitment to and participation in environmental activities, the certification process posed several challenges to the legitimacy of the clubs. First, possessing a certificate did not necessarily prove one’s ability to perform the skills indicated. Secondly, there were no standards required for an event to qualify to award certificates. Thirdly, a membership certificate did not imply active participation in the club activities. Fourth, there were claims that privileged students who could afford to pay membership and subscription fees to more than one club would receive membership certificates at the end of the four years from all these clubs without necessarily participating in their activities. Additionally, most of the club events leading to certificates of participation charged the students a fee which opened doors for opportunistic students to pay for certificates without necessarily attending such activities.

So many people are not willing to listen to the message. Very few are willing... Then many are after certificates. When you have clean-ups and you tell them there are no certificates for the activity, very few people will come. If you promise them certificates, they come in large numbers (Camilla, female student).

On the other hand, the clubs were criticized for becoming a ‘certificate minting place’. Rather than inspiring students to drive social change, some students argued that clubs focused on events that would result to certificates for their members. Some openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the idea of club certificates and instead preferred expanding the horizon of the club to openly challenging the university and the government on environmental issues. The club was blamed for failing to take a pro-active role in influencing student politics so that environmental politics became part of the broader Student Union’s agenda. While there were a few instances when the professional clubs collaborated with the Student Unions, it was

never a preferred mode of operation as it linked the club with what they referred to as ‘sycophant’ or ‘traditional politics’.

In sum, certified experiences exemplified the ability of neoliberal environmental subjects to deploy their self-making strategies by accumulating cultural and symbolic capitals in form of skills, certificates and titles and creating new social capitals in the form of ‘*know who*’ relationships. These served to keep the students on the momentum of devising flexible and multiple identities in precarious economic times when they would be seeking employment. I now turn to examining how these environmental subjectivities related to Kenya’s environmental politics.

‘Professional students don’t play politics’: Students’ Sense of Environmental Anti-Politics

At the same time, it is good to know that [the club], unlike other university clubs, is professional and not political. Leaders undergo professional elections. Due to that, we came to a point; we should be vetting leaders and interview those who are vying for the positions in leadership to get professionals and not politicians... Politics goes with sycophants. I may have numbers to vote me in, but I may fail to deliver along the line of service... but a professional like myself, I believe in myself. I didn’t have the mass, but being professional in nature made me go through. I got vetted; expressed myself and I made it. I am now able to deliver. If I was political, I would not have made it (Ndiguna, male student).

Environmental clubs provided a space within which student environmentalists depoliticized environmental activism and engaged in anti-politics. All the environmental clubs I visited identified as professional groups and claimed not to engage with the politics of Student Unions. Yet, what the students considered political, and how the clubs depoliticized their environmental actions, and with what benefits is contrasting. Ndiguna’s assumption that politics goes with sycophants and not professional students like him was based on the fact that environmental clubs existed in the context of student activism associated with violence and protest on one hand, and professionalization of environmental politics in Kenya on the other hand. Present-day student activism faces intensified resistance by the universities and

the government and has become disruptive involving destruction of public property and fierce confrontations with the police. While students continue to protest against national and university specific issues, such activism has not addressed the fundamental challenge of graduate unemployment and low quality education, and has instead led to the denigration of graduates as protesters by potential employers. Hence, other avenues for expression of student dissatisfaction and of redeeming the image of a university graduate have emerged. These strategies are creative, consciously trivialize national politics, while also emphasizing individual (and enterprising) efforts for self-development within the university and in society.

Nevertheless, trivializing national politics does not imply quiescence or lack of interest in national politics; it is a form of resistance relating to university students hybridity and strategies for maintaining an elite distinction in society. Generally speaking, in most African countries, narratives around environmental change are integral to a complex web of socio-economic and political issues, largely identified as bad governance and a manifestation of the politics of the belly (Bayart, 1993; R. L. Bryant & Bailey, 1997). These have been advanced by new architectures of governance giving rise to a new landscape for citizen participation, civil society organizations, and new political identities that converge for the purposes of power and resources (Brockington, 2012; Duffy, 2006; Goldman, 2001). In Kenya, such politics date back to the 1980s, when environmental issues were negotiated within spaces of failing governance, corruption, poverty, human rights, and emerging agendas of globalization and economic liberalization (Maathai, 2009; Ndegwa, 1996; Nixon, 2007). The traditional political system, ideally expected to provide for and empower the citizens, failed to deliver on environmental conservation, and was instead saturated with ideologies of self-interested politicians. The citizens and the environment – a source of their livelihoods – had become a marginal agenda of the governments as evidenced in the fierce confrontations between the government and environmentalists.

It is in such contexts that student environmentalism thrives as the clubs claimed professionalism in their environmental activism and denounced affiliations with student politics. Students who aspired for leadership in Student Unions were effectively ineligible for environmental clubs leadership as they were believed to ‘*infuse politics*’ and cause division in the clubs. The clubs imagined themselves as comprising of professionals committed to delivering the club’s mandate of environmental awareness and capacity building, identities that were expressed through their use of language and the nature of their environmental activities.

When it comes to politics, I don’t think there is any person who is engaged in politics in this club. Once they are engaged, they forget the core issues of serving the people and engage more in trying to politicize environmental issues. What comes out is that we find the environmental agenda is side-lined (Ochieng, male student).

Ochieng’s description of the dichotomy between politics and environment shows the conscious choice of the clubs to disengage from what they believed were unfruitful political processes that sidelined environmental issues. Yet, in their description of club mandates and their discussions of national environmental issues, students were deeply concerned about the role of national politics in environmental conservation and were often in opposition to the government (in)actions.

Students’ anti-political actions were evident at two levels: First, in the clubs, they regularly debated environmental issues and expressed their dissatisfaction with the government through activities such as the installation of dustbins, city clean-ups, tree-planting in deforested areas, reclaiming of abandoned green spaces, and switching off lights. Students debated national environmental issues ranging from climate change, land degradation, population, development, green economy, and lack of political will. The Mazingira Challenge, an annual national competition between university environmental clubs was one example of how students’ environmental political views were reconstituted as an individualized package of a

debate where the best performing club was awarded, but where individual political views remained trapped and were considered on the basis of how best they were articulated in the challenge. Secondly, students took part in professionalized environmental advocacy campaigns organized by environmental organizations which included peaceful demonstrations against genetically modified organisms; awareness campaigns on wildlife conservation; climate hearings; waste management campaigns; tree-planting; and policy dialogues among others.

It is important to put into context what students considered political. According to the student environmentalists, the difference between political sycophancy and anti-political environmentalism was the peaceful demonstrations involving environmental elites and environmental organizations against the highly vibrant student protests organized by Student Unions and often provoking the intervention of the police. Obviously, there was nothing apolitical about their environmental actions but their use of language and their performances in exerting pressure to those in authority were evidently political. Anti-political environmental actions were intentional strategies of university students to negotiate for individual professional identities and the credibility of their clubs. Depoliticizing the environment facilitated their access to networks of environmental institutions with similar interests where they negotiated for their own space as stakeholders, but also as potential job-seekers. Even where they felt that these environmental institutions were failing to adequately address environmental issues, the clubs' priority was to align their activities and interests with these institutions because they were seen as future employers for the individual members.

For instance, instead of protesting the failure of local municipalities in managing waste, one club framed waste management as requiring public-private partnerships, and approached the

local municipality, the university, the environmental organizations, and the private sector to finance clean-up activities. The area Councillor funded the club to carry out the clean-up activities, an event that attracted the local community, environmental organizations and local politicians who commended the students and urged the public to manage their own waste. Such collaborative activities provided a safe space for both the students and government: local governments were increasingly under pressure to deliver environmental services, and assistance from students who offered free labour and awareness campaigns, was welcome. On the other hand, students' history of protests against government inadequacies was eliminated by their choice of such anti-political and collaborative activities. The resourceful manner of addressing waste management potentially brought out students' responsibility and exhibited their hybridity where they disregarded environmental concerns as less important political issues in order to lobby the local government. Depoliticization of the environment was, therefore, a conscious calculation of students' imagined identities as environmental professionals, and their clubs as credible professional groups, both of which enabled their distinction in a country where student activism was largely associated with unruly graduates. By assuming anti-political environmental views, student environmentalists displaced their political views into the future when they expected to have gained environmental agency; yet in the meantime, they navigated the conditions of low quality university education and graduate unemployment by assuming professional identities.

It's both cases, because whenever the government tries to propose something that is contrary to environmental conservation, we will automatically go against it, because that's our role as an environmental club, to advocate for environmental conservation. But at the same time, we have to work with them, because without their support we cannot do much (Lumumba, male student).

Depoliticization of student environmentalism was necessitated by the need for students to accumulate skills, experiences, and join credible social networks from where they could freely debate environmental issues and reconstitute environmental political actions. Even

though embodying hybrid identities, the students desired an identity configuration unique to their nature of anti-political action and that was not based on previous imaginations of student activism for socio-political struggles in the country.

Depoliticization was a form of new politics inspired by changing career aspirations, collective environmental concerns and actions, and the overarching national socio-economic and political issues. It did not simply imply that students were disinterested in national politics; rather, it was a self-conscious quiescence and withdrawal from traditional politics that involved confrontations with the public, and instead retreating to private actions of self-development. Sharon, a first student, explained that the prevailing political formations did not necessarily address the on-going environment and development challenges.

Mwaura: Do you think there is a political will to environmental conservation and management in the country?

Sharon: No. No.

Mwaura: Completely no?

Sharon: No.

Mwaura: Would you say completely no, or partially no? Why?

Sharon: Completely no. This was very evident when Wangari Maathai was alive. No one supported her. For real, they were all against her.

Believing that politics was not the solution to environmental challenges, Sharon was seeking radical change, *‘from the political side, to the education system, to what we think, the mentality they have given us’*. She was like many other students who were disinterested in national politics but wanted to change the society through processes such as environmentalism which they believed was disconnected from the state. That Sharon was especially opposed to politics, yet she associated herself with Maathai’s environmentalism (which was fundamentally political) explains the new kind of politics where students assumed anti-political stand in the present, but resumed their political positions when they were in the right social networks and had the necessary capitals. Their imaginations of what was political confirms Farthing’s (2010) findings on new anti-political participation among

young Australians where young people actively disengaged from traditional politics, and created new spaces from where they addressed the issues affecting the system through the politics of specific issues. Anti-politics may signify an end to waiting for government's solutions to protracted youthhood and instead taking up the agency of one's fate in uncertain economic times. Essentially, anti-politics is an attribute of neoliberal environmental subjects where individualism is emphasized over collective action as Echitwa expressed:

Maybe we should not wait for the government to implement anything. At the end of the day, the effects of what is done to the environment are felt by the people; the common people... The people in government have air conditioners in their offices and homes. Maybe they use cars to travel, they never feel the heat. They never get to experience hunger because for them they never lack the food. It is therefore upon us to take the initiative and protect the environment (Echitwa, male student).

The politics of specific issues and of youthhood are grounded on the ability of individuals to become agents and develop a sense of responsibility over the spaces within which change is possible. Students did not limit their responsibility to clubs, they considered their everyday actions as contributing to a bigger project of self and community empowerment and national development. Although their club activities may seem insignificant to the magnitude of national environmental challenges, students believed that *'it's better to do that, than do nothing'*. This was reflected in their desire to contribute to social change as Kenyan citizens.

If we plant trees, it means we are going to have more land under tree cover. Among the things the government is trying to get is the 10 per cent tree cover. When I go back to my home, I see that I have participated towards the national goal of achieving Vision 2030 and the government master plan. I have a hand in development of our country (Wambugu, male student).

However, such actions were influenced by the circumstantial realities that encouraged students to embody hybridity. Although student environmentalists consented to the fundamental role of environmental organizations, they also challenged the ethos of these organizations and criticized their complacency, use of donor resources, and their failure to pressure the government to implement the national environmental policies.

Double speech. You find that like [an international organization], which is here in Kenya, they produce reports indicating how cars emit carbon, but they themselves are driving those guzzler cars. The ordinary Kenyan will not take them seriously. They are not doing what they preach (Caleb, male student).

Such criticisms, however, remained internal to the clubs because the organizations that they criticised are the same ones they desired to work for in the future or were seeking out as club partners. The realization that their future aspirations were dependent on their present identities influenced the manner in which the students conducted club activities and used language to explain their environmental concerns.

We partner with the [national organization]. If we have any activity within [the university] like the Green Week, all our partners come to display their products and tell the students what they deal with in the environment; that means we are doing something nationally... They incorporate us and this is of great help to the country (Ouma, male student).

Students' hybridity reflected their expectations of the labour market and not necessarily their future aspirations as environmentalists. It was an effective way of thriving in a depoliticized space in the present that would lead to immediate student benefits (such as knowledge, skills and networks) and where they envisioned themselves as social change-makers in the future.

One of the students justified their hybrid actions this way:

So, if you consider the activities we are doing in [the club], I don't think there is any we get immediate benefit. There is none. What we do, we are looking in ten years' time or beyond. If you plant a tree today, you don't expect to benefit immediately in two years, maybe after a long period of time. We are focusing on the future. Not short terms benefits. That's what we want to build into other people (Wambugu, male student).

Professionalization of environmental activism was a deliberate strategy of the clubs and individual members to become competitive environmentalists and professional groups, identities they would not achieve if they engaged in the stigmatized student politics. Some of the students believed that environmental challenges were factual matters requiring apolitical interventions, opposite of what happened in Kenya.

Most environmental issues get politicized. For example, if there is a hot area... politicians take the opportunity to politicize the issue... [But] first they should

organize, put into their programme, organize for education, call for people who have knowledge on the environment to come and talk to the community on how they can get involved and protect the environment for their benefit. They should give them the knowledge that protecting the environment is not for anyone else benefit, but for the individual's benefit (Fuchaka, male student).

However, assuming environmental issues were both apolitical and factual matters is misleading as students' actions within the club were subjective and anti-politics was just a symbolic performance of the students search for new occupations in society.

Conclusion

Self-conscious improvements by accumulating capitals in diverse spaces in anticipation of a time when such capitals would be utilized are evident in the lives of student environmentalists as they actively wait for an uncertain future. The main argument made in this chapter is that through environmental clubs, student environmentalists were performing three things: romanticising the natural environment (environmental subjectivities); utilizing the environment (professional socialization and certified experiences); and governing the environment (environmental anti-politics). The emergence of student environmentalism shaped alternative educational aspirations in the context of economic reforms, unpopular student activism, and increasing localization of global environmental agendas. Student environmental clubs are embedded in the broader Kenyan political economy and indeed respond to pertinent issues of environmental politics and youth aspirations. University students tap into the multiple identities presented by student environmentalism and take part in a portfolio of activities to accumulate social, cultural and symbolic capitals perceived essential for their future career aspirations. Finally, the depoliticization of student environmentalism creates an avenue for maintaining students' hybridity and self-making, attributes of neoliberal subjectivity.

In conclusion, although students' environmental concerns are largely shaped by global environmental narratives, they are also deeply inspired by every possible imagination of

change that educated youth hold of themselves, the environment, and the society. Thus, clubs provide an enabling environment for the students to actively wait, by giving them a sense of hope and belonging, while providing the necessary capitals to carve out a living in uncertain economic times. In the next chapter, I will explore how the imaginations of educated elites lead them to transform agricultural occupations in times of scarcity of employment and neoliberalized economies.

6. FARMING INTO ADULTHOOD: PRODUCING EDUCATED YOUNG FARMERS

Introduction

When asked what you do, don't say 'nalima tu' [I am just farming]. Say you are a farmer! (Adhiambo, female farmer, Homabay).

*Nalima tu*²² (*I am just farming*) is a common phrase among Kenyan rural populations depicting an individual's subdued life in meagre smallholder farming. It posits the stigmatization of agriculture, the unproductivity, unattractiveness, and social unacceptability of the occupation by the wider society. The phrase is often uttered with a hopeless intonation depicting being stuck and lacking other life choices. It expresses backwardness (*ushamba*) and a desire for change but one's circumstances in the rural areas do not always offer that escape route. *Nalima tu* constructs farming as a bargain kind of work with low and insecure returns and in a broader context, it reflects the historical stigmatization and backwardness of those involved in farming.

This chapter interrogates the circumstances under which Kenyan educated youth are changing their perceptions towards agricultural occupations from *nalima tu* to the less pejorative '*I am farming!*' a statement made with boldness, pride, and as self-appraisal, reflecting a sense of ingenuity and possibilities of a financially independent livelihood through farming. '*I am farming!*' is a re-invention of smallholder agriculture as a meaningful occupation among a growing number of educated youth who face the consequences of a liberalized, yet jobless economy. These youth reproduce previously stigmatized agricultural occupations as attractive and remunerative agribusinesses and as new and modern symbols of

²² Also *kulima tu* (*Just farming*)

elitism²³. ‘*I am farming!*’ reflects their active waiting and their performances as they negotiate conditions of unemployment in the rural or urban areas.

‘*I am farming!*’ reflects the claims that young people will find decent work opportunities in agriculture, a narrative inspired by the assumption that tapping into the African youth demography will solve most of Africa’s socio-economic challenges including unemployment, food insecurity, economic growth, and environmental sustainability (Brooks et al., 2013). This chapter’s objective is to investigate the context and effects of this narrative among educated youth engaged in farming as a source of income, an escape route from their joblessness, or in anticipation of job-seeking. I focus on the distinct characteristics of the educated youth who are disillusioned by the job market, yet present themselves as successful farmers exhibiting a demeanour that demands the social acceptability of their farming occupations.

This chapter develops further the overall thesis by analysing the various ways in which agriculture provides opportunity spaces for new subjectivities in an uncertain economy. Given the unemployment insecurities, coupled by an increasing demand for food and sustainable agriculture, Kenyan educated youth are seeking out opportunities in the cognate area of agriculture; a sector traditionally associated with the uneducated rural poor but which has been receiving considerable developmental attention and is closely linked to environmentalism in Africa. Here, I analyse the nexus between the flexibility of protracted youthhood and the changes in the agriculture sector that necessitate the incremental movement of educated youth into farming as an enterprise and an alternative secondary and tertiary sector employment. By questioning what makes agriculture attractive to an educated

²³ See, Daily Nation Seeds of Gold: <http://www.nation.co.ke/business/seedsofgold/Cowsoko-Victor-Otieno-Website-Ecommerce/-/2301238/2742034/-/11shurz/-/index.html> accessed 14 June 2015

youth whose career options span beyond farming, I explore local concepts of *kilimo biashara* (agribusiness) and reiterate the related concepts of tarmacking and side-hustling; which are supported by last resort survival and temporary livelihood strategies and the neoliberal attributes of market opportunism and elite distinctions. The chapter addresses the following questions: *What makes agriculture an attractive form of employment for young educated Kenyans?; how do educated youth explain their adoption of farming and their choice of agricultural activities?; and what identities do educated youth adopt to differentiate their farming from that carried out by the stigmatized smallholder farmers?*

The chapter is organised into three main sections. I start by examining how socio-economic differences affected the educated young peoples' perceptions and motivations to pursue agricultural occupations. The second section elaborates how agriculture provides opportunity spaces for entrepreneurship, side-occupations for supplementary incomes, and active job-seeking – characteristics that can be associated with neoliberal subjectivities in Kenya. I further argue in this section that agriculture may also be a necessity-driven opportunity resulting in last resort survival and temporary livelihood strategies. The third section presents the multiple identities embodied and performed by young farmers, which give them a sense of accomplishment and help to distinguish them from the stigmatized poor smallholder farmers as entrepreneurs and elites.

'Si Kulima Tu': The Changing Perceptions of Youth Agricultural Livelihoods

I think there should be education or awareness on change of attitude especially with the youth, because after form four or after college someone wants to rush to Nairobi maybe to get him or herself a white collar job. There is still a livelihood in the rural (Musembi, male farmer, Kalawa).

Several changes had occurred in the perceptions towards agriculture as a stigmatized occupation among the educated young farmers I interviewed. Firstly, most of them seemed to accept agriculture as an opportunity for remunerative and professionalized occupations.

Musembi (28 years), a diploma graduate, a development worker, and an online degree student, was also a young farmer in rural Eastern Kenya who believed that unemployed educated youth could earn decent lives in the rural areas. Secondly, agriculture was treated as a business opportunity (*kilimo biashara*) going beyond the normative goal of producing food to offering opportunities for capital accumulation. Eunice (21 years), a student, a youth group leader, and a farmer in rural Western Kenya expressed her farming activities as, '*We are not just doing agriculture, its agribusiness. So we do it smart*'. Thirdly, farming was equated to formal employment, as Muchai (30 years) a plumber, an electrician, and a poultry farmer explained: '*It is my office. When I wake up at six in the morning, I first attend to the chicken before going to other businesses*'. Fourth, educated young farmers were being influenced by the prevailing narratives of youth in agriculture that encouraged young people to pursue self-employment and to invest in the rural areas. Gitonga (23 years), an economics student, a youth environmentalist, and a farmer, valued '*to get money out of the soil you till*' rather than becoming employed. Similarly, Kaberere expressed his transition from journalism to poultry farming with phrases such as '*ukulima si ushamba*' (*farming is not backwardness*) implying his preference for financial independence rather than white collar employment.

The social, economic, and cultural circumstances, under which young people found themselves, influenced their changing perceptions towards agriculture. Eunice and her brother Omonge (28 years) farmed tomatoes and capsicum in rural Western Kenya. Omonge had dropped out of high school in his teens to care for his siblings and mother when his father died. He worked as a casual farm labourer where he learnt the profitability of farming and eventually decided to lease his own land. Through farming short-season crops, such as tomatoes, pepper, capsicum, and cabbages, Omonge educated his siblings and 10 years later, was able to enrol back into high school and marry. He was still hoping that he would save enough money to acquire a greenhouse, study for a diploma course, and hopefully open a

shop in the local town. Eunice joined him in farming when she completed high school because she needed to raise her college fees. She had acquired agricultural and business skills from her involvement in different youth groups which she now used to improve their farming activities. At the time of the interview, she was studying a diploma course in animal health and hoped to become a veterinary doctor in the future.

Even though Eunice and Omonge did not imagine themselves as future farmers, they both rejected to identify with *nalima tu* that reduces farming to stigmatized and last resort strategies. Instead, they claimed to be entrepreneurs who were ‘*doing it smart*’ referring to their application of new knowledge, diversification into new crops, understanding the markets, the seasons, the flexibility required, and the risks involved in earning decent incomes from smallholder agriculture. What Omonge had started off as a last resort survival strategy, progressively became a respected agribusiness that enabled their transition into ‘educated youth’, and provided them possibilities of accumulating capitals that would eventually enable them to exit the hardships of rural life.

Educated young farmers perceived urban and rural life differently. Usually, educated young people are expected to migrate to urban²⁴ areas and tarmac for white collar jobs in the formal sector. As employment was dwindling, more educated youth tarmacked for long periods or became un(der)employed. As a result, some returned to the rural areas when they failed to find jobs in the urban areas or to farm as a supplement to their meagre incomes. For example, Matei (34 years) worked for a development organization in Eastern Kenya, where he had been educated and lived most of his life. He talked of ‘*very many clean people are coming from towns, but they have a lot of nothing, with a big phone, just for Facebook. Yet they are*

²⁴ It is important to note that urban areas were mainly cities and major towns. Living in small rural towns neighbouring these regions was also considered a form of town life, but not in similar terms as urban life available in cities and big towns.

broke'. Matei believed that migrating to urban areas only changed someone from being *mshamba* (*backward*), but it did not change one's everyday struggles for employment and a decent life. He reckoned that the role of the urban places to increase one's cultural capitals had declined and some rural areas were becoming relatively favourable for the unemployed. On the other hand, young people brought up in towns and cities were returning to rural areas and assuming rural lifestyles, while keeping a close connection with their urban networks. Evidently, meaning was attached to rural or urban spaces only when there was an opportunity for financial gain and social acceptability of the young person's occupational identity.

Being stuck in the 'wrong careers' drove most young people to desire a new and challenging venture. Most young farmers commented that white collar jobs were becoming unattractive due to their contractual-nature, low wages, skills mismatch, and lack of personal development opportunities. They turned to self-employment because they wanted to recreate work as something decent, flexible, and transformative (Sumberg & Okali, 2013). Kirui (30 years) was a food scientist who turned to farming and software development after being stuck in an unsatisfying formal job. He explained how after four years of formal employment, he and his peers felt '*we were all sick of our jobs*' and decided to form a *chama* (*investment group*) where they would adjust to alternative life trajectories. Their first investment was in strawberry farming, a project which Kirui was managing. Kirui had also acquired IT skills during his formal job and had subsequently established a software development company. Similarly, Jeruto (27 years), a business management graduate, did not '*understand why people should leave five or ten acres in their home then start hustling here in towns. I think they should go back and start farming*'. With her Master's degree, she had worked as an administrator in Nairobi earning a gross monthly salary of Ksh. 40,000 in addition to long working hours, delayed salaries, and disrespectful bosses. She quit the job and returned to Eldoret town where she started rearing chicken and earned the same amount as her salary

every six weeks. She was excited about the flexibility of her new occupation and her independence to spend time with her family and friends while still managing her business. Now a self-employed, educated, young unmarried woman, Jeruto was free to change the nature of her business whenever she wished and would use her proceeds to self-improve as she desired.

Farming redefined one's leisure time and most young farmers distinguished themselves by putting in extra working hours to manage their farm enterprises, build business networks, and negotiate for their respectability in society. They talked of '*trying hard*', and '*having little time to waste*' or '*hang out*'. When Gitonga started farming, he sacrificed his friendships so as to balance his university education, farming, and youth volunteer work: '*I don't see myself investing in a friend who is always thinking about raving, only thinking of ku-hang out and eat those pizzas that actually cost you money that you don't earn*'. He spent his free time visiting other 'businessmen' (young entrepreneurs), contacting new clients, or researching on how to improve his agribusiness. Similarly, Mwaniki (25 years) had transitioned from a *Mung'etho*²⁵ (street/base) lifestyle of drinking and hanging out with his male friends to a farming lifestyle involving long and lone working hours on the farm. He now viewed *Mung'etho* as an optional practice and limited his friendships to few young men who were 'working hard', and with whom he would share experiences. Like Gitonga, he avoided his old friends because they despised farm work as *nalima tu* and often discouraged him, if not ask for hand-outs. Instead, Mwaniki spent his free time researching new farming practices, watching TV programmes on agriculture and business, or managing his farm records.

Right now, no one can interfere with my work. Coz I know business needs commitment. I usually tell my friends, 8 to 5 I don't want to be disturbed, but after five

²⁵A rural trading centre or the roadside; in literal terms, it is a joint, a base, or a meeting point, mostly where young men pass time 'looking out', discussing local politics, sports or planning licit/illicit activities. It is a space from where they can observe people coming in and going out, and receive and share news.

when I am free, you can buy me a drink. But I know as I drink that, tomorrow I have cows to milk, feed, and then I can relax, listen to my music or watch a movie... My mind has become focused (Mwaniki, male farmer, Murang'a).

To Mwaniki, farming had become a respectable profession and a business to be conducted with diligence. He was the new young farmer with a responsibility for the family farm and a good manager of his time, resources, and of his social relations.

While current efforts to entice young people into agriculture might be successful in changing their perceptions and providing information on different farming approaches, there is increasing evidence that attitude change must be accompanied with real investments in the identified opportunities (Sumberg & Okali, 2013; Tadele & Gella, 2012). Farming was attractive to educated youth because they could use their range of capitals to embody new identities and occupy multiple positions in the agricultural landscape. The motivation to become a young farmer are similar to those of a university student wanting to become an environmentalist: both were reproducing neoliberal subjectivities that used their social positions to accumulate capitals leading to alternative life trajectories and securing imagined futures in a somewhat constrained economy. The stigma of agriculture among the educated youth was changing as they started to consume the narrative to ‘making agriculture sexy’ (Rowling, 2014) by identifying themselves as successful young farmers and using social media to portray agriculture as a remunerative occupation for other young people. *Nalima tu* was gradually changing to *si kulima tu* (*I am not just farming*) and to ‘*I am farming!*’ reflecting a sense of own choice and pride in an independent livelihood through farming and even comparable to white collar employment.

Importantly, the changing perceptions show us that educated youth were not passively waiting; they were agential – actively negotiating their personal identities and financial independence. Their character demonstrates the new possibilities for youth employment and

challenges the existing realities of the uncertainties in agriculture and other productive sectors which often result in joblessness for some in the same youth cohort. Moreover, the educated young farmers illuminated the neoliberal philosophies of self-making, flexibility and multiple subjectivities as exhibited in their search for new ‘escape routes’ (Porter, Hampshire, Mashiri, Dube, & Maponya, 2010) and multiple life trajectories (Honwana, 2012; Waage, 2006). In the next section, I will examine the agricultural landscape as an opportunity space for young people’s entrepreneurialism, side-hustling, and tarmacking, but also as an opportunity space for last resort and temporary livelihoods.

Navigating Waithood through Farming

The main argument in this section is that, educated young people’s perception of what qualifies as a socially acceptable occupation has transformed to include opportunities for self-employment (*kilimo biashara*); opportunities for earning extra and supplementary incomes (side-hustles); opportunities for managing timeless tarmacking; opportunities for temporary sources of income during times of scarcity and waiting (temporary livelihoods); and as well, last resort survival strategies. As white collar employment sector is declining in number and in status, young people are choosing multiple options of creating alternative occupations. They are producing new subjectivities expressed as doing ‘*work for myself*’, having ‘*something on the side*’, and ‘*getting a total reward*’ from the diverse activities they engage in. By doing so, they respond to the unpredictability of white collar employment and draw on the neoliberal ideologies of self-making, competitive individualism, and multiplicity of identities (Gonick, 2015; Gordon, 2013). Some also aspire to independent occupations ‘*rather than sitting in an office, and benefit my boss, I would rather work for myself and employ others*’ that give them authority and agency. Such independent and subjective positions involve trying out diverse opportunities in farming and related enterprises expressed as ‘*I am just trying things here and there, to see if I can move forward*’. Most of them expect

that by putting individual effort to address their precariousness, they will be ‘*moving forward*’ or getting ‘*a total reward*’. One’s access to capitals, social positioning and other social differences, such as gender and education levels, determine the extent to which they can succeed in pursuing these opportunities.

Kilimo Biashara: Enterprising Young Farmers

Gitonga (23 years) was an economics student, an environmentalist and a volunteer with a youth organization when we first met in 2012. As a hobby, he kept rabbits on his parents land in Kiambu which he occasionally sold to finance his student and volunteer life. In 2012, he attended an exchange programme in Europe where he met organic farmers who taught him how to ‘*making money from farming*’ and was inspired to venture into agribusiness. He transformed his rabbit keeping hobby into a poultry business and when we met in 2014, Gitonga introduced himself as ‘*Mimi ni mkulima; kilimo biashara (I am a farmer; agribusiness)*’. After a year of consistent poultry keeping, Gitonga’s father had allowed him to acquire a bank loan using the family land as collateral so as to expand the business. By 2014, Gitonga had over 2,000 chickens and two acres of leased land in the neighbourhood where he grew local vegetables. He delighted in being self-employed and was earning, on average, a gross monthly²⁶ income of Ksh. 100,000. He described his success as the ability to use his ‘*akili [brains] to get money out of the soil you till*’ and in glorifying not the source of the money, but the freedoms that the agribusiness offered him. Gitonga’s farming had become ‘a success story’ covered on several media houses eventually leading him to identify as ‘an agribusiness consultant’ and a ‘social entrepreneur’. He used these titles to promote himself as an experienced trainer in urban farming.

²⁶ Although calculated monthly, most farmers earn seasonally and as such, this was not a regular monthly income.

Even though the stories on national and social media platforms painted youth agribusinesses with an image of success and easy-to-do business, the reality on ground was hard work and sacrifice to make any profit. Gitonga often slept at midnight and sometimes started his day as early as 4 a.m. with feeding his chicken, instructing the casual farm workers, and then proceeding to make deliveries. Later in the day, he would attend classes, go back home to inspect the farm, attend to the chicken, and assist his father with his dairy cows. He spent the evenings preparing orders for the following day, studying, or watching specific TV programmes that broadcasted agricultural information. His weekends were spent either on the farm or with the youth group, and he only rested on Sunday afternoons when he attended his *chama* meetings.

As we interacted, I observed Gitonga's uncertainty for the future of his business and himself as a young man. Having completed his degree while I was in the field, he continued to volunteer with the youth group where I first met him because he believed the network and its activities had opened up the agribusiness opportunity for him. He also informed me that he was continually improving himself for multiple livelihood options by '*trying things here and there, to see if I can move forward*'. He was still tarmacking for a side-job and was planning to enrol for a specialized course in agribusiness so as to perfect his consulting skills. As some researchers have argued, young people like Gitonga are attracted to agriculture only when it offers a business opportunity; an occupational choice; or a secondary source of income (Proctor & Lucchesi, 2012). Gitonga reflects the lifestyle of most educated youth I came across in the three regions, who distinctly identified *kilimo biashara* as an alternative livelihood strategy against the uncertainty of white collar employment they were experiencing or expected in the near future.

Other young farmers exhibited an entrepreneurial fervour which was about capturing the judicious opportunities arising from one's differentiated social positioning and availability of capitals. Musyoki (22 years), a computer engineering student in one of the public universities, grew up in Nairobi with his parents who worked for international organizations. When Musyoki sought to become financially independent, he invested in farming green grams on his parents' land in rural Kibwezi. Making good returns, he encouraged two of his university friends to collaborate with him in yet another agribusiness. They identified onions as a niche crop with possibilities for higher returns and relocated to Central Kenya where one of the friends' parents owned land that was suitable for onion farming. None of the three urban-bred young men had any skills in farming. However, they each requested soft loans from their parents which they used to hire labour, consult private extension officers on the best farming practices, and even drive to the farm every weekend to '*inspect the project*'. I visited their two-acre onion farm one month to harvesting and they were optimistic that they would make good returns and expand the project the following season. Despite their success, when I contacted Musyoki two months after my visit, he was no longer a farmer.

This time round, I am a little held up. I won't be participating with them. They want to plant onions again ... But I started my own company. I started my own internet company in my home area in Syokimau. That's what is holding me up, and I am still in school (Musyoki, male farmer, Nairobi).

Musyoki's parents had bought a house in Syokimau, a new residential area south of Nairobi where Musyoki had identified a new entrepreneurial opportunity to provide internet services. He had since abandoned farming and his friends to set up an internet company in Syokimau.

Musyoki exemplifies market opportunism evident in most educated young farmers who tended to invest in farming not because they were enthusiastic about being the next generation of farmers, but because they wanted to capture the imminent economic opportunities in agriculture, they had access to the necessary capitals, and could project the

high returns upon investment. His perception of agriculture might have changed; but not to an extent of sustaining him in an agriculture-based occupation. However, evidently, his fervour for self-improvement was triggered by the viability of emerging entrepreneurial opportunities. Rather than capitalizing on his university education and his friendships at the time, he would rather seize these entrepreneurial opportunities knowing too well they might be unavailable in the future. His positioning as a resident of Syokimau and a computer engineering student played a significant role in enabling the transition of his entrepreneurial capabilities from farming into internet service provision. Syokimau was a fast growing middle-class residential area whose real estate development benefited from the construction of Kenya's first modern railway station. It was not about Musyoki becoming a farmer in the first place, or even an internet provider then; it was about the opportunity to garner the capitals that came along with his differentiated social positions. With his computer skills, being at Syokimau, his willingness to forego friendships and manage his school and leisure time, Musyoki would invest in a new occupation that would potentially reshape his future. Moreover, these opportunities came at a time when Musyoki was aware that the future possibilities for finding a job were slim; thus, he prioritized the present opportunities as a safety net for future insecurities.

Kilimo biashara was challenging for young women due to gender disparities in agribusiness as well as cultural norms and expectations. Unlike the young men who viewed agribusiness as '*mbeba mbere*' (*money first*) affair, young women were more concerned with their social acceptability and the well-being of their families. Some of them had already given up farming by the time I met them and were instead involved in other off-farm activities, such as training and trading. They mentioned challenges with accessing land, disrespectful male workers, markets, and overall discouragement from other women as denigrating themselves by

choosing to farm. For others, providing for their families overrode the idea of investing in a farm enterprise.

In Woote town, Mwende (32 years) was a wife, a mother, a part-time degree student, and a full-time employee at a local organization. She and her husband spent the weekends working on two acres of leased land three kilometres from Woote town where they grew green grams, maize, and cowpeas. When I asked her how much she earned from farming, she declined ever viewing her farm as an income source. Instead, she explained how the farm produce was sent to her natal family who lived in a drier part of Eastern Kenya and retained some for her family. Whereas she was aware that she spent more by sending her family money, she could not quantify how much she was saving from growing the food herself. As a first born child, married and working, Mwende was expected to support her family and no monetary value would be attached to such social responsibilities. Neither would she consider her farm as a symbol for any entrepreneurial fervour.

In contrast, Keshi (25years) was married, a mother, and running two agribusinesses in Central Kenya. She had quit a clerical job to manage her husband's bar and rear pigs which she slaughtered and retailed as pork in several outlets in the neighbouring towns. Since she was rearing the pigs on her husband's inherited land, her in-laws forced her to employ her husband's relatives who started to belittle her, eventually mismanaging the agribusiness. Experiencing both an economic and social loss, Keshi opted to substitute pig rearing with buying and selling pork from other farmers in the region. However, the new business also faced challenges because of her young age and gender in a male dominated pig rearing and pork business. She narrated to me several instances when businessmen looked down on her as too young and *'too pretty'* for a pig farmer while others treated her as a secretary, often expecting to meet her male boss.

Yes, you know such biasharas [businesses] are there, but they are male owned. So when I go to look for biasharas, everywhere that I go, the procurement guy anakukatia [is asking me out]... They don't take you seriously they are like all the time they keep on asking me, "utaweza [will you make it]?... This is a business for big fish [rich networked/strong men], you are still very young ... look at yourself, you are pregnant" (Keshi, female farmer, Murang'a).

Nevertheless, Keshi was among the few young women who found agriculture a fulfilling occupation and a viable business for young people. On getting married, she had quit a clerical job to start pig farming and was planning to buy her own land and re-establish her farm. She also spent her free time talking to young people in high schools and youth groups about investing in agriculture. Unlike Mwende, she was keen on the profits she was making, and was a member of different business networks from where she received mentoring and financial advice. She also appreciated the social benefits that came with farming, such as independence in decision making and being her own boss. Yet, she was limited by how her in-laws treated her and her limited access to land.

Although most young farmers claimed to be successful on social media, I observed many struggles that they had to overcome. First, as most of them had had no interest or experience in agriculture when growing up, acquisition of modern agricultural skills was a significant part of their becoming young farmers. Even those who had grown up in rural areas claimed that some traditional farming methods were becoming obsolete since they wanted to maximize on productivity, introduce new crops and animals, and deal with the changing weather patterns. Secondly, registering their farming activities as an enterprise meant acquiring business management skills which most of them lacked. Thirdly, becoming an entrepreneur was not as easy as the social media, government, and NGOs, were promoting; it required capital investments which most of the young people lacked. Often times, young farmers drew on the hope in the promise and prevailing narrative of other young people who were making profits from similar endeavours. They relied on the successes of others to

inspire them and to imagine their own successes and hence, refashion themselves towards similar expectations.

Njuki started farming at 17 years by investing his high school pocket money in coriander farming on his grandmother's kitchen garden. He gradually ploughed back all his profits into farming different kinds of vegetables and when the grandmother noticed his consistency, she allowed him to use the family farm. When I visited him in early 2014, Njuki was a first year law student, managing three acres of exotic and indigenous vegetables, a mushroom house, and was setting up a poultry house. He had gradually grown his agribusiness by re-investing most of the profit and carrying out market research. Nevertheless, he was struggling to plan for the next stage in the agribusiness. The family land belonged to his uncles whom he feared would demand it once they realized that Njuki, only a 19 year-old college student then, was earning over Kshs. 100,000 a month. He also had to balance full-time law school with full-time farm work, which was becoming difficult. This meant relying more on farm workers who increased the cost of production. In the end, Njuki's profits were marginal and his long-term prospects for a successful agricultural occupation uncertain.

Most of the agribusinesses involved craftiness or what one of the young farmers referred to as '*disruptive innovation*' in their use of new knowledge, application of technologies, and approach to markets. Trial and error was the business model for most young farmers. They tried what they saw their peers doing, what they watched on the TV, on social media, and what they read online or in print media. Those financially stable hired private extension officers but a majority depended on online information, visiting other farmers, and on government extension officers who were few and often unreliable. Whereas there was an increase in the number of smallholder greenhouse farms, most of my respondents were

interested in the *juakali*²⁷ greenhouses, which they could afford without acquisition of loans. Instead of buying expensive animal feeds (due to government taxes on agricultural inputs), they learnt how to make their own feeds. They used animal manure and some made their own compost and organic fertilisers. They shifted their agribusiness from one commodity to another whenever faced with physical, economic, or social challenges. Visiting other farms was becoming an integral part to their farmer-way of life where they learnt new skills and shared their successes and failures. Several of them who had perfected their skills in some of the farming practices held trainings on their farms and most charged a training fee.

In sum, most young farmers were entrepreneurs often driven by necessity and a last resort instinct. They negotiated their uncertain conditions by farming in expectation of incomes that would enable their upward social mobility to support their families and maintain an elite distinction, thus attaining adulthood. In the next sub-section, I will expound on how the struggles to earn extra incomes were negotiated through side-hustling.

Farming as a Side-hustle

It is a side thing; I did it [training young farmers] for one year in 2013 as close to full time, because I had sponsorship from [a women's NGO]. Now that I am done with the fellowship, I am thinking of going back to work because I had actually quit my job to do this for a year (Wangechi, female farmer, Kiambu).

Wangechi (28 years) is a classic story of how present-day youth seize market opportunities as they arise and alongside other opportunities that one might have or foresee. The environmental scientist, and a master's student at the time, had quit a salaried job in 2013 to cultivate strawberries and train other young farmers on modern farming practices. Through a community-based organization (CBO) she had established, a local women's organization had awarded her a fellowship grant enabling her to organize agricultural trainings for rural youth

²⁷ This referred to using locally available materials to construct a greenhouse without following the standards of an imported greenhouse.

in her County. In addition to the free trainings, Wangechi's CBO created a blog which became a leading source of free agricultural information for young farmers in 2013. However, when I met her in early 2014, she had quit farming after several attempts with no profit. Her fellowship programme had however been successful and she had trained over 500 youth, blogged on youth farming opportunities, and had developed manuals on modern farming practices. Having completed her fellowship period, Wangechi was in the process of registering a company as a separate entity from the CBO from where she would continue offering trainings at a fee. She viewed the trainings, the blogging, and the development of manuals as her '*side-hustles*' as she completed her master's degree and tarmacked for another job.

Wambaya (26 years) was side-hustling in telephone horticultural and dairy farming in Western Kenya, while tarmacking for white collar jobs and pursuing other entrepreneurial opportunities in Nairobi. After graduating with an environmental studies degree in 2011, he had volunteered with several international organizations in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Japan, but none of these experiences led to a formal job. He started searching for part-time research and consulting work; volunteering with organizations; and learning new skills in ICT. In late 2013, he invested in a greenhouse that was managed by his mother and a waged farm worker. He also bought two dairy cattle, which supplied enough milk sold to pay the farm worker. Wambaya's mother described him as unemployed and hoped that the greenhouse and the cattle would provide him some insurance as he tarmacked in the city. At the time of my fieldwork in mid-2014, none of the farming projects had made any profit and Wambaya had not travelled to Migori. Back in Nairobi, he was excited that he had made the initial investments in agriculture and was already planning on his next investment in fish farming and open field drip irrigation. Even without any profits, Wambaya hoped to eventually make agriculture his main source of income as he maintained other side-jobs facilitated by his

evolving career. He had been self-training on website development and, with a friend, was about to launch an online marketing platform which would help him raise the capital to expand his farm. As he shared, *‘Like any other businessman will tell you, I will also invest outside farming. I want to diversify to cushion myself. Because you don’t know what might happen in future’* Wambaya was using each of his activities in Migori and Nairobi to supplement his incomes, perform productivity, and prepare for the unpredictable futures.

Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered young people who kept on referring to the side *‘thing’* they did on weekends or in the evenings. Some of them referred to having invested in the stock market, retail kiosks, internet cafes, *bodaboda* (motorbikes), agriculture, and real estate. Amayo (35 years) a youth trainer in entrepreneurship described the phenomenon of side-hustling among Kenyan youth as, *‘There was a period when everybody was starting to a kiosk, then cyber cafés, and then motorbikes. Now everybody seems to be moving into greenhouse farming’*. The real estate business in Kenya has been booming in the last ten years, with people acquiring *plots*²⁸; but young people found this restrictive due to the high capitals required. In the last five years, however, investing in agribusiness has been the trendiest side-hustle for a majority of Kenyans who cannot afford real estate development.

The entrepreneurial and side-hustling fervour was a *wave* dependent on the country’s economic conditions that created these opportunistic spaces for most people. Oguge (26 years) had started side-hustling as an undergraduate student by establishing a students’ tuck-shop, a restaurant, and later managing a *chama* for student entrepreneurs. Alongside these, he had acquired his bachelors and master’s degrees and managed to buy land in rural Homabay. At the time of the interview, Oguge was a university researcher, a farmer, and a businessman involved in several off-farm enterprises. In Eastern Kenya, unlike most youth whose farming

²⁸ A small piece of land, usually connoting land sold for real estate development

was a side-hustle, Mutua (29 years) made farming his main source of income and white collar jobs a side-hustle that enabled him to maintain connections with the urban elite in Nairobi. He worked full-time on his farm in Kitui and travelled once a week to meet his clients in Nairobi where he worked for a wealth management company.

I found that educated young farmers were also reworking a pre-existing trend among the Kenyan elites of farming as a hobby into farming as a profitable side-hustle. Most wealthy people and politicians in Kenya own large farms but to which a majority will claim are side-hustles or hobbies that they retreat to during their holidays. Young farmers, however, utilize small farms as a major source of income, as spaces for forming multiple identities, and for negotiating respectability as social change-makers in society. Fundamentally, side-hustles enabled young men to renegotiate their masculinities. For instance, Matei was a development worker and a young farmer in Machakos where he had purchased a *plot* of land, built a house for his family, and was farming sweet potatoes, cassava, mangoes, and bananas. Alongside his farm, he was also involved in informal enterprises in Machakos town as a way of earning extra income. When I asked him why he held more than one occupation, he referred to '*I don't want my family to hustle*' implying his desire to maintain his traditional breadwinner role as a husband.

Additionally, farming could become a weekend side-hustle that supplemented one's income; an experiment that could be developed into a long-term investment; but most importantly, it was often a significant income source and job security, thus reinforcing self-development and multiplicity of identities. In sum, side-hustling was an important marker of a young person's self-making efforts allowing them to gain financial independence and social acceptability among their peers and in society. It resonated with the notion of '*I am farming!*' where one

puts every effort to seize an entrepreneurial opportunity in difficult economic and social situations.

Farming to Manage Tarmacking

After my internship, I tarmacked for like a year, that's when I was very busy with the farm (Musembi, male farmer, Kalawa).

Unlike most educated youth who migrated from the region to seek jobs in the urban areas, Musembi had remained in rural Eastern Kenya from where he attained his online degree education and actively tarmacked for a decent life through farming. After completing his diploma course, Musembi's first year in tarmacking was also spent in farming as a way to '*finance the tarmacking*' and remain productive. He could only find a temporary job which paid very low wages and was dependent on the farming seasons in the region. Thus, he continued to farm because '*it supports me when I am not on contract*', enabling him to sustain his family and pay for an online degree programme. Musembi was optimistic that by acquiring a degree, he might land a better job; but in the meantime, farming was an essential income source that kept him hopeful for the future. He was working towards self-improvement, diversifying work opportunities, and investing in new identities, hoping to succeed in his job-seeking and remain respected in his community.

Otieno, a trained veterinary officer who had been tarmacking for two years identified as '*a diversified man*' (Chapter One) because he expected that from each of his activities and social positions he would accrue capitals enabling his upward social mobility. His enthusiasm for farming was visible in the manner in which he detailed each of his farming projects. He was also an environmentalist leading one of the Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in his neighbourhood. He had established a tree nursery in the hope that he would influence the CFA to buy his seedlings for a tree-planting project on the community land adjacent to their family land. He was a local youth politician and the patron of a local young men's *chama*

who were making monthly savings towards buying ‘*bodabodas*²⁹’. Although appointed because of his education and experience in leadership, Otieno disclosed how he had eventually become influential in the *chama* because he wanted to be the first one to benefit from the investments.

Figure 6. 1 Otieno showing off his ‘new’ rabbit house



Each of these activities provided a form of capital which Otieno planned would go towards getting him a job in Nairobi or financing his college education in automotive engineering. According to him, he was farming to overcome the inadequacies of waiting for formal employment. For Otieno, his future was not defined by the current entrepreneurial activities but by his willingness to keep trying multiple work options and identities that would enable him to eventually meet his ultimate goal of going back to school or migrating into the urban areas. Otieno was thus diversifying his options from tarmacking.

²⁹ Motorbikes used for local transport

Not all young people had the patience or the capitals for basic survival in order to ‘*move around*’ tarmacking. Adhiambo (29 years), a single mother and a graduate of journalism and public relations had migrated back to rural Western Kenya to live with her parents after unsuccessful job-seeking in Nairobi. Her parents had sent her to Tanzania for university education and socialized her to value white collar employment. On returning to Kenya, she ‘*thought I would just go to Nairobi and get a job*’, but was disappointed when she failed to find any job and had to rely on hand-outs from her parents. When I started my fieldwork in early 2014, two media houses had just featured Adhiambo’s success story as a ‘millionaire farmer’. In one of the interviews, she described how she had earned a million shillings from farming water melons on four acres of leased land. Adhiambo had given up tarmacking three years earlier and now claimed that she was creating wealth from farming, ‘*Life is a choice you make. You can choose to be in Nairobi and struggle [tarmac]; or choose to remain in the village and work hard and create wealth*’. She had abandoned the difficulties of job-seeking and transformed her last resort strategy into an agribusiness.

Farming as a Temporary Strategy

Most of the opportunities supposed to make young people transition into adulthood are in the twenty first century diverse, short lived, uncertain and risky. Different from the generation of their parents, when young people find a job, it is often contractual and temporary lasting from a few days to a few years, with few or no benefits or prospects for professional development. As a result, most young farmers operated in a context of temporality requiring additional investments, diversification, or shifting into other livelihood strategies.

Young farmers expected to earn incomes from farming that would propel them towards other opportunities, such as further education, establishing off-farm enterprises, supplementary incomes, and migrating to urban areas. Weather changes, markets, access to capitals, land

tenure rights, better incomes in other occupations, and socio-cultural factors influenced the temporality of young farmers. Only 11 of my respondents owned land, through inheritance, marriage, and purchase. While most of them expressed an interest to buy their own land in the future, a majority had other immediate needs such as going back to school, establishing off-farm rural businesses, or fending for their families. The main challenge of leasing land was the short-term contracts that limited the extent of their investments. For instance, Adhiambo faced problems with land owners who would demand land already leased to her only three months into farming. Sometimes she would be denied land because the farmers did not like '*people who used fertilisers on their farms*' requiring her to frequently relocate to other places when a lease ended or was cancelled.

Muchai's 15 years of poultry keeping were filled with times of limbo. As an orphan, he had lived with relatives until he could afford to rent his own house. During this period, some of the relatives had forced him to close down his poultry business blaming him for 'littering' their compounds, or sometimes being assumed to earn more income from poultry than they expected. When he started renting his own house, Muchai's poultry business had closed down three times after the landlords denied him a space for the chicken houses. He had also lost his chickens to thieves on countless occasions. Muchai finally managed to save enough to buy a *plot* in Central Kenya where he hoped he would construct permanent chicken houses and relocate the poultry business. However, the challenge with relocating to Central Kenya was that he would lose his client base who were often the urban dwellers.

Some individuals and *chamas* undertook farming as a short-term investment strategy. For example, Musyoki and his friends were motivated by the possibility of earning an income from farming rather than making farming their occupation. It is no wonder that Musyoki did not find it unusual when he talked about his new business venture a month after harvesting

his onions. Likewise, Kirui and his friends were farming strawberries as a temporary investment for the *chama* as they researched on long-term investment strategies. Similarly, Omonge and Eunice both had plans to transition from farming into off-farm occupations once they had garnered the required capitals. This temporality suggests that even though young people might be attracted to agribusiness opportunities in the present, their long-term entry into agricultural occupations remains uncertain and determined by the prevailing socio-economic conditions.

The temporality of young farmers also suggests getting-by against the assumed good life and high status expected of the educated elites. Watiri (23 years) a physics diploma graduate was featured as a successful young farmer in several social media platforms. She was running a contractual agribusiness of pre-germinating high quality horticultural seeds in modern greenhouses. Alongside, she farmed vegetables on an acre of her parents' land which had become a demonstration ground to the community for her application of modern farming techniques including drip irrigation, mixed farming, and use of high quality inputs. She also imported and installed drip irrigation kits for smallholder farmers in the region. At her age, and this being her first occupation after failing to find a job, Watiri was considered successful by most of her peers. Nonetheless, she did not view her current agribusiness as the ultimate occupation and instead considered it a flexible and temporary experiment that would constantly evolve as new technologies and economic opportunities emerged. She described herself and the technology as *'too young'* to *'I can't think too far into the future'*.

Watiri expected that technology would change, and with this, she would continuously improve herself by exploring new opportunities including advancing her education, establishing her business away from her parent's land, and eventually getting married. She even hoped that she would go back to school and become a university lecturer.

Figure 6. 2 Watiri's greenhouse and drip-irrigated vegetable farms



When I asked her where she would be in fifteen years, she expressed the same temporality and uncertainty with her life, *‘The fifteen years are too long; things will change, new technology will come, and I am open to experiment. I am still young’*. At the time, she was only interested in maximising on the immediate opportunities to make profit and earn a status as a successful young farmer. This notion of accepting temporality and everyday success as a way of life was widespread among young farmers. They would narrate of times when business was good and they had made considerable profits before transitioning into something else. They talked about their intentions of diversifying and moving away from their current ventures as a way of improving their livelihoods or averting expected challenges and risks. In sum, a temporary livelihood in farming was farming to exit farming. It was the short stints spent in profitable farming to accumulate capitals which enabled one to transition into off-farm occupations.

Last Resort Youth Farmers

It is problematic to assume that young people farm only because they perceive the economic opportunities in agriculture. Some choose farming as a last resort survival strategy after failing to get formal employment or when forced by socio-cultural circumstances, such as marriage, death, and migration among others. However, as I discussed in section two of this chapter, educated youth who chose farming as a last resort strategy were also changing their

perceptions and using a new language to explain their take up of a prior stigmatized occupation.

Farming was often the only option for child-headed rural households. Patrick (28 years) had become the head of a household of 10 siblings and his mother when he was attending college. He dropped out to care for his siblings through farming, the only means the family had at the time. His wife Bina (24 years), orphaned when in primary school struggled to finish high school and join college. She enrolled into a college in Nairobi on a partial scholarship, but later returned home after failing to raise the full college fees. Eventually, she chose to get married to Patrick who financed her college education while she assisted him on the farm. Similarly, Muchai took up poultry keeping as his only choice when he was orphaned at 15. Even though he had reared chicken and rabbits as a young boy while living with his mother, having to depend on a hobby to support himself and his younger brother was a difficult life. He had managed to educate his brother and himself up to vocational training college through poultry keeping on his relatives land and sometimes behind his rented house. At the time of the interview, Muchai was renting a *plot* in Kitengela where he had constructed temporary chicken houses.

Although a last resort occupation, young farmers transformed their activities to fit with their changing aspirations and to perform desirability and modernity. Farming became a last resort for Adhiambo after months of joblessness as a single mother in Nairobi. She returned to Homabay where her father gave her part of his land to farm and was now an expert horticultural farmer making huge profits and training other farmers in the region. On the contrary, Cherunya (33 years) quit a well-paying job to assume a somewhat last resort farming identity following her marriage and relocation to rural Kericho where the community expected her to play the traditional roles of a wife. However, her last resort farming

eventually became an agribusiness of greenhouse farming and a relational strategy to support other women in her community through women empowerment groups.

In sum, most last resort farmers were also temporary farmers: they farmed with the expectation of earning enough capitals that would enable their upward social mobility into modern farming methods, further education, establishing other enterprises or migrating to urban areas in search of formal work.

Youth Farming Subjectivities

This section explores the multiple identities performed by young farmers so as to distinguish their farming from that carried out by the stigmatized poor farmers. I broadly categorize their multiple subjectivities into six performances of neoliberal identities including pursuing portfolio (new) occupations; constructing diversified selves; performing market opportunism; reworking elite status; breaking down rural-urban distinctions; and acting as social change-markers. Importantly, these identities and performances reflect the narrative of youth in agriculture that acknowledges farming as a respectable occupation with capacity to deliver financial independence while at the same time, demonstrates how young people reconstitute normative visions of what is socially acceptable to maintain an elite distinction in precarious conditions.

1. *Self-making new occupations:* Young farmers introduced themselves as ‘cool’, ‘successful’ and working in lucrative businesses, a language that was common with those promoting the ‘youth in agriculture’ narrative. However, their performance of ‘cool’ and ‘successful’ farming did not mean that agriculture had become an effortless occupation where young people easily made profits. It still involved hard work, investment of capitals, ingenuity, managing high risks, and belonging to the right social networks. Most young farmers lacked the necessary agricultural skills and relied on alternative forms of learning.

Only a few benefitted from government agricultural extension services and a few who could afford, paid for private extension services. A majority relied on information shared on social media, through farmer field visits, and through an increasing number of TV and radio programmes on farming in Kenya. They also relied on the local agro-vets where they bought their inputs but these too were often unreliable.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs were transforming information sharing where ‘modern’ farmers shared their experiences, their experiments, and their source of inputs. Over a third of my respondents obtained agricultural information these online platforms which included seeking advice from other farmers on such issues as where to lease land, what seeds to buy, where to access soil testing services, or where to sell their produce among others. As the platforms allowed for multi-interactions, even information that would be presumably unverifiable, would be spread among other farmers, re-tested, and where it failed or succeeded, such experiences would be shared on the same platforms. Thus, it was an open space for learning, sharing and verifying information, and building a community of young entrepreneurs who identified as successful young farmers.

2. Diversified selves: As agriculture alone was not adequate to sustain a livelihood, most of the young farmers I met had multiple sources of income. Wanjiku (32 years), a single mother, and horticultural farmer, also identified as a counsellor, a student, and a businesswoman. I was taken aback by the fast pace of her life and ability to balance these multiple identities. Throughout the interview, she was constantly running; showing me around her eighth of an acre farm, answering my questions, receiving phone calls, and harvesting zucchini to sell to a nearby school after the interview, before *‘returning to town for a business deal that was boiling’*. She had started farming in 2010 alongside her grandmother who was keeping dairy cows when she realized that she was making decent income from selling milk. She

transformed the family compound into an intensive small farm where she installed a drip irrigation system and started growing tomatoes and capsicum. Wanjiku's diversification was informed by her entrepreneurial fervour: *'I am the kind of person if I get any kind of business I will do... my mind just sees business... I cannot be in one place all the time. I want to do short contracts, go work for a few hours, get my cash, and go to something else. I am boiling because there is so much waiting for me today'*. Having started her career as a flight attendant, Wanjiku's occupational aspirations had evolved and diversified and she now viewed herself as a *'a jack of all trades'* ranging from selling recycled plastics, training social workers, farming, counselling patients at the nearby health centre, and still pursuing a degree in psychology.

Similarly, Eunice was leading a local youth group in Nyakach whilst farming and attending college. She was also involved in local politics serving as the deputy clerk for the county youth assembly and prided in being among the few young women who attended community *barazas*³⁰. She identified as a gender activist through a young women's leadership group where she mentored high school girls. She was a scout and occasionally visited her former high school to mentor the students. She viewed her everyday life as involving interactions with government officials, the local community, and young people among others. She claimed to be *'a friend of many groups in the community where I learn from them, and I also share my skills and knowledge'*. Yet, Eunice also worked part-time as a sales girl in Nyakach town. Her diversified life highlights how enterprising individuals reproduce certain identities subject to available market opportunities. By diversifying their income sources, young people were able to accelerate their self-improvement endeavours. For instance, through the interactions with the government officials, Eunice gained information on agricultural

³⁰ Public administrative meetings often held by the chief in a village. They signify citizenship and democracy in post-colonial governments, while in pre-colonial times, they were critical for decision-making.

practices which she would channel to the farm. While mentoring high schools students she would also negotiate with the school administration to buy some of her farm produce. The allowances from conferences, government meetings, or speaking at events all counted as her diversified income sources.

3. Market Opportunism: Educated young farmers were entrepreneurs who identified and pursued market opportunities. Embracing an entrepreneurial identity meant disrupting the normative notion that rural smallholder farmers were disenfranchised. Young farmers described their everyday entrepreneurial lives as a continuous process of choosing to do a diversity of ‘things’ or strategies to which an economic value was attached. These ‘things’ made Otieno *a diversified man* navigating from farming, a tarmacking veterinary officer, an environmental activist, a politician, a youth leader and a taxi driver. Wanjiku was ‘*a jack of all trades*’ who farmed, sold recycled plastics, trained other people, and attended evening classes. Their entrepreneurial opportunities materialized in time by investing labour, social relations and other capitals. They were crafted; changed by technology; tried and tested; and always intended to propel one to ‘*move forward*’. However, they were risky but with determination and sometimes luck, some could eventually become profitable and sustainable livelihoods. When young people got ‘*involved*’ and ‘*try things here and there*’; they defied the notions of *nalima tu*, *ushamba*, hanging out, or being in wait; and instead, resourcefully navigated their ennui and changed their status on the margins of a formal economy. These performances essentially ensured that the educated person maintained their elite distinction in society.

4. Reworking Elite Distinctions: As the conditions for formal work changed and educated youth were encouraged to return to the prior stigmatized agricultural occupations, the emerging young farmers found it necessary to renegotiate their elitist identities. One way

young farmers maintained an elitist identity was by producing food for the middle class urban population who were believed to demand exotic and high value commodities, such as milk, meat, eggs, vegetables, and fruits. The urban middle class became both a client and a space for performing elitism. For example, Kirui relied on a self-managed client base who pre-ordered his strawberries. When I met him in mid-2014, he shared with me their marketing strategy '*Ours is a novelty plan; we are targeting the growing middle class*'. Months before the strawberries were ready; he had visited major restaurants and supermarkets looking for a market for his produce. His other clients were largely drawn from friends he made while at university and while working in Nairobi.

As young farmers sold their produce to the urban middle class, they earned financial capitals that propelled them into a middle class (defined by financial capital). Their interactions with their clients who often lived in the urban areas enabled them to build and maintain social networks to which they attached their middle-class distinctions. Their social networks remained strongly intertwined with those of their peers working in white collar jobs to whom they sold their commodities; and with networks created and re-negotiated in the rural areas where they earned their respectability through farming and other community activities. Most of them still lived or frequently visited the urban areas to maintain these networks and urban lifestyle.

Secondly, young farmers renegotiated their schooled subjectivities by claiming expertise in certain fields that they were involved. They were part of a growing movement of modern farmers who grew new crops and utilized new technologies such as hydroponics, drip irrigation, greenhouses, organic fertilizers, and exotic crop varieties. Kirui's *chama* invested in the '*best*' innovations that could guarantee them higher returns on their strawberry farm. They researched on the best seeds; leased the best land; carried out soil testing; and trained

their workers on best farming practices. Several other young farmers expressed a sense of always being at the forefront of adopting new technologies so as to remain competitive in the business. For instance, Watiri imported and installed drip irrigation systems for farmers; Gitonga trained individuals and institutions on establishing kitchen gardens and urban farms; Muchai was an expert in constructing farm houses and breeding pet birds; Kaberere was breeding chicken and training farmers on poultry and vegetable farming; and Adhiambo trained farmers on horticultural farming.

Thirdly, elitism was negotiated by continually expanding one's innovation base. Most young farmers used my presence on their farm to learn of innovations from other farmers' that they could adopt or improve. They enquired about new technologies and requested for contacts of other innovative farmers that they could visit. When I made a follow-up call to Njuki a few weeks before leaving the field, he was eager to hear of the new ideas I had found in the field: *'Are you coming back to visit before you leave? ... I also want to hear what other farmers are doing. What new technologies, or innovations other people are applying on their farms. You know I need to keep up with the game'*. According to most farmers, innovations included learning what new techniques other farmers were applying; improving one's production and marketing techniques; identifying quality and affordable agricultural inputs; and becoming more efficient in resource use.

Finally, young farmers praised themselves as successful and performed professionalism. They registered and branded their farms as companies; gave themselves titles of young farmers and farm managers; advertised their products on social media platforms; packaged their agricultural commodities; made business cards for professional networking; and developed websites and blogs to share about their agribusinesses. By November 2014, I had tracked down over 30 websites, blogs, and micro-blogs created by young farmers or targeting

young farmers in Kenya (Appendix VIII). Wambaya, even though he had not travelled to his farm, he blogged that *'the farm specializes in horticulture, dairy and fish farming... I invite all interested youth to embark with me on this journey as we fight unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity in Africa'*. Wambaya envisioned his responsibility to society in the near future; not as one who was unemployed or side-hustling at the time, but an educated and privileged youth with a responsibility for addressing the challenges of the neoliberal economy, such as unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity. By assuming such a responsibility, Wambaya was setting himself as elite and not necessarily a young graduate who was struggling to make ends meet.

Likewise, Kaberere expressed optimism every time I asked him of the challenges he faced as a young farmer: *'The problem is when we get blessed; we still say we are struggling. I am not struggling. I am not'*. An image of no struggle might be perhaps true for Kaberere who claimed earning thrice as much as he had earned from his journalism job, but he also faced challenges, such as buying the wrong chicken feeds, electricity cuts that affected the poultry breeding process, or his workers who either resigned or stole from him. Yet, for an elite like him who needed to maintain a status of accomplishment, such failures needed to be concealed from the public which was attracted to his agribusiness for inspiration. These performances also mirror Thieme's (2013) observations that acting professional and organized could impress external actors who often disenfranchise young people and dismiss their contribution to society.

5. Breaking rural-urban distinctions: Agricultural occupations challenged existing notions of a good life associated with an urban lifestyle and instead portrayed the possibilities of a decent life in the rural areas. As Eunice shared, a rural young farmer needed to construct him/herself as respectable and productive regardless of the kind of activities they pursued in

the rural areas: *‘Everyone is seeing me like mshamba sana [very backward] like when I am in the farm utaniona nikiwa mshamba lakini [you will think I am backward but] after all wewe ndio mshamba sana [you are the most backward]. I am so much in multitasking; I am involved in many things because when I am involved in one place I feel am wasting my time’*.

Eunice argued that the only way to change the conditions of her waithood (which she associated with being in the rural areas and farming) was by appreciating any work that came along and embracing multi-tasking. She redefined *mshamba* as those who abandoned farming when they had no other income sources. By getting involved in a myriad of activities in the rural areas, she was transforming her waiting and avoiding the negative images associated with unemployed youth and appreciating rural livelihood options that yielded capitals.

Matei had jokingly described urban unemployed youth as *‘clean people with a big phones for Facebook but broke’*. He emphasized the reality that most young people upon migrating to urban areas no longer succeed in acquiring the same assets and demeanour associated with an urban culture, such as a job, a car, a house, and supporting a family. However, they may reproduce some images of the urban lifestyle by acquiring mobile phones which give them the technological sophistication, but not the socio-economic freedoms associated with a decent urban lifestyle. Matei’s observations suggest that not all technologies signify economic progress. Even though he had grown up in the rural areas, Matei was proud that he had been educated in a local college and succeeded in finding a decent job in a local organization alongside his side-hustles in farming and informal trading. Through these activities, he had acquired the same symbols of modernity and the sophistication of an urban lifestyle – a good job, a wife, a house in the rural areas, a *plot*, and a second-hand car. Matei regarded himself as a wealthy rural person, *‘Mimi napenda maisha ya ushago [I like life in the village], I have money, but I am living in the village. I have a car, and I am loaded in the village’*. His contrast of urban life as ‘being broke’ and rural life as being financial

independent illuminates the increasing appreciation among educated youth of their rural-based occupations and the possibilities of transcending these two spaces in search of economic opportunities.

6. *Performing as Social Change-makers:* In a country like Kenya which has embraced neoliberalism and democracy, young people create their own alternative routes to sustaining their livelihoods, efforts which put them at the centre of African ingenuity. Some young people do not necessarily focus on narratives that cast them as being ignored, forsaken, stuck or even whose hope is cut; instead, they exhibit immense counter-action and resilience through neoliberal and ‘green’ subjectivities. Rather than lose their skills and earning potential while unemployed, they move into temporary work and side-hustles where they attain new skills and construct new identities which help them to diversify their income sources. They are actively repositioning themselves as self-made adults, identities that reproduce them as social change-makers in the community. While earning an income is their first goal, many of them also wish to have an impact in society through their entrepreneurial activities.

For instance, after Gitonga’s success story had been featured on several media outlets, he became a role model in the youth movement and at his university. When I visited the youth movement and informed them of my research, several members informed me of having been mentored by Gitonga to venture into agribusiness. Gitonga had rebranded his agribusiness into a social enterprise which he was planning to expand into an exchange programme for young people willing to develop their skills in sustainable agriculture. He planned to buy a bigger piece of land where he would set up a training facility, diversify into value addition, and conduct research. His vision was to *‘eventually become a leading producer and exporter of quality ethical food, and contribute in a new way to social entrepreneurship in Africa’*. As

an environmentalist, he continued to participate in international policy processes, hoping that he would link his new agricultural occupation with his environmental activism work and his economics degree.

Most young farmers positioned themselves as contributing to food security in the country. Even though some of them were foremost driven by a need to '*secure myself*' a livelihood, most of them agreed that their farming activities were contributing to the society's economic growth and social needs. Their rationale was that a business providing local staple foods consumed daily in rural and urban areas would never collapse even during economic uncertainties. Thus, farming to contribute to the country's food security gave them a sense of permanency and security of their livelihoods while at the same time being able to invest in a social business. In sum, rather than avoiding agriculture as a stigmatized occupation, educated youth pursued ways in which they could re-fashion agricultural occupations to enable them maintain elite distinctions while earning an income and eventually attaining social adulthood.

Conclusion

As the formal labour markets shrink, a generation of young people, now socialized to expect uncertainty and occupational flexibilities, are developing alternative livelihood strategies by rebranding agriculture as a high status entrepreneurial occupation which gives them agency and power on the margins of a formal economy. This chapter has shown that education is changing from being an escape route from rural agricultural life among educated Kenyans to providing opportunities for educated youth willing to create new identities as agri-entrepreneurs, thereby retaining an elite distinction in society.

In response to economic austerities, youth create alternative careers in agriculture, a sector that is also requiring change to increase its productivity to meet the country's food demands

and accelerate economic growth. The enthusiasm of the young farmers presented here does not mean that agriculture has ceased being a denigrated occupation associated with the poor and uneducated rural communities. On the contrary, these young farmers firstly relied on the extent to which they could overcome the systemic challenges of agriculture including access to productive resources, agricultural information, markets, socio-cultural barriers, as well as enabling policies. However, to position themselves as the elite of society, they chose to reproduce agriculture as lucrative by claiming to be successful farmers, experts, and change-makers. They used their farms as demonstration sites to the surrounding communities (including their online networks), on what they claimed were farming best practices which they acquired through experimentation. They utilized social media to acquire and share agricultural information, access input and output markets, and maintain social relations. Finally, young farmers embody elite distinctions that allow them to imagine themselves as social change-makers in a society that expects change from their educated youth, thus providing a bargaining power for the social contract between the youth, the society, and those in power.

7. GENDERED YOUTH IDENTITIES, INDIVIDUALISM, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Introduction

Oh my God, No! I was thinking of how I would become a diplomat, attend to political parties, and be fabulous. I did not imagine soil and stuff. It was never in my plan. But that happened during my transition when I got married... so I had to naturally blend into the culture (Cherunya, female farmer, Kericho).

Yeah! I am married! It is the first time I get to put this on paper actually; and I am a father! I am very happy... But I am daily pitching to my wife (Kirui, male farmer, Nairobi/Naivasha).

In this chapter, I will discuss how young men and women not only embodied traditional masculine and feminine attributes, but also how they collectively reworked gendered identities to achieve desired individual goals in the context of environmentalism and agricultural entrepreneurialism. Cherunya was from a wealthy family and educated in good schools in Uganda and Kenya. After graduation, she worked with a policy think-tank in Nairobi where she expected to rise up the career ladder into the diplomatic service. Nevertheless, on getting married, she acquired a new identity as a wife which meant ‘*blending into the culture*’ and so migrating to rural Kericho to assume the traditional roles of a Kalenjin wife. She cared for her parents-in-law and maintained a kitchen garden of greenhouse tomato farming and poultry rearing alongside her husband who managed the family’s tea and dairy farms. However, Cherunya had grown uncomfortable with her ‘unemployed’ status and, eventually, using her schooled subjectivity, reworked her traditional roles into becoming a businesswoman, a gender activist, and a local politician. She was creating a new life for herself in the rural areas as a wife, and an educated young woman with multiple opportunities for self-improvement in local enterprises and politics.

Similarly, Kirui was an excited married man, a father, and an entrepreneur investing in a software development company and in farming. However, he was constantly negotiating the

tensions between him and his wife and parents for choosing entrepreneurship as the sole income source for his young family. His parents and wife perceived entrepreneurship as a temporary and risky venture for an educated young man to pursue without first securing a formal job. Kirui's ventures in the software company and in the agribusiness were not just enterprises to accumulate wealth, but spaces within which he daily negotiated his manhood as the breadwinner (Jeffrey et al., 2008). Each of his activities, either within the *chama* or the software company, were important moments of demonstrating his capabilities and convincing his wife and parents that he was '*trying hard and making it*' as a man.

As Cherunya and Kirui demonstrate, this chapter elucidates the complex interactions of gender with individualism and collective action among the educated youth. I examine the intertwined and contradictory, yet complementary ways in which young men and women pursued alternative livelihoods, contingent on their personal choices, gender relations, and collective agency. By examining how young men and women respond to the prevailing tensions between masculine and feminine identities, I argue that neoliberal individuals flexibly reconstruct their gendered identities and manage multiple livelihoods in precarious environments. Drawing from the discussions with university students and the interviews with young farmers, this chapter responds to the question of *what ways were the conflicting and contrasting notions of individualism and collective action necessary for navigating the gendered life trajectories of educated youth in Kenya*.

My point of departure is that gender and youth are relational and social constructs. The representation of women and men in the literature evokes contradictory roles where men are associated with power and dominance while the women are situated as powerless and victims inviting intervention, or as self-reliant heroines posing a threat to hegemonic masculinity (Cornwall, Harrison, & Whitehead, 2007; Okali, 2012). On the other hand, those in authority

construct young people as subordinate and aspiring to become adults (Wyn & White, 1997). Nevertheless, even though young men and women are subject to the dominant powers in their social worlds, and they may align with the normative masculinities and femininities; privately, their actions vary widely from the idealized visions of subjugation (Jeffrey et al., 2008). To be a young man or a young woman is, thus, negotiated at an individual and collective level involving the self, family, society, and external institutions.

In this context, therefore, I suggest that a nuanced analysis of youth livelihoods is one that examines the gendered configurations of young people's multiple identities as they are negotiated, reproduced, and reworked over time and space. Such an analysis allows for the study of young men and women in their subjective positions but also contextualizes the neoliberal discourses that seek to produce young people as independent beings (Durham, 2007). Additionally, gendered youth livelihoods might be better understood by examining the normative conceptions of women and youth as carers and stewards for the future. Women and young people are marginalized from the public sphere, often occupied by men and adults; but they are also organized or organize themselves into self-improvement projects that enable their new political actions and multiple social identities. Cherunya and Kirui illustrate how some youth may renegotiate their caring and stewardship roles by first assuming their traditional gender roles (as wife and husband respectively) and then belonging to social groups as gender activists and entrepreneurs so as to achieve their individualized visions. The collective in this case becomes an opportunity for economic investment, a resistance to traditional gender norms, and an opportunity for self-transformation leading to eventual exit from marginalization for youth and women.

The rest of the chapter is organized into three sections. I start by discussing how self-making produced gendered and competitive individuals, attributes of neoliberal subjectivities. In the

second section, I illustrate how men/women relations in and out of marriage were influenced by the variety of masculine and feminine identities that young people embodied. The third section demonstrates how notions of collective action influenced the formation and participation in different kinds of social groups and enabled young people to manoeuvre prevailing uncertainties and attain individual accomplishments. I finally illustrate how gender relations and the traditional ideologies of collective action give us insights into the complexity of young people's neoliberal life trajectories in contemporary society.

Producing Competitive Individuals

It is a hustle, it is challenging, but at the end of the day, when I know what I am getting from it, I am happy... and you know you are doing this at your own convenience; and you plan your [every]day[life] (Gitonga, male farmer, Kiambu/Nairobi).

Not all young people who had tried farming as an occupation had succeeded or would have the confidence to make a similar statement as Gitonga. Some had already given up farming and were pursuing other off-farm enterprises or had returned to tarmacking. Spending time with Gitonga helped understand why he was not really the successful young farmer that the media portrayed in 2013 and 2014. Foremost, Gitonga struggled with accessing start-up capital, agricultural information, markets and maintaining clients and transporting his commodities – challenges he claimed were indeed making him 'a successful young farmer'. Secondly, his success was not in earning a profit but in working hard to reclaim his manhood. He spent most of his time in farming, schooling, travelling across the city to sell his commodities, and volunteering with the youth organization.

Whereas Gitonga had been given titles, such as a 'young champion' and a 'smart farmer', his life was a continuous hustle as he tried to increase his returns to finance his private university education and maintain a decent income that would keep him from potential tarmacking in the near future. Balancing these identities required making a choice to work hard on the farm,

plan his time, and plough back the profits he obtained. His life resonates with Katz's argument that, in times of economic changes in rural Sudan, an entrepreneurial spirit was not necessarily consciously produced as 'those who benefited from the economic and other changes attributed to the success of their own "hard work" and ability' (Katz, 2004: 217). Katz observed that individuals and communities emphasized 'flexible specialization' over success or failure in entrepreneurship as crucial to their economic and social well-being. Failure to find alternative livelihoods was associated with lack of skills, ability, and diligence (ibid). Hence, by working hard on the farm, Gitonga was reconfiguring his masculinity as a 'productive' man (Fokwang, 2008a) against the prevailing narrative of idle urban youth. He was proud that the media coverage had offered him 'public' opportunities to demonstrate his competence and diligence in a high-risk business environment and against the high youth unemployment rates. When I invited him to share his story with one of the universities, he was excited that this was his chance to demonstrate to 'other youth' that there was respectability in working hard and being flexible with one's occupations and masculinity. He demonstrates what Bottrell terms as a chosen identity- a subjective position which one desires and work towards, against that which the society has constructed them to be.

As with many university students and young farmers I interacted with, the significance of 'hard work', 'working smart', and 'managing' were emphasized as the new forms of production and reconfiguration of the educated youth in times of unemployment and economic changes (Demerath, 2003; Katz, 2004). Working hard involved taking individual responsibility to increase the possibilities and diversify the options of having a good life. One compromised some individual comforts, such as white collar jobs (Jeruto and Keshi), and hanging out (Mwaniki); embraced *ushamba* (Eunice and Kaberere); transformed their leisure time to long hours of entrepreneurship (Musyoki and Joe); and as well, accepted the possibilities of losing some economic and social assets (Keshi and Gitonga).

Whereas some literature suggests that young people may abandon agriculture for its drudgery (Leavy & Smith, 2010b; Tadele & Gella, 2012), these performances of hard work provide new insights that young people might reconsider building meaningful livelihoods in agriculture if such opportunity spaces facilitate respectability, financial independence, and a chance to reconstruct one's masculinity or femininity. As evident in Gitonga's story, his success in farming was not in the lack of challenges but in his ability to withstand them and emerge a successful young man. Fundamentally, young people measured their success by the confidence they had in their self-making efforts.

Self-making, an integral attribute of neoliberal subjectivities, is the process through which an individual develops into a person of influence and respect in a community by pursuing independence while also enlarging one's circles of interdependence (Durham, 2007). Even though it may also be a symbol of resistance to a post-Keynesian state, to a large extent the reproduction of competition puts the individual at the centre of redressing the challenges of a weak developmental state, hence becoming a change-maker. Young people are socialized to accept the responsibility to address their unemployment rather than expect the state to intervene and to become competent and accomplished individuals who can be relied upon by their community. The (self-made) individual is thus an important focus of investment in anticipation of their contribution to shaping the altered community in a neoliberal society. As one of the students shared with me, state failure was viewed as an individualized problem '*I think the problem is not with the government, it is us that are not aggressive enough to get the change*' which required the action of the young people, and especially the educated. Whether this took place through university clubs that aimed at preparing individuals for a competitive job market; or through farms that had become the new graduate employers, these efforts counted in producing citizens with a responsibility for their society.

The autonomous efforts of student environmentalists and young farmers reflected how twenty-first century young men and women act on their selves in the technology of self (Foucault, 1988). By assuming responsibility for their communities, they attain their social markers of adulthood and maintain their elite distinctions in the society. Their self-governing capabilities are manifested in their reaction to having not '*seen*' the government; and their citizenship that is determined by their individual actions. As Matei shared, '*the mwananchi [citizen] is the government. Naomba serikali isaidie [I am asking the government to intervene] is the biggest nonsense*' and citizens have a role to play in national development. As neoliberal economies are characterized by the shrinking role of the state, waiting for state interventions is seen as a futile approach to attaining independent livelihoods. Thus, the activities of student environmentalists and young farmers are acts of re-fashioning them as competent, productive, and dependable citizens who can also contribute to national development.

However critical hard work and self-making was for producing successful individuals, these efforts do not mend the social contract between young people and those in authority. The success often depends on one's family background, gender, and one's access to the right social networks. For example, in rural Western Kenya, Awinji (32 years) was a farmer, a local youth politician and a volunteer with several development NGOs. He had previously worked for over five NGOs as a field assistant but none paid him decent wages or employed him on a permanent basis. When I met him in mid-2014, Awinji farmed indigenous vegetables, worked as a part-time field assistant, volunteered with several NGOs, and was involved in local politics as a youth representative in his County. He had also enrolled for his second and part-time diploma course. While none of these activities provided him a regular income, Awinji counted his sources of income as the temporary research jobs, the sitting allowances from meetings, volunteer allowances, and the income from the farm. After years

of temporary jobs, Awinji had not attained a decent income to enable him to build a house for his father and himself on his inherited land in rural Siaya, and he lived in a two-room rented house in Siaya town with his wife and daughters. Even though he claimed that he was working hard to sustain his family, cultural norms barred him from transitioning into adulthood, and thus, Awinji identified as a youth.

Contrary, to his wife, Awinji was a responsible husband capable of supporting his family. The wife declined participating in the interview claiming she was an adult woman, a wife and a mother and, therefore, too old to engage in 'youth' issues. Yet, she was comfortable with her husband identifying as a youth and earning his income from 'youth' activities. Unlike Cherunya who embraced traditional wife roles but remained actively involved as a gender activist and young female politician, Awinji's wife 'female youth' identity was long lost by the virtue of marriage, child-bearing, but also by her own choice to remain subordinate to her husband. On the other hand, Awinji's 'young man' identity represented the competition between him and other men in the patriarchal family system, where adulthood was measured by the ability to have a decent income, marry, and build a house for himself and his parents. In addition, identifying as a 'young man' was Awinji's strategic performance: he was the youth representative in the county assembly and took part in several donor-supported youth programmes in health, education, environment, and politics. By participating in these activities, Awinji would 'earn' sitting allowances, volunteer allowances, and new friendships, which formed his portfolio of capitals that defined his adult status and respectability by his wife. Such individual and collective decisions are the complexities of gendered relations between the young men and women of the twenty-first century.

Bina and her husband Patrick embodied adult and youth identities differently. Bina supported Patrick on the farm which was the only income source for their family comprising of his

mother, ten siblings, and their son. Although Patrick managed the family farm, it was Bina who identified as a young farmer. At first, Patrick declined participating in the interview quoting '*mimi ni mzee sana*' (*I am a very old man*). At 28 years, but with a huge family responsibility, Patrick regarded himself as experienced in adult life than his wife. He had become the family's breadwinner in his early twenties when his father died, forcing him to drop out of college and return home where he eventually married as a symbol of attaining adulthood.

Contrary to Awinji who remained a young man in relation to the unaccomplished son-father obligations, death had granted adulthood to Patrick with assets (the family farm and siblings), and eventually a family of his own. Bina on the other hand, identified with the 'female youth' identity, perhaps given her continuing schooling and her participation in local youth groups. What we observe in these two cases (Awinji's, and Patrick and Bina's), are the continued efforts for young men and women to rework their masculinity and femininity during crisis moments and to perform new identities that best suit their socio-economic conditions. Such identities sometimes may transgress cultural barriers but are essentially to enhance one's self-making efforts.

With the lack of a social welfare system in Kenya, young people are expected to cater for the needs of their natal parents which include food, housing, hospital bills, and sometimes, providing company in their homes. Mwongeli (34 years) was a first born, living in Kitui town with her ageing parents, her daughter, and her niece from her deceased sister. Her father was retired while her mother was disabled and needed care at home. Mwongeli had resigned from a full-time job in Mombasa and returned home to care for her parents as she worked in a part-time outside catering business. She and her father kept poultry to supplement the household income and as Mwongeli put it, '*to keep my [retired] father busy*'. As expected of most

women her age, when I asked Mwongeli about her future, she did not imagine marriage or moving away from home. Instead, she considered herself a mother and a dependable adult with two daughters and two adults under her care. She viewed her future in relation to providing the best care for her parents and her daughters and in establishing a stable business in Kitui. Her younger brother, who traditionally would be expected to care for his parents and inherit their assets, had married and migrated to a different region leaving Mwongeli to head the family and perhaps to never leave her natal home.

These intergenerational interdependences and reversed gender roles were also evident with other young women and men. Mwende migrated to get married, work, and study in Woote town, and while there, started farming on leased land during her free time. The staple foods she grew would be sent to her natal home, thus reducing the cost of feeding the family for which she was responsible as the first born and educated daughter. As a young woman, having a husband and a job in the urban areas already counted as a source of income for the family left behind in the rural areas. She was expected to provide financial support to her family not only as an adaptation strategy, but also as a sign of individual accomplishment.

Gendered individualism was also evident among student environmentalists. To start with, Kenyan environmentalists, like the late Prof. Wangari Maathai, were produced by among others, the relations of a collective of individuals who organized environmental campaigns (Njeru, 2012); the state which regarded their activities as '*just planting trees*'; the natural landscape where they witnessed environmental changes; and the community which relied on their distinct activism to change their livelihoods (Maathai, 2008; Nixon, 2007). Likewise, student environmentalists were produced by the university that imagined them as professional groups; the environmental organizations that relied on their masses to drive successful environmental campaigns; and the club activities which shaped their certified experiences

and introduced them to networks of environmental professionals, who acknowledged their competence and competitiveness in the job market. In this sense, club members were equally concerned with the individual benefits as with the collective benefits of a club as the failure of one would lead to the failure of the other. However, tensions between the individual and the collective existed. Whereas the clubs were spaces for collective environmental activism, their activities aimed at primarily producing competitive environmentalists with certified experiences and networked to potential employers. As a result, students used the club activities and, for some, their leadership positions, to become employable or to establish their own initiatives and social enterprises.

Individualism helps us gain insights on why young farmers and student environmentalists considered themselves accomplished against the uncertainties of their present occupations and imagined futures. After attaining financial independence, some of the young farmers ceased 'being youth', claimed adulthood, and distinguished themselves from 'other youth' who had not yet 'arrived'. Some even went ahead to blame 'other youth' for not being aggressive enough in addressing their own predicaments and being impatient in their actions. While, being hopeful may be a way for the educated youth to acknowledge their changing aspirations, their performances of hope and achievement helps us to critique young people's new political contestations (Honwana, 2013), especially in unravelling the realities of educated unemployed youth who continually hustle for alternative livelihoods in an attempt to maintain their hegemonic elite distinction.

Moreover, the performances of young farmers present us the possibility that flexibility during one's time of waiting may redefine the significant role of farm work and rural contexts for young people's livelihoods. Flexibility allows the urban credentials to become the tools for renegotiating a productive identity as new technology is used to access new agricultural

information, new markets, and thus transform a stigmatized agricultural occupation into a 'cool' social enterprise. Likewise, student environmentalists flexibly depoliticize the highly criticized student politics and reconstitute themselves as environmental professionals with credibility, thus gaining access to reliable social networks and potential employers.

Evidently, individual endeavours and performed accomplishments do not imply that hard work was the only key to an independent livelihood and that it always led to the imagined futures. Rather, these performances help us understand how educated youth renegotiated their positions to remain the privileged elite by the virtue of their education, their mobility capabilities, and their flexibility across masculine and feminine identities. This, however, results in unequal progress of the educated youth in comparison to 'other youth' in Kenya. I will now move on to discuss how gender relations shaped individualized lifestyles and how collective action played out in such contexts.

Gendered Youth Identities

You find the women do everything; tea picking, farming vegetables, retailing. Where are the men? We want to do it together. Even what used to be for men, over the years it has become for the women. Empowerment of men is also needed. You find women milking, farming, giving birth, while the man is just getting drunk. The gap is there, it's a cultural one (Cherunya, female farmer, Kericho).

When Cherunya migrated to rural Kericho, she found that there was a huge disparity between men and women especially in terms of the gendered divisions of labour and household income distribution. She viewed Kericho men as 'disempowered' since they were often drunk and 'looking out' while their wives worked all day to support the household. But the main contradiction was the fact that due to the dominant culture, the women were doubly disempowered and remained under male subordination with no rights to family assets and income.

It is such a contrast... The women are always coming to ask for money from me to pay school fees or take a child to hospital. Yet, they have 15 acres of land; that is gold but

they cannot see it. Are they lacking the tools, education, or facilitation? (Cherunya, female farmer, Kericho).

Ironically, Cherunya was trying to address a women empowerment situation in a society where the young married men were identified as disenfranchised youth who required government intervention while their wives remained subordinate and adult women at home. This double disempowerment of the young women was compounded by the fact that most of them were uneducated and some of them were separated or living with their disengaged husbands. Cherunya described the women in her community as young, usually 18 to 30 years, but in real life in Kericho, they were adults, mothers, and wives with responsibility for their families. Being among the few educated women living in the rural areas, she sought to help these women using her education and her relationship with her husband. Whereas her husband was responsible for managing the tea estate, the dairy farm, and providing for the family, Cherunya remained the traditional but modern wife, farming vegetables in a greenhouse, keeping poultry, and running a grocery shop in the nearby trading centre. She positioned herself as a gender activist, advocating for similar freedoms for the young women in her community. She had established a women's empowerment programme in the churches where she taught women how to save and start small income-generating activities.

By helping other women to reclaim their position as self-reliant heroines, Cherunya was at the centre of social organization and gender reconfiguration in her community (Cornwall, 2005; G. A. Jones & Chant, 2009). Yet, her individualistic goal was to reconstruct her occupation as a gender activist and a young female politician. In so doing, she illuminated the gendered youth identities, where young married men were allowed to remain 'male youth' who, in economic ambivalence, could 'look out' and wait; while their young wives lost their 'female youth' identity after marriage and stayed at home caring for the family. She also highlighted the implications of early marriage that led to women's early entry into adulthood.

This became a form of protracted womanhood, as young wives struggled to raise families with absent or 'waiting' husbands and minimal resources. At 25 years, some of the young women had several children, were separated from their husbands, and had no assets or skills to which they could earn a living. They also found it difficult to identify as youth or join 'youth projects' because with their family responsibilities, they had changed their expectations of collective action. These are the women that Cherunya was trying to empower with her identity as a gender activist and establishing women empowerment groups in her community.

Masculinity and femininity was also reconfigured along economic and cultural lines. Okore (34 years) a father of two, was a farmer and retailed dry cereals in Busia market. He also supported two of his market colleagues, Lydia (27 years) and Achieng (24 years), to farm water melons in the same neighbourhood. Lydia and Achieng traded groceries between Eldoret and Busia towns where they had met Okore. When their businesses started declining, the three decided to diversify into farming as a fall-back strategy. Okore grew water melons and butternuts while the ladies grew water melons and sorghum. While Okore's farming and trading were viewed as the norm in society, Lydia and Achieng's involvement in commercial farming was treated as defiance from the Luo cultural norms which required young women to depend upon their husbands, fathers, or other male family members (Prince, 2006). Their farming activities were seen as a threat and a competition with the men, and hence, their friendship with Okore was strategic in managing the suspicions that met their activities in the community. Okore had become their male figure who would conduct, on their behalf, the essential agribusiness transactions, such as searching and leasing land, negotiating market prices and sometimes hiring, supervising, and paying male farm workers. Most of the male farm labourers detested supervision or even receiving their wages from the young women as it reflected on their failure and loss of power.

Okore's role as the 'man' in these women's farm was an unusual conception of solidarity among young men and women. Interestingly, Okore was comfortable with a liberated young woman and went out of his way to help Lydia and Achieng transgress cultural norms and attain economic independence. Yet, he was also content with his wife who had no interest in farming and worked as an accountant in a local school. His wife kept to the traditional roles of a Luo young wife: she cared for the children and had no interest in Okore's farm. In fact, when we met her, she confessed not having visited any of her husband's farms but was aware of the profits and losses he was making.

For Lydia and Achieng, it was impossible to fulfil the expectations of the society. While the community questioned Achieng for not bringing her husband to the farm, they were also concerned with Lydia who worked hard, yet, she was unmarried. An older woman in the community had once scolded Lydia, '*My daughter, why are you struggling? Stop all this and get married*'. The contradiction was that the old woman expected that there would be male family members to provide for Lydia while in reality, Lydia was a first born in a female-headed household and thus had the responsibility to support herself and her family. On the other hand, Achieng was farming to supplement her husband's income and to diversify her household's livelihood sources. Their modified gender roles unsettled cultural norms in their community that '*a lady is supposed to be just there*' while at the same time challenged the traditional roles of a woman in a household. The two ladies went ahead to perform success and distinction by buying expensive household items and designer clothes which also symbolized modernity and their repositioning as female breadwinners in their family and community (Naituli, Wegulo, & Kaimenyi, 2006).

With the rise of agribusiness, male and female smallholders drive commercial agriculture which now involves the cash crops (coffee, tea, sugarcane, horticulture) and the women crops

(staple foods, vegetables, and domestic animals). Although with structural reforms, the labour markets have diversified for both men and women, women who chose to venture into once male-dominated agribusinesses find it difficult to break the barriers and gain the level of respect that would grant them business deals and maintain their recognition as young female entrepreneurs. For instance, even though Watiri had a well-established business, she still struggled to do business with male clients.

Of course, you get men who are interested in you and not what you have to offer; not the drip irrigation kit, they are interested in the service provider. But I make them understand what I am doing is business. If someone calls to meet at Hilton [Hotel], I say no. Why? How? I usually tell them if they are interested in the farm, they should come and see the farm here (Watiri, female farmer, Kiserian).

Similarly, Keshi found it very difficult to get business contracts in the male-dominated pig business. She shared the instances when she was denied business contracts or ridiculed due to an assumed lack of business capability as a young pregnant woman.

“Utaweza? [Will you make it?] This is a business for big fish, you are still very young”... I remember that time I was so pregnant. “You are very young, look at yourself, you are pregnant”. Imagine! I used to hustle when I was pregnant. What can you do? I just told him, “Stop asking me those questions. Were you born a man the way you are? Can you stop comparing me with such a person? They started from somewhere. I am starting from somewhere and that somewhere is here. Are you giving me biashara [business] or not?” (Keshi, female farmer, Murang’a).

Keshi was disappointed that not only were her in-laws unsupportive, the business environment was also hostile not just because she was a female entrepreneur, but also because of her age and her aggressiveness. Even with these obstacles, most of the young female farmers exhibited immense resilience in their counter-actions. For instance, Cherunya refashioned herself into a young gender activist and local female politician; Watiri refused to meet businessmen in secluded places; Lydia and Achieng sought friendship with Okore and bought symbolic items to demonstrate accomplishment; while Keshi diversified her business and joined international business networks where she received mentorship.

Young men too faced comparable gendered challenges especially when their parents, wives, or girlfriends disapproved of their occupations. As earlier highlighted, Kirui was excited that he could afford to maintain a wife and a child in an urban lifestyle through his enterprises. He spoke with an air of accomplishment in establishing his software company, the *chama's* strawberry farm, getting married and having a son, all in two years. Yet, his parents viewed his accomplishments relative to his future, and desired a formal job for their '*unemployed and disconnected son who was not willing to look for formal employment despite a good education*'. Perhaps, because Kirui's parents were civil servants employed in the 1980s, they found it difficult to conceptualize the on-going changes in the labour market and the consequential career portfolios that Kirui exhibited. Kirui would meet with his father's friends, who were expected to connect him to a formal job, only to realize he was more interested in being mentored '*to become a successful businessman; not an employee*'. These inter- and intra-generational conflicts of when and how a man attained adulthood and what markers of adulthood were acceptable across generations were evident among most educated youth. For example, Kaberere prioritized earning money to support his family rather than acquiring an education. Though he had not completed any of his university degrees, he had had a successful career in journalism and in business. He believed that financial independence and freedom at work enabled him to maintain respectability and defined him as a responsible man and husband.

I could care less about what people think about me as long as I am doing it well... I don't care if you think I am not educated as you are. Like my wife is doing her master's and I am not yet done with my first degree, but I took her coz I am not threatened by education, and if she wants to get a PHD, I will pay for her... As an entrepreneur, mbeca mbere [money first] (Kaberere, male farmer, Nairobi/Kikuyu).

Kaberere's wife and child lived in one of the modern residential areas in Nairobi and he confessed that his wife had almost no idea how to farm. This separation of the rural farm and the man from the urban and the woman is perhaps new in the Kenyan context. Traditionally,

it was the women who remained in the rural farms while the men took up jobs in the urban areas. It also illuminates the changing urban-rural divides in the twenty-first century whereby, with technological advances the rural and urban areas become equally competitive and complementary labour markets. While analytical evidence might be required to justify this case, it is foreseeable that in the future, with precarious jobs and side-hustles in the urban areas, and on the other hand, improved infrastructure, mobile and internet network coverage in rural areas, the growing young labour force might straddle rural and urban spaces. They may acquire urban credentials and use them to redefine their rural spaces from where they generate part of their incomes. This way, they will potentially bridge the rural-urban divide, but also increase the possibilities of urbanization.

While most of the young men were outwardly reclaiming and reconfiguring their masculinity, they often talked of the disenfranchised youth in their communities who were often uneducated, lacked the capitals, and with limited possibilities of alternative livelihoods, remained stuck and hopeless. This phenomenon of ‘disempowered’ men is widespread in Central Kenya where the media has constantly displayed young married men as lost in the drinking dens and subordinated by their hardworking wives³¹. Njuki, for instance, shared about his former classmates who hang out in *Mung’etho* or engaged in ‘*kulima tu*’ on their family farms or as casual labourers. He occasionally hired some of them to assist on the farm, and hoped that once his agribusiness had stabilized, he would facilitate some of them to start their own agribusinesses. Similarly, Kaberere employed young men in response to the high numbers he found hanging out on the roadside each day when driving to his farm. He reasoned that by employing these young men, he reduced the chances of local theft and

³¹ In Central Kenya, there are increasing cases of women battering their husbands (Chacha, 2015; Ndunda, 2015) and nationally, 10.9 per cent of married men aged 15-54 years have suffered forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse from their wives (KNBS, 2014a).

enhanced his friendships and collective identity with the community. He paid his employees decent monthly wages, opened savings accounts for them, trained them on modern farming practices, and offered them free housing on his farm. However, not all young people resonated with such support from their peers. Keshi's attempts to employ local youth were unsuccessful when she realized that most of them were not enthusiastic about working hard or becoming aggressive in the business. This had greatly demoralized her that she started seeking employees from other communities and eventually employing Ugandan immigrants. Likewise, Gitonga struggled to hire young men to work on the farm as they often looked down on him as a young inexperienced man. He, thus, had to rely on his father to supervise some of the farm workers.

Critically, with increased number of young people getting involved in what was previously known as women's agriculture³² which is the growing of staples foods, vegetables and poultry keeping, there is a possibility for competition in the agricultural markets between women and young farmers. For example, Kaberere's goal was to scale up poultry keeping and vegetable farming for creating employment for other rural youth in the country. However, if contrasted to the women's kitchen gardens in his neighbourhood (which also supplied vegetables and poultry products in the local markets), it might eventually lead to their displacement from agribusiness as his scale of production would lower the market prices making it less profitable for the women farmers.

Nyakio (34 years), one of Kaberere's neighbours, was married, a mother and pregnant at the time of the interview. Like other women in her neighbourhood, she had a small kitchen garden where she grew vegetables and reared a few chicken for sale. At the time, she had

³² Or even boy's agriculture, such as rabbit keeping which has now been commercialized

abandoned vegetable farming due to lack of water and relied on the 200 chicken she was rearing and selling every six weeks. Kaberere on the other side had over 2,000 improved breed of chicken from which he sold chicks, eggs, and chicken. He had installed piped water which he used in drip irrigation to grow vegetables that were sold in Kikuyu and Nairobi markets. Being in a position to employ workers and introduce new technologies, Kaberere's commodities were obviously of better quality than Nyakio's, but were more likely to be sold at a lower price since they were produced at scale. I argue that he was evidently out-competing Nyakio and other women farmers in Kikuyu. While an analytical scenario of the impacts of young farmers on agricultural markets and women livelihoods has not been carried out, I hypothesize that the heightened youth in agriculture narrative might increase the competition for women farmers with young farmers who have more access to new information, technology and have more time to spend on their farms as they are unemployed and unattached. As such, not only increasing the capacity of female farmers, but also understanding the changing dynamics as a result of introduction of educated young farmers shall help reposition the '*female farming par excellence*' (Boresup, 1970 in Okali, 2012).

Some young women chose marriage as an alternative to unemployment, failed dreams, and their way of attaining social adulthood. Growing up with her grandmother as an orphan, Bina's options for life were limited by her socio-economic conditions. She had received a partial scholarship to join a diploma college but dropped out when she could not afford the rest of the tuition fees. Back home, she continued to care for her siblings and her grandmother but soon decided to get married to Patrick where she saw prospects of getting-by.

I did not have enough fees... so I decided to come back home and hustle...that is when I met my brother in church and we ended up staying together. I still had the aim of going back to school, but now I had to help him on the farm. I was so engaged but when I heard of a new college in Nyakach town, I requested him if I could go back to college. Now I attend two days a week and the rest I am on the farm with him (Bina, female farmer, Nyakach).

Whereas Patrick married Bina as a symbol of his transition into adulthood, Bina used her husband's capability to finance her education and support her siblings – an interdependence she did not have before getting married. Her occupational aspirations were attached to her vital conjuncture, marriage, while for Patrick his adulthood was defined by his marriage and responsibility for the family. Thus, their collective agency was intertwined with social responsibilities and financial capabilities only accessible through marriage. There were other skewed partnerships between wives and their husbands and between young unmarried women and men. For instance, even though Okore's wife had no interest in farming, she took a loan from a women microfinance bank to support her husband in establishing a poultry project. Similarly, Awinji made his savings through his wife's account in the same bank because it offered lower interest rates for loans to female clients. The emphasis on the gendered identities was, therefore, to keep the relations flexible and to build a collective that met the needs of both the man and the woman. I now turn to examining how young men and women were involved in collective action.

The Collective Agency of Individualized Youth

In this section, I examine how young people engaged in collective action as groups either established by the youth themselves or sponsored by other actors, such as the state and NGOs. Young men and women perceived and utilized the ideology of collective action in different ways to manoeuvre prevailing uncertainties and attain individual accomplishments. The most common collectives were friendships within and across gender, marriage, family, schools, clubs, *chamas*, volunteer organizations, and the community. I will elaborate on the collective agency in marriage and groups which I categorize as clubs, *chamas*, and non-profit organizations. I end by offering a critique of capitals in a gendered society arguing for a more nuanced analysis of the differentiated ways in which young men and women garner and maintain social capitals.

The individual youth, who by the virtue of being educated were privileged, stood in tension with their collective agency as they attempted to navigate socio-economic uncertainties in order to earn incomes and maintain respectability as adults. Some, such as Keshi, Okore, and Cherunya, were transforming the understanding of collective agency *vis a vis* gendered roles of wives and husbands in marriage. With socio-economic changes, not only were women empowered to contribute to household incomes, but also the marriage institution was being transformed to accommodate the complementarity of husband and wife in raising a family. For example, Achieng and her husband had reconfigured themselves as entrepreneurial individuals whose diverse occupations contributed to the household (collective) livelihoods and empowered the woman.

Once you get into marriage, the men want you to be a housewife; you just wait for the food in the evening. You remain afraid of what would happen if you decided to do something by yourself. You are afraid to empower yourself... [But] when we [husband and I] wake up in the morning, we both go our different ways, and come back home in the evening (Achieng, female farmer, Busia/Eldoret).

Achieng had her own enterprise before getting married which she negotiated with her husband to keep as a way of empowering herself and supplementing the family income. By having an alternative source of income, their family was in a better position to manage the uncertainties of a changing economy. Similarly, Cherunya maintained her subsistence farming alongside her husband's tea and dairy farms. It was the same diversification strategy that Okore, Kirui, and Kaberere used to allow their wives to hold formal jobs while they hustled on the farm. Nevertheless, when such collective agency was not developed, it led to tensions, as in the case of Keshi whose in-laws were against her entrepreneurial lifestyle. These marriages depict diversity across gender lines whereby rather than working on a family business, or subordinating the wife, the husband and wife collaborate in managing future risks by diversifying into individualized economic opportunities. Therefore, the collective is comprised of competitive and complementary individuals rather than a cooperation of one.

The idea that the ‘self’ is ‘helped’ though the collective ‘group’ is contradictory and yet a significant feature of the neoliberal empowerment discourse in most of Kenya’s women and youth programmes. There is a long history of ‘self-help’ groups (*chamas*) which began in rural Kenya as a women’s initiative to avail ready cash for emergencies in a society that marginalized women from formal economic activities and banking services (Kinyanjui, 2014; Mutugi, 2006). Ardener and Burman (1995) refer to these ‘merry-go-rounds’ as Rotating Savings and Credit Organizations (ROSCAs) as they practically involved giving the individual group members their savings or credit in a rotating manner. *Chamas* are small, voluntary groups inspired by mutual assistance to satisfy a certain need (Ardener & Burman, 1995; Lourenço-Lindell & Lindell, 2010). Arising alongside cash economies, the *chamas* enable individual women to overcome social and economic challenges and collectively bring about desired social and/or personal change. Weekly or monthly table banking enabled women to meet financial needs they would often not afford as individuals (Kinyanjui, 2014). Mutugi (2006) categorizes the roles of a *chama* into welfare (e.g. burial, weddings), economic empowerment (e.g. market women, *bodaboda* transport), neighbourhood (e.g. security), clans (e.g. land divisions, conflict resolution), social activities (e.g. drama) and natural resources management (e.g. tree planting, water projects). Investments, self-improvement, and social welfare remain the most important goals for *chamas* in the informal sector. Their solidarity entrepreneurialism is based on extensive use of social capital to tap into the changes that take place nationally (Kinyanjui, 2014). Whereas the individual women are competitors, the social bonds in the *chama* emphasize collaboration in the development of personal identities.

The investment and self-improvement goals of a *chama* appeal to young people who are un(der)employed and who strategically use the collective ideology to build relationships and learn and share knowledge and experiences as a process of upward social mobility. The

collective provides a safe fall-back in case the individual projects fail and helps build resilience for unexpected changes in one's diversified life. Essentially, youth *chamas*' main purpose is capital investments and enhancing personal identity formation and eventually exiting marginalization as an unemployed educated youth. In earlier years, a few *chamas* existed among youth in sports and drama but these were often male-dominated in their membership and leadership (Mutugi, 2006). Recently, in the 'youth and agriculture' narrative, youth *chamas* and Saccos are promoted as a mechanism of financing youth agribusinesses.

Overall, most of my respondents belonged to more than one social group from where they accessed a variety of capitals. Youth *chamas* were small and structured investment and friendship groups of young people; often sharing similarities such as same gender, locality, and career orientation and with an aim of jointly saving a certain amount of money towards a specific future investment that has individual economic benefits. They were closed and secretive groups that operated on the principle of mutual understanding and trust. Members were incorporated based on their experience, capabilities, and their relations with other group members and the social world that's of interest to the *chama*. Individuals expected to bring new ideas, capabilities, and networks were invited to join a youth *chama* to diversify their reach and impact. Meetings were held at members' convenience, for instance, in the office of one of the members, over lunchtime, after a church service, over drinks among other multiple time spaces, hence not creating additional obligations. However, rather than aiming to develop each of the members at the same pace, contributions were differentiated and one's percentage of savings determined the return on investments they would gain in the future.

The members' responsibilities often revolved around market research, sharing information, and collective decision-making on viable investments in the present and in the future.

Sometimes, young people registered their *chama* as a company allowing them to make investments and remain free of liability when operating businesses. As a *chama* or registered company, individuals constructed their identity as established businessmen giving them access to higher social networks. A classic example of these characteristics was in Kirui's *chama*, comprising of seven of his high school classmates who had re-united after feeling disappointed with their career progression. They made monthly contributions and at the time, were investing in a modern strawberry farm (Cover page) which Kirui was managing. In addition, the group intended to diversify into food processing and real estate development. The individual members continued to hold fulltime jobs in different sectors and each was expected to contribute his skills to the specific projects that the *chama* would implement.

Young people also belonged to non-profit organizations that played the role of capacity building, awareness creation, and advocacy. Their establishment was supported either by an external actor such as the government, NGOs, or by individual elites who sought to address certain developmental challenges in their community. The engagement of members was shaped by the shared experiences and the diversity of the individual members in terms of their capabilities and personalities. The collective identity in these groups was influenced by how members constructed ideas about themselves as open, creative, and innovative persons in the forefront of change-making. Moreover, this was usually in contrast to how they imagined non-members in the community, and used this shared repertoire to negotiate respectable identities. For example, Eunice was the leader of a local youth group which mobilized and trained rural youth on how to establish what they referred to as green enterprises and to address climate change in their communities. Although she had been a member of the group for three years, she confessed her inability to apply most of the skills she had acquired, such as water conservation, integrated pest management, and sustainable farming practices. She found these practices expensive and time-consuming for her small

agribusiness to make any profit. As a result, Eunice consciously separated her collective environmental subjectivity performed in the youth group, from the individualized entrepreneurial ventures on her farm.

In a similar youth group in Embu, despite establishing a 'green enterprise' of greenhouse farming, the members could not afford to transition into such agribusinesses on their own. The group had successfully applied for the AgriVijana Loan from the Youth Fund and were harvesting their second season of vegetables from two greenhouses. Even though they had made a complete loss from the first season, the members contributed finances to plant the second season of vegetables. Paradoxically, only a few of them could associate their contribution to the group's activities as an investment from which they expected economic returns; instead, most viewed these projects as spaces for friendship, learning and passing time. As projects evolved, the group incorporated new members with diverse skills while existing members were encouraged to volunteer their skills and time towards other income-generating projects. Young people also joined and left the group as opportunities opened or closed elsewhere, such as temporary work or going to college.

The main characteristic of non-profit organizations is their emphasis on wealth redistribution over competition for individual wealth accumulation (Thieme, 2015). All members are expected to equally contribute and benefit from the group activities. Most of my respondents criticized this approach not on whether the model would yield any economic benefits in the end, but on the time it would take to achieve any results of independent livelihoods. For most youth, any investment in a group needed to yield benefits in the quickest time possible as this was their main (and sometimes the only) source of income. Otieno demonstrated this need by using the collective agency in the *bodaboda* group and the Community Forest Association (CFA) to advance his individual interests. After helping the local community to establish a

CFA, which he envisioned would give him credibility (symbolic capital) in local politics; he also established a tree nursery strategically targeting to sell the seedlings to the group (economic capital). On the other side, as the patron of a *bodaboda chama*, he over-stepped his voluntary contribution and started to influence decision-making in the group so that he could also benefit from the investments. Otieno's crafty participation in these groups was motivated by his need for immediate gains, and thus, his expectations from the collective were limited to the timeframe that such gains would be achievable. Such were the expectations of other youth who declined joining non-profit organizations.

The Kenyan government, NGOs, and funding agencies have also contributed to the pool of youth groups in Kenya. Most development NGOs require young people to form groups so as to benefit from their empowerment programmes. This range of groups received wide criticisms from my respondents. First, sponsored youth organizations often attracted young people who often had no prior interest in collective action as an avenue for improving their livelihoods. These youth found the process of forming groups time-consuming in relation to the expected benefits. Hence, rather than a shared vision and passion for joint enterprises (Andersson & Gabrielsson, 2012), some youth who formed such groups did so out of desperation. As a result, there were cases where, upon receiving such grants or loans, members distributed the money amongst them and disbanded the group.

Secondly, the model assumed that unemployed and disillusioned youth, if encouraged to develop social capital through such groups and provided with financial capital, they would establish independent livelihoods. This narrative is misguided because it fails to consider the dynamics and social costs of group formation. They also fail to consider the temporality of young people who in the course of forming groups or pursuing any livelihoods, may migrate, marry, go back to school, or find a job - actions which affect their expectations of a collective

and hence their commitment to the space and process. Thirdly, the support provided by these programmes is sometimes too little to help realize adequate returns to cater for the individual needs. Munene, an educated young farmer who had helped a local youth group apply for the Youth Fund, offered a critique:

Because this business of Youth Fund I don't think it is working. Ten young people you are given 50K, what are you going to do with it? Then you are also told to form a group; so the group dynamics are there. How many groups are working? ... The rest are not working, and the rest are young people, they are not just groups which are not working (Munene, male farmer, Kitui).

While the group model's aim is to empower the young people so that they can individually start their own enterprises, I have highlighted in Chapter Four the limitations of this kind of social capital. In addition to the social costs and the changing dynamics in group formation, young farmers commented that the requirements put in place before one could apply for the AgriVijana loans were often prohibitive to marginalized youth such as the uneducated, disabled, school drop-outs, ex-offenders, internally displaced, and those coming from conflict zones who would not have access to such resources without external support.

However, I also observed that most young people were misinformed on the procedures of accessing government youth support programmes. Two thirds of my respondents were unaware of how to access and repay the Youth Fund loans. All of them could mention the AgriVijana Loans, the Kazi Kwa Vijana, and the Uwezo Fund, which had been publicized during political campaigns, but only a few were aware of the full range of loan products available from the Youth Fund. In addition, given the popular experience of poor governance and corruption in youth programmes (Hope, 2012), few of the educated youth had interest in seeking the government loans.

Seeing how differently young people utilized the spaces provided by the collective, it is important to explore how social capital intertwined with neoliberal life trajectories. While

groups are formed out of a common goal to accumulate capitals, individuals diversified their interests into certain groups based on their socio-economic conditions. Youth in the rural areas and with little connection to urban areas, were more likely to join non-profit organizations where they benefited from capacity building and joint projects. Some of them were involved in table-banking to provide a safety net. Urban youth were more likely to join *chamas* mainly to make investments. Those involved in non-profit organizations were doing so to reclaim their respectability by being patrons or founders of such groups. Most youth belonged to more than one social group: they would make their savings with *chamas* with the intention of diversifying their investments in the future, and maintained their elitist identities by supporting non-profit groups. Forming groups was also a career path for some youth especially in research, advocacy, training, and entrepreneurship.

Additionally, young people used groups to express their frustrations at a failing developmental state and exhibit their resourcefulness in maintaining an independent life through collective action. Being part of a group increased their resilience and adaptive capacity to social and economic upheavals and enabled new possibilities for political intervention (Lourenço-Lindell & Lindell, 2010). As Kinyanjui rightly puts it, ‘to argue that these collective organizations are opportunistic is far from the truth. They are based on solidarity and common understanding among individuals who have been historically marginalized into subalternity and who are struggling with the same goal’ (Kinyanjui, 2014:115).

The criticisms of *chamas*, therefore, are evidence of the creation, loss, and limitations of social capital among young people in the course of altering their livelihoods. Enshrined in Bourdieu’s concepts of social capital, young people’s collective action embodied the traditional ideologies of associational life and trust, but also refashioned themselves as

neoliberal self-making projects manifesting as *chamas*, non-profit organizations, social enterprises, environmental clubs, and even the social media platforms. However, whereas young people would be expected to be enticed by the government and NGO youth empowerment programmes, most educated youth emphasized the benefits that one expected to accrue from the collectives and in relation to the individual effort required. Essentially, the individual and collective agency of young people demonstrates and contradicts the value of social capital in economic uncertainties. While the collective is useful in resisting dominant powers that subordinate the young men and women in the formal economy, it was also useful in producing competitive, yet gendered individuals in the very social space. As this occurs, masculine and feminine identities are also reconfigured and so is the collective.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that in precarious economies, young men and women approach adulthood and imagined life trajectories differently often determined by their ability to self-make and their positioning in the collective. Self-making was intertwined with the dynamics of being a young man or woman, and the external agencies of local collectives such as family, schools, clubs, *chamas*, and other social groups. There is no clear pathway of describing the gender disparities in the individual and collective identities of young men and women that I encountered because their feminine and masculine attributes were temporary, conflicting, and contrasting, and depended much on individual choice and social positioning over time and place. Self-making involved the flexibility to individually work hard, tap into the collective to advance the self, and often transgress the normative masculine and feminine identities to earn an independent livelihood.

As the socio-economic and political landscapes change, educated youth will continue to occupy new spaces and reproduce new meanings and alternative pathways to adulthood.

Their strategies do not necessarily represent the ideal futures imagined by the rest of the society, but they enable the youth to move forward towards attaining adulthood. Social groups may rely more on individual decisions; however, for gender, the external factors, such as society norms and expectations, will play a comparable role to individual decisions. Whereas a young woman could easily choose to abandon her culture and become an entrepreneur, her success and respectability is limited by how the society decides to perceive her new identity as a businesswoman. She could become financially independent and support her family but in some instances, value is attached to her subordination than to her financial capabilities.

In conclusion, young people's choice to pursue a neoliberal life trajectory was a continuous struggle characterized by power dynamics and consequences of gender relations, individualism, and collective action. Failing to find employment deprived educated youth of their elite distinction, but also opened them up to further marginalization as young men and women who had not yet 'arrived' or had failed to align themselves to the neoliberal life trajectories. As such, their gendered identities as individuals and collectives were primarily because they presented judicious opportunities for re-fashioning into successful and respectable individuals in the present, while re-imagining future independent livelihoods.

In the next chapter, I examine how neoliberal subjectivities were grounded on the conflicting notions of greening livelihoods.

8. THE PARADOX OF GREENING YOUTH LIVELIHOODS

Introduction

We should be able to feed ourselves if we utilize the land we have. If we improve it, if we empower people to adopt technology, and in ways of not only farming, but also in adding value to what they are producing... In addition, storage; because I find people are losing food stuffs like maize, and some are forced to sell at a low price (Makena, female farmer, Embu).

Despite her advanced age of 45 years, Makena, a sociology graduate, was introduced as a young farmer because she resonated with the description of other successful young farmers in the region who had adopted new agricultural knowledge, technologies, and accessed new markets. However, Makena's farm was a typical home garden with fruits, fodder and agroforestry trees as well as diverse range of indigenous food crops and animals for domestic and commercial use. At the time of the interview, she was practising minimum tillage, a farming practice involving minimal soil disturbance so as to maintain fertility and improve soil structure (Guto, Pypers, Vanlauwe, de Ridder, & Giller, 2012). During this period, the land was left fallow and perennial crops were allowed to grow freely with the weeds. Indigenous vegetables, bananas, tubers, fodder crops and weeds were growing on the fallow land. In the family compound, she kept dairy cows, rabbits, indigenous chicken, and dairy goats. She usually froze her fruits during the harvest season and sold them as blended juices during the dry season earning a good profit. When I asked³³ her if she knew what a green economy or a green job entailed, Makena was unaware of these terms. However, she talked of her farm practices as sustainable explaining how she produced enough and healthy food for her family; earned a decent income from selling farm produce throughout the year; and protected the environment by not using chemicals, planting trees, and using biogas for cooking, lighting, and refrigerating perishable foods. Makena also added that due to her soil

³³ The questions of green jobs, green economy, and sustainability were asked through a series of questions on if young farmers were conserving water, protecting the soil, minimizing use of chemicals, growing and preserving indigenous crops, practiced mixed cropping, used renewable energy, reduced or recycled waste, among others.

management practices, the farm would remain productive in the future. She explained that the trees ‘controlled’ the climate, kept her farm cooler, and ‘attracted’ rain. She also understood the significance of coping with the changing weather patterns and commodity markets and thus preferred growing drought resistant crops, drip irrigation and timing her planting with the rainy seasons. Indeed, Makena’s farming practices could be classified as sustainable or green livelihoods as I will explore in this chapter.

Following the practices of student environmentalists and young farmers, this chapter probes how the discourse of a green economy succeeded in creating new spaces for negotiating alternative youth livelihoods amidst environmental change, declining agricultural productivity, and socio-economic changes in Kenya. I argue that as the green economy agenda is localized, youth livelihoods are refashioned into green jobs which prioritize markets, new technologies, and the commodification of nature and self (Cock, 2014). Rather than analysing the totality of these green jobs, I aim to elucidate the reproduction of ‘greening youth livelihoods’ which I argue is a continuous process of attempting to improve one’s livelihood options (decent, green or otherwise) while relying on markets, technologies, and the commodification of nature and self. The specific questions addressed here are: *to what extent do the neoliberal ideologies of green jobs shape (or indeed are shaped by) the livelihood options of educated youth in Kenya; how are youth green jobs understood and pursued in the Kenyan context; and what are the implications of greening youth livelihoods?*

The chapter is divided into four sections. I first contextualize greening livelihoods in the notion of social navigation (Nielsen & Vigh, 2012; Vigh, 2010) which helps explain how individuals and communities respond to the variability of their physical and socio-political environments. The second section analyses the shades of green livelihoods as anticipated by student environmentalists and as performed by young farmers. The third section examines the

implications of prescribing a green economic model to youth employment in precarious economies such as Kenya's. The final section illuminates the overall thesis' argument by discussing how greening livelihoods is an important aspect of navigating waitness, securing alternative livelihoods and reworking the aspirations of educated youth.

Navigating Green Livelihoods

I want to use the knowledge I have as a food scientist and as a Kenyan. We are suffering from shortage of food, and we have to ask for food aid. We find in the time of plenty we have about 50 per cent of our produce going to waste. I want to develop a post-harvest technology as a small cottage industry in the village, for value addition which is in line with Vision 2030. This will help solve the problem of food insecurity and provide employment for the rural people (Thairu, male student).

Thairu, a fourth year environmental engineering student, desired to become self-employed while addressing food insecurity in his community. He linked his anticipated green occupation to the environmental knowledge he was acquiring through the club; his educational capability in developing a technology that could solve post-harvest food losses; and as well, his enthusiasm to establish a business that would employ other people in his community. He categorically mentioned his responsibility as a citizen to contribute to Vision 2030, and thus, the broader national neoliberal project of self-development. Whether, Thairu would achieve his dream in the near future is a complex question, but he demonstrated the acceptance to become an enterprising individual in a changing economy.

Contrary, Njango (27 years), a Master's graduate of International Relations from Wales, became an organic greenhouse farmer on her parents' ten by five metres portion of land after a year of unsuccessful tarmacking. She was frustrated that even after six years of international education; she still relied on her parents for upkeep rather than becoming dependable. Her frustrations were further aggravated by what she considered 'wrong' government decisions in the agriculture sector. She criticized the government subsidies on fertilisers, the imposed taxes on agricultural inputs, and the globalization of food commodity

markets that led to certification of food exports and entry of cheap food imports. That she was practising organic strawberry farming, Njango could be classified as a green entrepreneur; yet, her first priority was to become financially independent.

I know food insecurity is huge but it has been about maize and beans for a long time... I hope many young people will remodel that and change it. But for most of us, it's the frustration of not getting a job. We are in it [agriculture] to secure ourselves; securing a livelihood for yourself and those close to you (Njango, female farmer, Limuru).

We could argue that Njango was part navigating her waithood, part resisting government inadequacies in the governance of the agriculture sector, and part contributing to a new narrative of green entrepreneurship. Yet, the main issue with Njango's organic farming and Thairu's aspired green enterprise was that they both responded to the prevailing discourse of green economy that somewhat puts the burden of economic growth and environmental sustainability on young people through narratives of decent and green jobs. This was despite the reality that most young people were foremost unemployed and with limited access to the capitals required to negotiate for an occupation that safeguards the environment. Whether Thairu and Njango were consciously greening their livelihoods, or they were just attempting to adapt to the changes in their lives, depended on whether their immediate needs were satisfactorily met and there was a possibility to rework their aspirations. As one of the students later shared, any job was a matter of '*using our brains to feed our pockets*' and Thairu and Njango were evidently opportunistic in using their knowledge to pursue perceived green jobs.

Greening livelihoods are the daily encounters of neoliberal youth subjects in a constrained commodity market, their on-going (and also anticipated) adaptation strategies that enable them to manage the uncertainties of the physical environment from which they derive their livelihoods, and which are continuously performed and reworked to suit young people's everyday needs and to keep them on the momentum of attaining social adulthood. They

reflect the neoliberal society where development discourses, frames, and policy agendas, such as a green economy, sustainable development, and millennium development goals among others, emerge from international policy making scenes which construct the vision of the donor community to address the challenges of the so-called developing world. Whether these narratives become inclusive and impactful, as they often claim, remains contentious. However, in the case of young people, there is an increasing desire to embody such frames and make them their own projects of self-discipline through discourses such as decent work, green jobs, and social entrepreneurship, essentially greening youth livelihoods.

Consequently, this chapter makes two main arguments. First, the greening of youth livelihoods entails continuous, intertwined, and complex pursuit by neoliberal youth subjects to improve their selves by substituting occupations, diversifying into portfolio occupations, adopting new identities, utilizing new markets, technologies, and commoditizing their selves and nature from which they derive the livelihoods. Second, greening livelihoods is the conscious (and sometimes unconscious) processes of student environmentalists and young farmers to respond to the changes in their physical environment (from which they derive their livelihoods) through autonomous adaptive strategies including innovation, mobility, diversification, pooling, rationing, intensification, revitalization, and exchange (Thorn et al, 2015).

My point of departure is that greening livelihoods is a form of social navigation defined by Nielsen and Vigh as ‘motion within motion: a modality of practice that is premised on multiple movements and temporalities... pointing us to the relation between the movement of the environment and the way we move within it’ (2012:661). As individuals navigate the changing social-political and physical environments, they become ‘aware that *they* might be repositioned by shifting circumstances. As *they* seek to move within an unstable socio-

political environment, *they are at the same time being moved*’ (ibid). Social navigation involves detours, redrawing trajectories and employing new tactics. Nielsen and Vigh have used social navigation to explain how Biidi village in Northern Burkina Faso adapted to climate variability and the consequent rising food prices. The community demanded from the government food aid, offered their votes in return for food projects, sold their livestock, and some migrated to seek waged work in other regions. Similarly, greening youth livelihoods occurs in a state of liminality and significant unpredictability when individuals are not linked to state strategies of reducing vulnerability, and thus, employ diverse pathways of manipulating and adapting to their difficult situations (Thorn et al, 2015).

Throughout this chapter, I will show how young people pursue alternative livelihoods in environmentalism and farming through social navigation in the natural and social environments. Perhaps the critical question for this chapter is also, how is it possible for educated youth to pursue green livelihoods when they foremost lack the basic work opportunities and are uncertain about their futures? My argument is that the green economy narrative is successfully creating temporary and flexible shades of green job opportunities for young people who become employable in ‘green professions’ or as ‘green entrepreneurs’ as one young man shared:

We are insisting on going green; we are not yet there, but we are going there. We want to integrate spider plants with other crops to break the cycle and add nutrients to the soil. When you do short term crops, you can beat the seasonal weather patterns of rain failure and we are able to go against this (Alfred, Youth Group Member, Embu).

When I first met the members of this youth group in Embu, they prided in organizing young people to participate in a range of green activities including recycling plastics, making charcoal briquettes, artwork, environmental advocacy, and greenhouse farming. Most of the members were high school leavers and college students unemployed and dependent on their parents. Besides being a platform for environmental advocacy and networking, the group also

offered its members opportunities for acquiring essential skills in green businesses. The members ironically imagined themselves as green entrepreneurs, yet they were not gaining any immediate economic benefits from the group activities. What I observed, however, was the symbolic and cultural capitals with which they could identify with the country's Vision 2030 and with youth empowerment programmes that promoted green entrepreneurship. Most of the group members were aware of the country's green economy strategy and the national climate change strategy and extensively talked of their opportunities for green businesses in such policies. Even so, only two of the members of the group had established a business of their own. As such, their participation in the groups' green enterprises was just a part of their efforts to green their livelihood pathways.

Similar 'green' and 'social' entrepreneurial stories are increasingly being featured in the Kenyan media, particularly affiliated to ICT, agribusinesses and 'young rich' Kenyans. Some of the young farmers I interviewed had been featured on national print media such as *Seeds of Gold*, a weekend newspaper pull-out covering successful farmers, and *Smart Farmer*, a print magazine providing information to modern and prospective farmers in urban areas. On TV, young farmers were featured in *Shamba Shape Up*, a multi-donor funded educational and farmers' make over style TV show facilitating the transition of smallholder farmers into modern and sustainable agricultural practices, and in *Young Rich*, a TV show highlighting the rapidly increasing number of successful young entrepreneurs in Kenya. It was evident from these features that indeed young people were constantly seeking new markets, using new technologies, and some commoditizing their selves to remain competitive and resilient to the changes in the economy.

Greening livelihoods was necessitated by the constant mobility of young people who imagined themselves as having a wide scope of navigation between rural and urban spaces,

and between physical and virtual spaces (Gough, 2008; Tacoli & Mabala, 2010). Among the university students, the movement from home to university, club membership, and the anticipation to 'return home' to either tarmac or to transform the community inspired individual and collective adaptive strategies. These included professional socialization, certified experiences, and environmental anti-politics. Among the young farmers, rural-urban-rural migration and the use of ICTs transformed farming practices, such as access to markets, weather forecasting information, online social networks, and agricultural information and at the same time blurred the rural-urban divide. The land rental markets were changing from leases of several years of large-scale commercial agriculture to several months of small-scale intensified agriculture. Young farmers could negotiate to lease land for one season (sometimes as short as three months) and during this period they maximized on profits by growing short-season high value crops. Improving rural infrastructure such as irrigation schemes, piped water, electricity, and road networks were encouraging young farmers to invest in some of the previously remote and inaccessible regions of the country.

However, the longevity of most of these investments was uncertain. Most young farmers planned to transition into medium-scale agribusinesses, off-farm rural and urban enterprises, or to pursue further education and formal work. The decision of the future occupation was not necessarily based on whether the current livelihood opportunity was green, but on whether the young person would access the necessary capitals to sustain it in the future. These contrasts suggest that green youth livelihoods, was a matter of their ability to transition to something else, another place, expand their existing opportunities, or abandon them altogether as long as they guaranteed upward social mobility. One's navigation was dependent on one's access to information, capitals, market competitiveness, and social factors, such as gender, social networks, and social acceptability of their livelihood options. I

now turn to assessing how student environmentalists and young farmers were producing shades of green practices in a rather unpredictable physical and socio-political landscape.

Shades of Green in a Jobless Economy

The UNEP's 'shades of green' framework acknowledges that there are different degrees to which technologies, products, and business practices can be said to be green, ranging from reactive and remedial measures on the one hand to proactive measures on the other (UNEP, 2008:41). Hence, I do not disqualify any of the youth practices as not green, but propose that each of them pursued a different shade of green along the green jobs continuum³⁴ and the emergent livelihoods could either improve or deteriorate the process of achieving sustainable livelihoods and a green economy.

My conversations with university students, young farmers and key informants revealed that 'green' was indeed an embodiment of knowledge, certain practices, and behaviours. Most student environmentalists and young farmers who claimed to be green or had intentions of pursuing green livelihoods were influenced by their knowledge of environmental sustainability; the need to adapt to change; the need to increase productivity; and the prevailing market competitiveness for green products and services. Student environmentalists, by the virtue of belonging to environmental clubs, embodied pro-environmental behaviours and a 'green' professional outlook and often chose activities that increased their job market competitiveness by equipping them with new and additional skills. On the other hand, young farmers frequently tried out different technologies as options for navigating changing weather patterns, increasing pests and diseases, challenges with soil, water, and land resources, as well as the limitations of their agricultural knowledge and

³⁴ See Appendix IX for full list of shades of green practices by student environmentalists and young farmers

market demands. In the next two sub-sections, I examine the greening strategies of student environmentalists and young farmers.

‘For anything to be better conserved, it must be commercialized’: Greening the Student Environmentalist

With the changing climate, one key issue is that for anything to be better conserved, it must be commercialized. If water is left free, you will find that people will misuse it, but if we give it some commercial value; something you have to buy, you try to use it sustainably. That’s why we talk about green economy; for us to conserve we need to commercialize these things (Ouma, male student).

Ouma’s views that conservation can only be achieved through novel forms of valuation and commodification of nature relate to the neoliberal conceptions of environmental conservation that are widespread in developing countries (Brockington, 2008). He highlights the awareness among university students of the dynamics of neoliberal environmentalisms, which assume that the integration of capitalism and the environment resolves environmental challenges and results in growth, improved efficiency, development, and sustainability (Fairhead, Leach, & Scoones, 2012; Green & Adams, 2015). Furthermore, Ouma reiterates the role of individuals in environmental conservation. These – commodification of nature and participation of individuals in conservation – are major aspects of a green economy that emphasize the commodity markets, the collaborative role of the state and non-state actors, and the resultant social and environmental benefits.

What’s important for young people, however, was how they positioned themselves in these hybrid forms of environmental governance as student environmentalists and, therefore, important actors in the discourse of greening economies. Students discussed different forms of neoliberal conservation efforts as their future work opportunities, such as in eco-tourism, environmental research and consulting, carbon trading, waste recycling, and renewable energy businesses among others (as mentioned by Brockington, 2012; Newell et al., 2014; UNEP, 2014). Whereas most of these could be regarded as mere anticipations of their future

occupations, they highlight the emerging subjectivities of educated youth who embrace not just neoliberal ideals, but are also cognisant of the social and environmental challenges and benefits attached to certain natural capital commodity markets. These ideals were instilled through club activities and members emerged as competent environmental subjects for the anticipated neoliberal opportunities.

Everything in this world depends on cash. That's the reason why we are in school. We want to feed our brains so that our brains can feed our pockets. I think everyone would do farming as long as you are getting ready income... and you don't have the hustle of going to someone and asking them, "Hey I need to do this and that". You don't have a boss. I think everyone would want that; to be your own boss, and get some cash out of it; and you can also do something else on the side (Machangi, male student).

I expected that student environmentalists would be more interested in pursuing green jobs in the agricultural sector, especially because they were aware of the social and environmental benefits of doing so and they faced the same unemployment challenge as other youth in the country. However, as Machangi demonstrates above, farming was like any other occupation that promised a cover during times of economic uncertainties. Students expected careers with 'ready incomes' and not unpredictability, as their lives already were. Their career expectations were shifting from attaining a recognisable occupational status to achieving an independent livelihood defined in economic terms through market value or commodification of self. Furthermore, they preferred flexible occupations with fewer restraints associated with being an employer. Often times, the students expressed a desire to become self-employed, and others were just interested in having 'something else on the side' of their own. These tendencies – to be financially independent, innovate freely, your own boss, and accumulate wealth – indicated how students' aspirations as environmentalists intertwined with their navigation of crisis moments in their lives. For example, Samoe linked his desire for self-employment to the government failure to create jobs and his competence as a graduate student.

I see youth spearhead innovation by getting environment out of campus. If your profession is food science for instance, you can start a food industry. The government does not fund start-ups, but there are organizations that fund such. Don't wait for the white collar job. For us to get on top of the food chain, in terms of income, we cannot be working in offices... When I go out there, and I know my specialty is mechanical engineering, I think how I can come up with a green enterprise... and we can then create more jobs (Samoe, male student).

Being aware of the limited public opportunities for young people, students imagined their futures as disruptive innovators, particularly in solving the community challenges that the state had failed to address. As white collar jobs were no longer an option for most youth, Samoe was enticing his peers to pursue self-employment opportunities in addressing social and environmental challenges. While the state was viewed as incapable of offering these alternative youth opportunities, adaptive spaces were found in social networks and markets.

In 2014, I reconnected with Leonard, whom when I had interviewed in 2012, he was a green economy enthusiast and had expressed an interest to establish his own green business. However, after graduation, Leonard had only worked for six months as a research assistant and then retreated to his village to start farming fish and vegetables. Stuck in a presumably green enterprise, Leonard felt that unemployment, rather an entrepreneurial opportunity, had pushed him into the agribusiness. He was hoping that he would still find white collar employment to give him a decent income as he stabilized his side-hustle. Similarly, Kiplagat envisioned self-employment in a presumably green enterprise:

I will be the proud owner of a big agroforestry estate which will be a demonstration farm to the local community to provide lessons on conservation. At the same time, I will employ people there (Kiplagat, male student).

Although his vision to own an agroforestry estate might appear far-fetched; it aligned with his environmental degree; the environmental challenges in his community; his need to create a job for himself; and his expected responsibilities in society. By attaching value to environmental degradation and anticipated unemployment, tree planting was transformed from being a mere environmental restoration project at the club level to a future agroforestry

estate with viable business outcomes that contributed to economic growth and community development.

Green jobs were also viewed in the context of revitalizing the government which was blamed for failing to enact policies to address environmental change, resolve political struggles, and advance economic growth. Instead of open resistance and protestation, some students wished to become public sector employees from where they would bring radical change in environmental issues.

I will be working in a government office that is dealing with environment... Right now the government offices are not working so much; they are just there. A government office in Eldoret I visited the other time, I found the people there are very old, and don't even understand what needs to be done. They are just there. I want by that time [10 years], the people working in national organizations will be young people who are aware of the environmental issues and are ready to take care of the future. I want to be the steward (Chepruto, female student).

Chepruto anticipated transforming how the government would work in the future by introducing new environmental knowledge and a young workforce. She imagined a changed economy and transformed power structures that would accommodate new workers and substitute existing ones. Another student, Gladys, desired a green occupation in environmental activism so as to educate the communities and pressure the government: ‘A big person in environmental activism. I should be someone who will be actually pressurizing the government and other stakeholders to ensure they take care of the environment. Also, ensure that rural people are able to understand what environment means and can relate that their life entirely depends on it’. In all these cases, the club was viewed as an incubator of different kinds of green occupations and a safe space for students to try out different options, such as volunteering, or a starting an environmental project in one's community. In 2014, some of the students had ventured into side-hustles, such as farming, selling merchandise, owning *bodabodas* (motorbikes), operating *Mpesa* (mobile money payment services), and holding part-time jobs.

Nevertheless, even with knowledge and awareness; existing success stories; funding opportunities and relatively favourable policies; green jobs remained uncertain and beyond the reach of most student environmentalists. In 2014, Leonard no longer romanticized green economy and instead, was farming as a judicious opportunity to fix his timeless financial insecurities as he tarmacked for decent formal employment. For others like Machangi, it was the financial independence expected from any career investment and not the green connotations accompanying it. These examples show us that young people are open to different shades of green livelihoods, and a greening process would only be prioritized when one was assured of a secure livelihood.

These notwithstanding, the clubs provided a space for pooling social capital among the students and through which they gained certified experiences, joined professional networks, and participated in environmental anti-politics, thus advancing their claimed green livelihoods. Through clubs, they rationed their leisure time and friendships, and instead used them in conducting environmental activities believed to eventually result into environmental professions. I now turn to the contradicting processes of greening young farmers.

‘It is about agriculture that is going to be sustainable’: Greening the Young Farmer

It is sustainable because I use animal manure to improve soil fertility and I use the crop residues to feed the livestock... I use Zai pits which is a new technology to retain soil moisture and have erected some terraces to reduce soil erosion. I can confidently say it is sustainable because the fertility is not lost (Musembi, male farmer, Kalawa).

In Kalawa, an arid region of Eastern Kenya, Musembi planted drought resistant crops during the short rainy season and irrigated fast growing vegetables using harvested rainwater during the dry season. Just as Makena had claimed the sustainability of her farm, Musembi too described his sustainable farming practices as those which improved soil fertility; controlled soil erosion; retained soil moisture; and were profitable. These were affordable practices which enabled him to adapt to the low and unpredictable rainfall, soil erosion, and market

dynamics, and at the same time, provided an opportunity to earn an income during the dry seasons and while tarmacking. His farming was also opportunity-driven as he acquired most of the skills in sustainable farming from his contractual job as an extension officer.

Musembi demonstrated that young farmers' choice of what was sustainable was both that which conserved the environment, and that was economically feasible in the short-term and long-term. Unlike Musembi, most young farmers were less aware and concerned with the sustainability of their farming practices. I discuss here ten of their farming practices that reflected any effort to green their farming, including their acquisition and use of agricultural information, water conservation strategies, soil and land use management, organic farming, integrated farming, climate-smart agriculture, quality germplasm and animal breeds, modern farming techniques, certification and institutional adaptive capacities.

1. Access to agricultural information and services was a main determinant of young peoples' choice of farming practices. Young farmers were always searching for information that could help them improve their productivity, access new markets, or diversify into other profitable practices. They visited other farmers, read widely, and experimented with new technologies. They relied on online platforms, TV and radio stations, print and social media for agricultural information. In return, they contributed by sharing their own experiences through social media and during farmer field visits. Adoption of sustainable farming practices depended on how each farmer responded to the agricultural information they acquired, mostly influenced by their access to finances, land, time, and general market competitiveness.

Last resort farmers were less likely to adopt sustainable farming practices. Even where they might have access to the knowledge and skills, their application was limited by their access to resources, and their need to balance responses to prevailing changes and wealth accumulation. For instance, Eunice and Omonge could not afford to adopt the sustainable

agricultural practices she had learnt through her youth group. They practised intensive furrow irrigation³⁵ pumping water from a nearby river, and applied agro-chemicals and fertilizers throughout the year.

There is a time we got around Ksh. 600,000. That time I used many chemicals to sustain the crops and make that profit. They require proper management, but if you don't have money, you can't get that profit (Omonge, male farmer, Nyakach).

Eunice was aware of the environmental challenges they were facing (and were also creating), but recounted their lack of comparable alternative livelihoods.

Figure 8. 1 Eunice (left), Omonge (third left) and their neighbours setting up for furrow irrigation



Although the water levels in the river had been declining, they had to continue irrigating their crops to make ends meet. She explained the frequent flash flooding leading to massive crop losses; the increased incidences of pests and diseases attack; and invasive weeds which required more investments in agro-chemicals. Additionally, the larger Western region was

³⁵ They pumped the water from a nearby river using a generator that ran on oil, further increasing their cost of production

experiencing prolonged dry periods and thus horticultural farming required regular irrigation, raising the cost of agricultural production. For lack of another ‘smart’ option, their farming practices were their green livelihood at the time.

In Homabay, Adhiambo who was farming mainly for Nairobi and export markets was reluctant to accept that there was any difference between her intensive practices and those that were claimed to be sustainable. She preferred to use furrow irrigation claiming it was cost-effective and time-efficient. She also practised an intensive spraying and fertilizer application regime for all her crops: she sprayed insecticides twice a week and applied fertilisers and growth boosters every three weeks. When I asked her about any measures to optimize resource use on her farm, she instead suggested a misunderstanding on the effects of fertilisers on the land.

Fertilisers have no effect on the land; when you add them, they go to the plant not to the soil. But we face this problem when we are leasing land. The land owners ask you if you are going to use fertilisers; if you say yes, you don't get the lease... but farmyard manure is very expensive like when you want to use it on six acres of land. So we use the granules fertilizer from the shops (Adhiambo, female farmer, Homabay).

Adhiambo's claim that fertilizer use had no effect on the soil could be contested; but it was also said in a context of the scale of fertilizer application. She had six acres of land leased in different parts of the county and, therefore, considered it costly to source and transport organic fertilizers to all those farms. However, the intensity of her practices had led to her becoming a ‘millionaire farmer’, as featured in one of the media houses, after earning a million shillings from water melon farming in less than four months.

Not far from Adhiambo, Oguge claimed to be applying sustainable practices on his farm, ranging from greenhouse tomato farming, sugarcane, fish, dairy, and tree farming. He described his practices as ‘novel technologies and they are rewarding, but many young people shy away from them, because they require a long-term investment’. A full-time

university researcher, and running several side-businesses, Oguge attributed his farming successes to the knowledge he gained from professional and business networks. He explained how each of his farming activities were profitable and sustainable, such as the use of animal manure and planting of agroforestry trees, even mentioning his possibilities of trading in carbon once his trees had matured. However, as our conversations continued, Oguge indicated how he had made huge savings from buying in bulk the government subsidized fertilizers. Not only did this statement negate his previous claim that he was a sustainable farmer, it also exposed the contrast between what young people considered sustainable versus what was affordable. In this case, he was like Adhiambo and Eunice who prioritized the profits.

2. Sustainable soil and land management practices were the most common green practices that young farmers pursued. Those whose farms were small used organic manure while those with large farms preferred chemical fertilizers. In Eastern and Western regions, more young farmers planted trees because they had larger pieces of land and were more prone to erosion and soil nutrient loss. Agroforestry was common among those who owned large pieces of land usually over two acres. In Kitui, Kimwaki (32 years), a science journalist, had inherited ten acres of land from his father where he planted trees for timber. Within three years, he had planted over 3,000 *Melia volkensii* trees, an endangered indigenous tree species that provided both fertiliser and high quality timber. A year later, he integrated the trees with farming of fodder crops and goat keeping. His friend Munene was practising agroforestry on three acres of land by integrating a variety of fruit trees, timber trees, and fodder trees with vegetables, pulses, and tuber crops. He also had a tree nursery, zero-grazed dairy cattle, and harvested runoff water for irrigating the tree nursery and the vegetable garden.

3. Integrated farming practices: Mutua classified himself as an integrated farmer of fish, dairy cows, poultry, vegetables, fodder crops, fruits, and staple crops. He had installed a greenhouse and open field drip irrigation system for horticultural farming. He grew fodder crops and owned a shaft cutter for making animal feeds. He owned a tractor which eased ploughing and was hired out to other farmers. He used the crop residues either for mulching or for making animal feeds. Waste water from the fish ponds irrigated the horticulture farm. To maintain soil fertility, he practised crop rotation alternating rain-fed drought resistant leguminous crops with irrigated vegetables. Fruits and fodder crops were intercropped or planted as hedges to control soil erosion while animal manure was used as organic fertilizer. Fish was used to enrich chicken and cow feeds, while chicken manure was used to enrich the fish ponds to enhance the growth of algae for fish consumption. Located in a very remote area of Kitui, Mutua had purchased a motorbike, a pickup, and a tractor which he used to transport his farm inputs and outputs and his farm workers. His family was among the few in the community who had installed electricity which enabled him to refrigerate perishable farm produce. He had seven waged workers whom he trained on modern farming methods and offered free housing. He planned his planting and harvesting times in advance to ensure that he took advantage of the market prices, maximized on the rainy seasons to reduce irrigation, and remained resilient to the arid conditions of his region.

4. Climate-smart agriculture: Ndanu and her husband Philip had been featured as ‘climate-smart farmers’ in the *Shamba Shape Up* TV show. While the term was new to them, they employed a mix of sustainable farming practices including zero-grazed dairy cattle, biogas production for home use, farming drought resistant crops, drip irrigation using harvested runoff water, crop rotation, and planting agroforestry trees. When they got married, Philip started planting trees as ‘*a future investment plan*’ which he diversified into timber, fruit, and fodder trees. They planted high quality beans bought from the government’s Katumani Seed

Centre³⁶ and in turn sold to them their quality seeds after harvesting. They belonged to a farmers group that provided weather forecasting information enabling them to make decisions on planting and harvesting times, and hence, reducing the losses encountered due to limited rains and low market prices. Ndanu was also a veterinary officer, a freelance job which supplemented her farm income and gave her an opportunity to interact with other farmers in the region. These activities were adaptation strategies effectively providing decent household income and enabling their resilience to environmental and market changes.

5. Organic farming: Young farmers who adopted organic farming practices were motivated by market competitiveness and the rising health consciousness of the middle class in Nairobi. Bernadette, for instance, had returned from America to care for her ailing father, a situation she said, had motivated her to produce healthy food for the growing middle-class urban population. Njuki, on the other hand, claimed to be an organic farmer, who used animal manure and practiced crop rotation to reduce crop pests and diseases incidences and maintain soil fertility. Both Bernadette and Njuki packaged their produce and targeted an elite class living in the suburbs of Nairobi. Likewise, Kimondo's motivation to become an organic farmer was due to the expected financial gains and the possibility of maintaining the fertility of his *plot* of land.

Then you look at the clientele you see these tu-mzungu [white people] and these health conscious kinds of people. You realize why everybody is flocking in this organic market is because of the health aspects. For a farmer, it is the most profitable way to go (Kimondo, male farmer, Nairobi/Kikuyu).

When his first attempts in strawberry farming failed because he bought the wrong seedlings, Kimondo decided to invest in producing healthy strawberry seedlings, training other farmers in organic farming, and selling his fruits at the organic farmers' market in Nairobi.

³⁶ Government owned seed research centre producing high quality seeds especially for the drylands.

Kimondo's organic farming practices included growing strawberries on sunken beds, integrated pest management practices, drip irrigation, and production of his own organic fertilizers through vermiculture – a technology that used live red wiggler worms to decompose biomass. The vermicompost and liquid fertiliser had a higher nutrient value, were good soil conditioners, enhanced microbial growth in the soil, and boosted the growth of the runners and the fruit. These improvisations enabled him to increase the production of runners and attract a new category of farmers who were interested in organic farming practices. Although he had not acquired certification for organic farming, Kimondo believed that his practices were purely organic and preferred by all his clients.

6. *Water conservation strategies* were the backbone of all farmers. To some, it was the lack of adequate water to support their irrigated farming practices while for others it was the high cost of water for irrigation that drove them to invest in water conservation strategies. These ranged from mulching, water harvesting, drip irrigation, sinking boreholes, water recycling, sunken beds, and planting drought resistant crops. Each young farmer chose a water conservation strategy depending on his or her financial capabilities, knowledge of water conservation strategies, and the availability of reliable water sources. When Mutua started farming, he used sprinkler irrigation, but this was expensive as it required a lot of fuel to pump from the borehole. He then started alternating irrigated horticultural crops with rain-fed indigenous crops which would also enhance soil fertility and provide fodder for the animals. Later, he installed a greenhouse to enable him optimize water use through drip irrigation. By introducing fish farming, the nutrient-rich water from the fish ponds was irrigated on the crops thus optimizing use of water and nutrients. Digging terraces helped control soil erosion, and retained the fertility, thereby increasing the productivity of the farm. Other farmers harvested runoff on water pans and would use the water for irrigation during the dry seasons, thus producing food when the market prices were high.

Most young farmers complained about the effects of weather changes on water resources and agricultural productivity. In Eastern region, the lack of rains had led to several crop losses, while in the Western region, flooding and hailstorms destroyed crops. As a result, some of them, like Adhiambo, opted to irrigate their farms during the dry seasons rather than lose their crop to hailstorms or floods during the rainy seasons. Okore was planning to start leasing land in neighbouring Uganda where he expected fewer hailstorms and had access to a permanent river for irrigation. Soil erosion was prevalent in Eastern and Western regions, but was often controlled through terracing and tree-planting.

Figure 8. 2 Soil erosion and effects of river flooding in Western Kenya



7. Modern and protective agricultural technologies were fast spreading among young farmers given their limited access to land and capital, their need to save time and make quick incomes while at the same time, adapting to the weather changes. Techniques that optimized resource use, minimized incidences of pests and diseases, reduced the cost of production, and maximized yields were often sought after. Greenhouse farming was an intensive and innovative strategy that optimized on small land sizes and reduced the possibilities of land degradation by ensuring that only small quantities of resources were used to produce crops over short periods of time. Historically, greenhouse farming is associated with large-scale horticulture farming in Kenya. However, in recent years, companies supplying this technology have customized small-scale greenhouses some of which were introduced through

government programmes, such as the AgriVijana Loans programme. The technology is knowledge and labour intensive, and those whose greenhouse farms had failed often referred to the lack of adequate knowledge on the management. Ten young farmers had installed small-scale greenhouses³⁷, three of them had already failed, and many others aspired to own a greenhouse in the future.

Muriuki and Wanguhu specialized in hydroponic farming as a quick and cost-effective way of feeding their pigs. The technique involved speeding up crop growth while avoiding soil related plant diseases by germinating crops in a water medium. It is an ideal technology for farmers with limited resources, time, and space. The time of growth is drastically reduced, for instance, the germination of wheat and barley from 21 days to only six days making it a faster method of growing more nutritious livestock fodder. Muriuki and Wanguhu were utilizing approximately seven by seven metres *plot* of land on Wanguhu's homestead for growing hydroponics and rearing pigs. They also offered trainings and construction services for the hydroponic structures and retailed barley and wheat. Other modern technologies that were not common among the young farmers included open field drip irrigation and the use of agro-nets to shield the crops from direct heat, birds of prey, and hailstorms. In animal husbandry, incubation and selling of day-old chicks was a thriving business among the poultry farmers.

8. Quality germplasm and animal breeds: Young farmers invested in high quality seeds and healthy breeds of animals by propagating, purchasing, and some, trading in them. Quality varieties were to increase productivity, prevent pests and disease attack, for drought resilience, and to fetch higher market prices. Amayo invested in hybrid onions and stevia farming, both of which fetched high market prices. Kaberere had become a specialist in

³⁷ The size of these greenhouses was mostly 8 by 15-24 metres

breeding high quality indigenous chicken. Kimondo specialized in propagating and selling organic strawberry runners and training other farmers on organic farming methods. Joe planted certified onion seeds from an international seed company which also offered him free extension services and crop insurance. Ndanu and Phillip purchased their seeds from the government's Katumani Centre, and also sold their quality seeds to them. Watiri and Adhiambo received from agro-companies, free seeds, growth boosters, and agro-chemicals to test them on their farms, while Awinji and Masika produced indigenous vegetable seeds which they sold to a certified indigenous seed company in Western Kenya.

Figure 8. 3 Awinji's indigenous vegetables farm



Most indigenous crops were believed to withstand the changing weather patterns and fetched higher market prices in the urban areas. However, the controversy of seeds and animal breeds was in sourcing the right varieties. Whereas in Kenya seeds are freely shared amongst farmers, young people expressed fear of contamination of pure breeds. For instance, Kirui who at one point had considered importing strawberry seeds, explained how, due to lack of

specialized research in strawberry in Kenya, farmers often assumed there existed only one variety of strawberries, and thus, would buy seedlings from different farms and plant them on the same piece of land. The cross-pollination would obviously affect the variety of the fruit produced. Additionally, there were concerns over the introduction and lack of control of genetically modified crops. While none of the farmers mentioned any knowledge of these crops in the market, the lack of restrictions on seed sharing meant that the search for high quality germplasm remained a challenge for most farmers in Kenya.

On the other hand, some young farmers had introduced new seeds. Wanjiku planted tomato seeds obtained from America through a family member; Oguge had once planted tomatoes whose seeds he had acquired from a friend in Israel; Amayo had planted beans from Uganda and Tanzania; while Kaberere had crossbred a Ugandan and a Kenyan breed of chicken. There also existed fake seeds in the market. Some of the young farmers had lost a whole season after their seeds failed to germinate or when their crop failed to cope with the weather conditions. In response, young farmers diversified their agribusinesses to propagating and selling high quality seeds. Makena propagated seeds of sorghum, maize and indigenous vegetables; Kaberere had improved the indigenous variety of chicken; while Kioko was propagating hybrid varieties of citrus fruits.

9. Certification: A few young farmers had embraced global certification of their farms and branding of their products so as to capture the competitive local high-end and export markets. Njuki acquired Global Good Agricultural Practices (GGAP) certification not to export his produce, but to access niche markets in the five-star hotels in the East African region. Wanjiku was seeking GGAP certification so that she could venture into greenhouse horticulture farming for export purposes. Besides showing interest in the economic benefits associated with certification and export markets, Wanjiku referred to herself as a conscious

farmer who produced ethical food for ‘a growing middle class urban community who are concerned about the source of their food’. She explained her ethical practices as the installation of open field drip irrigation system, use of animal manure and limited use of pesticides.

In theory, certification should enable consumers to use their purchasing power to support sustainable products and so drive social and environmental improvements along the value chain; but when it is a requirement for market access, it becomes a barrier for small-scale producers rather than an opportunity (Kariuki, 2014; Muriithi, Mburu, & Ngigi, 2011). In economies like Kenya where the gap between the rich and the poor is wider and the cost of food is high, even with a growing middle class, the buying power of consumers has not significantly changed to accommodate consumption of expensive certified food commodities. On the other hand, urban farming increases the competition between certified food commodities and locally produced fresh foods available cheaply in food markets or from urban kitchen gardens. Several young farmers were already in opposition to certification processes as these would lock out those organic producers who could not afford the certification costs. Most were also opposed to certification as a means of accessing export markets and preferred alternative local branding targeting the growing middle class who shopped at local food markets or preferred home delivered fresh foods.

The inputs are minimal, what makes it [organic farming] expensive here? Especially, if you have to get all the certificates... I did not get the certificate, and I intend not to get one... For a long time, people have been doing organic farming, but they didn't have the certificate, so if these people knew they were doing organic farming, then they would sell their products more expensively. As a matter of principle I will not pay that money, but I will sell my produce as organic, and cheaply (Njango, female farmer, Limuru).

10. Institutional adaptive capacities were evident in young farmers' diversification strategies and in their collective agency in *chamas*, online social networks, and in their families and friendships enabling them to manage and share risks. Some young farmers resulted to rural-

urban-rural migration where they were able to make investments in different socio-economic settings as need arose (Muyanga, 2013). The diverse sources of income included off-farm rural enterprises; trading in agricultural produce; diversifying the range of crops grown or animals kept; propagating and trading in seeds; salaried work in urban areas; and value addition, such as packaging and processing. These provided a fall-back strategy when and if the agribusinesses did not result to adequate incomes as the young farmers expected.

Collective action was essential in enabling young farmer's adaptive capacities. For instance, Mutua indicated that his greatest assets were his family, his community, and his urban friends. He had started farming on his father's land, and even after buying his own land, continued to farm there because he could rely on his siblings as unpaid labour on the farm. Rather than seek bank loans, his elder brothers financed most of his projects. He employed school drop-outs from his neighbourhood, whom he trained and offered decent wages. He also made use of the social networks he had created during his university days to market his products in Nairobi. Twice a week he worked as an independent financial advisor in Nairobi where he met new clients for his agricultural products and services. He had diversified his farm incomes to include proceeds from sale of dairy products, poultry products, horticultural produce, fish and fingerlings as well as the training services and hire of his tractor to other farmers. Mutua and his brother had also formed a non-profit organization in Kitui which they were using as a platform to educate the community on sustainable farming methods. The NGO activities brought more people to his farm increasing his client-base.

Gitonga on the other hand, utilized the small *plot* of land owned by his parents to keep poultry and farmed vegetables on leased land in the neighbourhood. He also rehabilitated and farmed on the riparian land along a stream next to his home. He had relied on his father for collateral when he needed a bank loan to expand his poultry business and was saving through

a Sacco from where he hoped he would take another loan to buy his own land. His siblings had no interest in farming and thus Gitonga had to hire farm workers. Given his young age, he often requested for farm services through his father's name so that older service providers would respect him. He lived with his parent's as this provided a safety net in uncertain times of market failure. He had diversified his income sources by offering home deliveries and trainings on kitchen gardening and agribusiness management. He also maintained his social networks in the youth organization from where he met most of his clients.

In sum, there is no distinct way of classifying or measuring the extent of greening young farmers' livelihoods; however, one can assess the flexibility and the continuum of individual efforts towards improving their capabilities. It is also possible to observe through the young farmers the contradictions of the discourse of green jobs for young people. I will now turn to explore the paradox of the prescribed youth green jobs in Kenya.

The Challenge with Greening Youth Livelihoods

One of the advantages I have as a learned person is that I can understand the kind of sporadic changes in farming and market feasibility. I analyze them and develop strategies to help me survive in such situations. I will know how to plant, where to buy my inputs, and where to market my products. I am doing well with my expertise (Oguge, male farmer, Homabay).

Oguge and a few other youth were an exception. Most young people lack the portfolios of capitals – skills, credit, networks, productive resources, and enabling policies – that would enable them to adapt to change and transition into sustainable farming. Nevertheless, access to these capitals does not always lead young people to adopt sustainable practices. As we see in Oguge's case, even where he claimed to be a sustainable farmer, there are times he had to seize opportunities that would enable him make economic gains over maintaining a sustainable practice. These unpredictable moments are evident in most of the young people I met. I found that most young farmers were shifting towards intensive production of fast-maturing and high yielding crops and animals due to the need for quick incomes, the

shrinking land sizes, unfavourable weather patterns, expansion of urban markets and infrastructural improvements. Very few of them chose farming because they wanted to contribute to a healthy or green economy. Instead, the term was used as a proxy for their actions. The consequence was the increasing transformation of smallholder rural farms and urban spaces into intensive production sites for dairy products, poultry products, fruits, and vegetables. As a result, greenhouses, hydroponics, incubators, storeyed chicken houses, zero-grazing, among other modern and intensive farming techniques were becoming common terms of communication among the young farmers.

It is important to question whether the narrative of green jobs was applicable to all of young people's livelihood options. To start with, most young farmers, even after investing in agricultural information services, faced the challenge of identifying what information was best for their contexts. Agricultural research has often focused on Kenyan staple and indigenous crops while most of the young farmers specialized in exotic crops (Nzuma, 2013). Since very few agricultural extension officers had information on their farming practices, the young farmers relied on agro-shops, who often times did not have adequate information. Only a few who had the finances could afford to hire qualified extension officers. Secondly, new technologies are not enough to inspire the adoption of green practices. Most of these were expensive especially after the government imposed taxes on agricultural inputs. Very few young farmers afforded new agricultural inputs and that's how they came about to rely on borrowed seeds, home-made animal feeds, *juakali* greenhouses among other cheaper options. Thirdly, markets were not necessarily and always niche for new and green products and services as most young farmers continued to struggle with access and competitive prices for their products.

Furthermore, some green jobs remained socially exclusive favouring male entrepreneurs and further marginalizing young women from participating in the agricultural value chains. For instance, Mwende's response to climate variability intertwined with the societal norms in her community where she was expected to contribute to household income.

Kitise is where I come from. That place never receives rain, or very little rainfall. So I decided because it rains here in Woote, and at least people harvest, I can look for a kashamba [small piece of farmland] so that I be farming. We have been buying food all along from January to December in our home place... so that I can also assist my family (Mwende, female farmer, Woote).

The fact that she did not view her farm as an enterprise also meant that she was not prompted to invest in modern farming techniques that would increase the farm productivity. Nevertheless, mobility had enabled Mwende to access opportunities for overcoming the vulnerabilities of her family, by seeking further education, finding a job, getting married, and eventually farming in Woote. She represents the continuum of autonomous adaptive strategies that sustained a person in a changing landscape.

In retrospect, green livelihoods remain problematic in Kenya as the whole agrifood system has not transformed in favour of national food security and sovereignty (Nzuma, 2013). Whereas the government expressed a desire for young people to contribute to the country's food security, the entrepreneurial activities they promoted and the policies that were implemented, favoured importation of cheaper food, taxation of agricultural inputs, and exportation of horticultural foods.

There is a lot of strange focus going on when we talk of food security and there is nothing being done... That is why those farming for the export market will continue to do that because perhaps there is no incentive to produce food for the local market (Njango, female farmer, Limuru).

Njango complained that most of the agricultural trade policies had favoured export-oriented agriculture over producing food for local consumption. However, young people had the potential to invest in high value, land intensive, and sustainable farming practices, firstly to

maximize on profits, and secondly, to contribute to a social good of feeding the population. While they might use the narratives of food security, sustainability, and inclusivity, their priority would be to secure a livelihood in the present as they are mostly uncertain about the future. Perhaps the government was well-informed on the ambivalence of young people's lives when they designed youth in agriculture programmes comprising of short-season high value crops.

There are claims that developing the export horticultural food value chains reduces attention on staple foods which most communities need to be food secure and increases the use of natural resources for the production of food for external markets which have limited economic and social benefits to the producers in the long-run (Muriithi, Noga, & Bhaduri, 2012). In effect, local foods would remain expensive to local communities while a few entrepreneurial individuals would benefit from commercialized farming. I argue that green jobs did not necessarily lead to food sovereignty and only satisfied the needs of a few individuals with the capitals to invest.

Pragmatically, the idea of greening youth livelihoods allowed educated youth to refashion themselves as social change-makers and maintain elite distinctions as expected by society. A green occupation was respectable and recognizable, especially when it genuinely addressed the welfare of the community. Environmentalism and modern agribusinesses were setting a new image of educated youth by introducing alternative measures of the success of an educated person. For instance, green occupations were associated with creating work opportunities for other youth as an indicator of financial independence and responsibility. Overall, young farmers created work opportunities in production, transport, input and output markets, certification processes, skills training, provision of agricultural information services, providing extension services and in processing.

Finally, environmentalism and green entrepreneurship were becoming a novel lifestyle for educated youth in the face of unemployment and green economic thinking in Kenya. It is a culture that involved investing in accumulation of knowledge; participating in public events relating to the green economic thinking; and networking with other farmers, entrepreneurs, and environmentalists to learn and share experiences. It was also a process of utilizing modern technologies to design new career paths in sectors, such as agriculture, renewable energy, and environmental protection. One would embody green livelihoods as long as they had the necessary capitals to maintain such an identity. As such, greening livelihoods was a continuous process of reworking youth aspirations and changing one's conditions of waiting as I examine in the next section.

Reworking Aspirations

I actually want to go back to school and study for a masters in E-commerce after I setup properly. I still believe that E-commerce [has] not scratched the surface in this country. I still want my grandma to buy stuff on the [inter]net (Kaberere, male farmer, Nairobi/Kikuyu).

I know there are many things we want to do in life but you can't do them without money. Normally if you are in an office, society or a Christian, anything; resources give you a voice other than your academic credentials and what you know. Do you have resources to see what you belief in taking shape? That has really boosted my ideas of investment (Joe, male farmer, Nairobi/Kajiado).

The occupational choices of Kaberere and Joe help us understand how educated youth are reworking their aspirations in contemporary Kenya. Aspirations are an individual's desire to obtain a status or achieve a goal, such as a particular occupation or level of education. They are developed and achieved in certain contexts and may be influenced by family background, peers, gender, socio-economic status, and locality. As observed from Kaberere, his entrepreneurial aspirations changed as he occupied new social fields that eventually led him to establish an agribusiness. But even while in this business, his aspirations kept evolving and he expressed a desire to pursue postgraduate studies in the future so as to diversify his business. Although he was a school drop-out, Kaberere's definite plan was not to attain an

education entitlement, but to acquire extra skills in a field that he foresaw business opportunities. Education in this case was an investment towards reworking his aspirations allowing him to diversify and remain competitive in the market: a form of greening his livelihood.

On the other hand, Joe's aspirations for wealth creation would be attained through his side-businesses and a postgraduate degree which he expected would lead to a promotion and pay rise at his workplace. He referred to his agribusiness as a hobby, *'I am not a journalist on the weekends. I am in my wellies, my hat, and it's a lot of fun just like going to play golf'*, that eventually would be expanded into a large-scale greenhouse farm for export purposes: a form of greening his livelihood.

It's a pet project, and it is fun... It's a new thing, but it was not cool five years ago. If you look at it as a business, it's cool...This business needs to grow, coz when you move into exports, you are talking big money. I am planning to go into farming for export (Joe, male farmer, Nairobi/Kajiado).

Both Joe and Kaberere demonstrated the willingness for self-improvement so as to rework their aspirations and their imagined futures. Similar to them, were the university students whose self-improvement took place in the diverse club activities they viewed as complementary to their degrees. They constructed themselves as emerging from the university with abilities to 'start something', 'go back', 'give back', and 'reshape the community'. The associational life in clubs enhanced one's ability to garner a portfolio of capitals, manage uncertainties, perform multiple identities, and to negotiate for their elite distinction in society: all forms of greening their livelihoods.

There were significant disparities between how young men and women managed their multiple identities and imagined their futures. While young men expected power and authority, young women were more concerned with the day-to-day wellbeing and a healthy environment. There was a change in the sharing of marriage responsibilities where most

young women were determined to establish a stable occupation before getting married and most young men expressed a desire to marry women who had stable occupations. Statements like *'who will marry me without a job'* from a female student and *'I want to marry a woman who is more intelligent than I am'* from a male student were handled with normative consensus that both gender had equal contribution to society. Nevertheless, fewer female students aspired for leadership positions in both the environmental clubs and their future lives. Among the young farmers, women were more likely to be criticized and discouraged by the society for choosing an agricultural occupation. They were also more likely to abandon farming, mainly because of the male-dominated business environment, difficulties in acquiring land, hiring labour, or even because of an emerging culture that encouraged young men to work hard in the rural areas while 'keeping' their wives and girlfriends 'away' from the hustles in the urban areas. All these were forms of greening youth livelihoods.

Technology was greening youth aspirations by enabling daily encounters with imagined possible futures. Young people immersed in a new world of social learning from online communities, such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube among others. Their knowledge of the world and their relationship with that world and the probable futures, were beyond the classroom knowledge or the social learning that happened in their family, clubs, and the wider community. Most of them belonged to online communities where a new language was used to create an identity that propelled one to fame and respect. They were both producers and consumers of online information, and in so doing, they were building a new agency for themselves in the virtual world. In early 2012, a young researcher and farmer in his mid-thirties created Mkulima Young, a Facebook³⁸ page and later a website³⁹, offering

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/mkulima.young>

³⁹ <http://www.mkulimayoung.co.ke/>

free access to agricultural information through blogging and an online agricultural market. The Facebook platform later incorporated multiple online tools such as Twitter⁴⁰ and a YouTube⁴¹ channel featuring videos of Mkulima Young Champions and later expanded to educational videos on agriculture. Eventually, the online community subscribing to Mkulima Young platforms developed an agency as young farmers who often visited each other's farms, offered advice, traded with one another, and shared their successes. Through these platforms, young farmers produced multiple subjectivities, thus greening their livelihoods.

In retrospect, Obote, the environmental club chairperson in one of the public universities, was one of the most controversial and highly against youth farming as a decent occupation for educated youth. Throughout our discussions, Obote believed that agriculture would never be his occupational choice.

I know agriculture is very profitable, more than even being employed but immediately after school, I am not planning to do agriculture. My mind is to look for something decent first, and then I could settle for agriculture later (Obote, male student).

Obote is among the generation of young people brought up in the rural areas and encouraged by their parents to pursue white collar jobs away from the farm. He said that he feared being seen as a failure after his parents had sent him to university, '*you go to school, if you don't want to go, you will go to the farm*'. He criticized each of the success stories I presented to the club by giving reference to his rural area where he had not seen an agricultural officer for years, the rainfall was unreliable, the rivers were drying up, and where agricultural inputs were unavailable and unaffordable to most farmers. He reiterated that the youth in agriculture narrative was a gimmick which failed to address the systemic barriers facing the wider agrifood sector. According to Obote, '*something decent*' should be available before one can embark on agriculture. This comprised a good salary that gave him financial independence

⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/mkulimayoung?lang=en>

⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/user/mkulimayoung>

and enabled him to enlarge his interdependence circles to his parents and community. Furthermore, Obote did not want to farm just because there was the promise of money in agriculture; rather he was looking for an occupation that would grant him respectability in society.

First thing I have to consider is... I don't go for a job because there is money, because at the end of the day I will be frustrated. I need to get a place where I can get appreciated and that can make me move to the next level if the environment is favourable (Obote, male student).

Several observations can be made from Obote's case. First, it is the notion that some occupations, such as agriculture, might remain secondary and alternative occupational choices for some educated youth. Second, Obote confirms the view that occupational identities are not always defined by financial independence but also by the equivalent social acceptability that the individual expects. Indeed, a few months into my writing, Obote had finally created 'something decent' and he wrote an email saying:

We have an organization... My colleague and I have been conducting environmental education and mentorship programme at our county. This happened in between January to April when we were on long holiday. We managed to form environmental clubs in 16 schools within Migori and planted a total of 7000 trees in these schools with the pupils (Obote, male student).

For an educated young man from rural Migori, 'going back' to his community and participating in projects that were deemed to bring social change was something decent and acceptable. Even though such projects were funded through his savings (being the university students loan), Obote and his friend were creating a new identity and negotiating their recognition in that community. He asked me to connect him with individuals and organizations that were willing to fund their '*humble initiative*' as they planned to plant more trees in more schools. As such, the third observation from Obote's conversation reveals the differentiated views of young people on self-making. He chose to become an environmentalist (a green occupation), spending his savings in non-profit environmental projects in anticipation for a respectable identity in the community, a symbolic capital he

could eventually trade for an environmental occupation. Obote could be among the few educated youth who negate capitalist relations of accumulation, but instead pursue identities that would eventually result into economic capitals in the same neoliberal society.

Moreover, Obote resonates with the judicious opportunism of educated youth who are in pursuit of alternative livelihoods. He was a club leader, a position that granted him leadership skills and important connections to the outside world of environmental organizations and university administration. Like other club leaders I had met in 2012, he too had confidence that he would emerge more employable and competent for the workplace because of the leadership skills and connections he had gained. By establishing a local youth organization while still a student, he was already utilizing his leadership skills and reworking his aspirations as a director, an educator, a fundraiser, and an environmentalist. Such flexibilities and multiple identities opened up diverse occupational possibilities in the present and future. Obote too was greening his livelihood.

Conclusion

To build on the main argument made in this thesis, this chapter has explored the practicality of the narrative of greening youth livelihoods in Kenya. The chapter has shown that whereas capitals remained necessary for the greening of livelihoods; rather than achieving a truly green occupation, young people exhibited different shades of green practices and behaviours that came by chance, as an adaptation strategy, or as market-driven opportunities to make profits in the short-term. The challenge of prescribing youth livelihood strategies as green is, therefore, mainly to do with distinguishing what qualifies as a green occupation.

Overall, a green youth livelihood in precarious economies is by far a rare opportunity; to many it is a skewed chance to address immediate concerns of quick income and a survival strategy. However, in the long-term, and with good governance and fundamental structural

changes, it might transform the world of work and future aspirations as a growing and younger workforce accumulates more capitals and negotiates new spaces and identities. If the conversations and the experiences of my respondents are anything to generalize, then it is evident that youth livelihood opportunities in a green economy are primarily about survival and market opportunism on the margins of a prevailing neoliberal national development project. Most youth livelihood pathways discussed in this thesis remained temporary side-hustles characterized by disruptive innovation to overcome the high risks and often in pursuit of opportunistic markets, new technologies, and a commodification of self and nature. I conclude then that greening livelihoods is a façade, a hustle in itself, but also a reworking of young people's aspirations in the twenty-first century.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined how Kenyan educated youth occupy multiple subject positions as they navigate the precarious conditions of waithood. It demonstrates how opportunity spaces in student environmentalism and agricultural transformation are utilized by young people and result in producing neoliberal subjectivities. I have shown that, following the post 1980s World Bank and IMF directed economic reforms in Kenya, university education is no longer sufficient to guarantee educated youth white collar employment and the esteemed status associated with the intelligentsia. Although these educational capitals can be deployed to manoeuvre indeterminate situations of unemployment, young people seek to acquire new forms of capital in order to plot survival strategies and realize new occupational aspirations. The life and work histories of student environmentalists and young farmers have exemplified the diversity of the opportunistic and necessity-driven strategies deployed by educated youth as they develop multiple (neoliberal) subjectivities, enabling them to obtain decent work and maintain social acceptability in a precarious economy.

Understanding the changing life trajectories of educated youth is especially important because the twenty-first century youth are aware of the uncertainties of their socio-economic and political conditions and of the increasing difficulties of remaining productive and meaningful towards attaining social adulthood. Because of the limited work opportunities available to them, young people engage in multifarious activities that earn them a range of capitals, which are then deployed to negotiate for recognition and respectability as adults in society. Their lives involve continuous attempts to self-make into ‘persons of influence and respect’ (Durham, 2007). They remain alert to judicious opportunities which in essence are often last resort survival strategies that are performed as desirable identities of entrepreneurialism and elite distinction.

With these observations, this thesis makes three main sets of contributions: first, to Kenya's scholarship on educated young people, student environmentalism, and youth in agriculture transformation; secondly, to conceptual debates on youth waithood, in particular on neoliberal subjectivities, opportunity space, forms of capital, and gender of youth; and finally, to policy and further research relating to youth and waithood in Africa.

Contribution to Kenya's Scholarship on Youth Empowerment, Student Environmentalism and Agricultural Transformation

This study makes a substantial contribution to the study of educated youth in Kenya. Previous studies on educated youth have focused on children and youth in primary and secondary schools (Bruyere et al., 2011; Foeken et al., 2010; McDuff & Jacobson, 2000). Most studies on Kenyan university students have addressed student activism purely from a political perspective (Amutabi, 2002; A. M. Chege, 2009; Klopp & Orina, 2002), and not relating to the role of student clubs in shaping student professional identities. This focus on student environmentalism and educated young farmers in Kenya is therefore seminal. The study demonstrates the existence of forms of students' activism and farming as alternative spaces for realizing new occupational aspirations.

This study is important in the context of precarious economic opportunities for young people. Kenyan educated youth appear to be at the centre of everything precarious yet they are open to choices that a majority of marginalized youth do not have. The study shows the uncertainties facing the educated youth and how they negotiate periods of unemployment, anticipated job insecurities, and the difficulties of maintaining their elite distinctions. They re-imagine their futures in the context of inappropriate education, changing economic conditions, political instabilities, and environmental change. Their enthusiasm for environmental activism or farming is not a mere romanticism of nature or entrepreneurial fervour; rather, it is a mechanism through which they challenge the existing systems of power

and authority that fail to adequately respond to environmental degradation, the inadequacies of the agriculture sector, poor governance, as well as their unemployment predicaments. But just as the economy is precarious, these youth are unsure if their engagement in these new spaces will be any different, and therefore, their actions remain flexible, open to change, and indeed a form of resilience to prevailing crises. Their identities do not publicly resist the failing developmental state or challenge the hegemonic powers; instead, most are intentional strategies of navigating their precarious moments and resourceful pathways producing their neoliberal subjectivities.

In the context of Kenya, the study shows how global discourses of environmental change and agricultural transformation are localized and reproduced in the national development landscape. Students position themselves as important actors and stakeholders in the global discourse of environmentalism. They institutionalize student environmentalism where clubs become spaces for experiencing nature and developing an agency for the environment. This view reflects the environmental education literatures arguing that outdoor experiences may help shift one's perspectives of nature and impact on pro-environmental behaviours (such as Bruyere et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2013; Lawrence, 2012; McDuff & Jacobson, 2000). Student environmentalists move beyond adopting pro-environmental behaviors to using their environmental agency to negotiate for their youth voices in environmental decision-making and implement environmental projects from the university to community, national and international levels. They also present themselves as the educated elite responsible for protecting the environment on behalf of their community. However, their environmental agency is still constrained by negative perceptions of student activism in the society, and thus they depoliticize their actions and identities. Rather than protesting to university administration or the government on environmental matters, they prefer to dialogue and collaborate. Yet in their private club activities, they debate and express their discontentment

with the inaction of the government or environmental organizations. As such, student environmentalists emulate the nature-lovers in Indonesian universities (Tsing, 2011) who disguised their political consciousness in nature romanticism and cosmopolitanisms by acquiring transferable work experiences and joining social networks. Their environmental actions, however, demonstrate a hybridity which prioritizes individual interests of job-seeking and meaning-making over the needs of environmental conservation.

The study further shows that educated young Kenyans are responding to global discourses of agricultural transformation especially that which gives them an elite status in society. This is exemplified by their market opportunism and in the use of language as attempts to distinguish their farming from the normative assumptions of smallholder agriculture. Adhiambo related *nalima tu* (*I am just farming*) to stigmatized work, and '*I am farming!*' to lucrative farming. Her use of two languages (Swahili and English) and the intonations could be considered as symbolizing the modernization and professionalization of agriculture. *Nalima tu* referenced the stigmatized agriculture associated with the poor, rural and uneducated farmers, while '*I am farming!*' referenced the new narrative of agribusiness that was profitable, associated with educated people, and involving modern technologies. Similarly, many young farmers, to distinguish themselves as successful and elite farmers, used *kilimo biashara*, a term often used in local political arenas, to identify their new occupations. *Mshamba* and *ushamba* were used to show the lucrativeness of rural life and to dispel the notions that young farmers' lives were backward because they had chosen agricultural occupations. Most respondents identified with the occupations they felt gave them a recognisable status, such as a young farmer, a social entrepreneur, and a businessman, among others. These titles of nobility propelled them towards their elite distinctions and can be compared to other studies such as 'acting extra' (Demerath, 2000), being 'an applicant' (Fokwang, 2008a), 'revitalizing agents' (Munive, 2010) and cosmopolitanism (Tsing, 2011; Weiss, 2009).

Contribution to Scholarship on African Youth

With particular reference to educated youth, this thesis has contributed to the literature on contemporary youth in Africa by developing further the concepts of negotiating waitthood, youth subjectivities, opportunity space, and forms of capital.

I have increased the understanding of how waitthood is negotiated through the production of youth subjectivities in the context of a neoliberalized economy. The concept of neoliberal subjectivities helps us to understand how educated youth utilize their capitals to navigate conditions of precarity and redefine their entry into social adulthood. Active waiting builds on the related concepts of social navigation (Vigh, 2009), vital conjunctures (Johnson-Hanks, 2002), and opportunity spaces (Sumberg et al, 2012; 2013) all of which aim at conceptualizing youth as agential – holding and influencing power in a neoliberal society. I examined how, when faced with moments of ambiguity, young people's intentional strategies of survival and of 'moving forward' included producing neoliberal subjectivities.

Generally, neoliberal subjects emerge from the profound changes in the global and local economies and the relations between the state and its citizens that emphasize belief in freedom, choice enterprise, and self-responsibility. I have added to Gonick's (2015) characteristics of neoliberal subjects – self-managing, autonomous, and entrepreneurialism – and argued that my respondents exhibited occupational flexibility, diversified identities, and as well, refashioned their elite distinctions. Their life trajectories were the outcome of their abilities, life skills, and a factor of family background, education, gender, and class. Students used the environmental clubs to attain extra skills, acquire transferable experiences, and widen their professional networks which helped them to negotiate for honourable positions as professionals in anticipation of future work opportunities. Likewise, young farmers reproduced the conventional youth in agriculture narrative as an individualized project grounded on the ability to become self-employed and remain respectable in society. Whether

as a last-resort strategy, an intentional investment in the self, a fulfilment of cultural norms, or a chance economic opportunity, the individuals emphasized the need to succeed and retain a socially acceptable status.

Neoliberal youth subjectivities illustrate how, in precarious economies, marginalized groups are forced to reshape and produce multiple identities which are contingent of their genders, individual and collective agencies, and other dominant discourses in the neoliberal economy. In this study, such discourses were youth entrepreneurship and green jobs. The neoliberal subjectivities unfold in the context of global economic crisis, political instabilities, and environmental change, and are negotiated locally through judicious opportunism and reworking elitism. I argue that these subjectivities also exist as precariats living in conditions of economic uncertainties and job insecurities (Standing, 2011). As such, the neoliberal individual has to be adaptive to changes through innovation; exchanging assets; diversifying capitals; migrating to new spaces; pooling resources; intensifying production; rationing resource use; and revitalizing themselves as productive agents in unpredictable conditions.

Nonetheless, some of my respondents illuminate that not all young people chose, succeeded, or conformed to these neoliberal ideologies. Some student environmentalists feared that even after gaining extra skills set and joining professional networks, the unpredictable job market might lead them to tarmac and work in new jobs only to earn an income. Some of them had become farmers in response to their adversities in un(der)employment and unfulfilling work conditions. For others, socio-cultural issues, such as assuming household headship and marriage, influenced their entry into farming as a last resort strategy. Yet, there are those who held onto the ideology that being university-educated should earn them a decent formal job; what was deserved of the educated elite.

With respect to Bourdieu's forms of capitals, I have elaborated that to produce a neoliberal life trajectory, one requires access to portfolios of capitals – economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. This thesis illuminates that neoliberalism has not significantly influenced a shift of capitals from the state and those with resources to citizens and those without resources respectively. According to Bourdieu, capitals enable one's social positioning in the field giving one a sense of place, a tacit acceptance of one's position, and the limits and distances that must be kept, respected, or expected. Young people were in constant motion manipulating their time and space and employing strategies (*habitus*) towards garnering and maintaining capitals leading to multiple identities. However, access and use of capitals illuminate inequalities and differences among the youth. Structural inequalities, particularly those that have traditionally marginalized young people from formal socio-economic and political processes, remain a significant barrier to attaining the basic capitals required to establish a livelihood. Evident in young people's navigations, their successes and limitations in attaining desired livelihoods often related to structural constraints such as infrastructure, trade policies, access to productive resources, such as land among others.

Furthermore, the kinds of capitals accessible to young people determine the identities they produce amidst job insecurities and income uncertainties. Uncertainty for the future prevents any rational anticipation or any 'basic belief and hope in the future that one needs in order to rebel, especially collectively, against present conditions' (Bourdieu, 1998:82). Bourdieu continues to argue that for one to develop any ambitions to transform the present in relation to the future, he/she must at least comprehend the present situations by possessing capitals that guarantee basic security (survival). Most educated youth, by virtue of being schooled, had accumulated symbolic, cultural, and social capitals which stimulated their navigation of adulthood and widened their sense of place in the social world.

However, we must put a caveat on the significance of capital in facilitating neoliberal youth subjectivities. Critiques of social capital in development research (Bebbington, 2004; Bisung, Elliott, Schuster-Wallace, Karanja, & Bernard, 2014; Cleaver, 2005) argue that social capital is necessary but not sufficient for improving community livelihoods. Therefore, we must explore the contexts within which collective action takes place including the relations of power, gender, inequalities, generational differences, and social status so as to determine its contribution to individual and collective progress. Additionally, social capitals are evolving as groups transform into self-reliant development agents, a trend growing in contrast to states diminishing resources and legitimacy (Bisung et al., 2014). This is evident in the student clubs, the *chamas*, and the online social networks that some of my respondents joined.

Opportunity space closely links to concepts of forms of capital and neoliberal subjectivities. They are the geographic, socio-economic, and political contexts within which young people's aspirations and expectations are altered as they work towards independent lives. Sumberg *et al* (2013; 2014) argue that these are located in a person's world over time and space, starting from the near opportunity spaces, which might be protective and preventive work options (such as last resort, temporary, and tarmacking strategies) to distant opportunity spaces, including promotive and transformative work options (such as side-hustles and agribusinesses). Neoliberal subjectivities were contingent of near and distant opportunity spaces: for student environmentalists, it was the anticipation of competence and employability while for the young farmers, it was the immediate economic opportunities and social acceptability that motivated them to pursue livelihood opportunities in environmentalism and agriculture respectively.

I argue that negotiating waithood through neoliberal subjectivities in non-conventional opportunity spaces is contingent of the mobility (and sometimes the immobility) of the individuals involved. Porter *et al* (2010; 2012) studies on youth mobilities in Africa observe

that physical movement was motivated by the prospects for better opportunities and upward social mobility. In Cameroon, young people were ‘in between and betwixt the rural and urban spheres’ (Waage, 2006: 68) where they expected upward social mobility characterized by economic opportunities, new identities, and opportunities for respect. Some of my respondents found themselves moving between and betwixt adulthood and youthhood where they expected to shrink or expand their youth with prevailing circumstances. Social and virtual mobilities, such as collective action and participating in online social networks led young people to embody new identities. Physical mobilities, such as rural-urban-rural migration blurred the distinctions between the rural and urban lifestyles as young people transferred the urban credentials (such as smart phones, internet, and blogging) to rural areas and spent the incomes earned from rural-based occupations in maintaining urban lifestyles. Potts (2008) made similar observations of how the urban-rural divides in Africa were blurred by structural reforms that interfered with the urban incomes making rural areas an alternative source of resources for urban-dwelling family members.

Finally, the relational and contextual gender of youth is an important contribution to the studies of youth in Africa. Gendered youth identities were constantly mobilized, contested, and modified as young people reconstituted themselves into enterprising individuals and utilized their collective agency to pursue markers of social adulthood. Masculinity had little meaning except in relation to women and female identities. The collective action in student clubs and in *chamas* was only relevant in relation to individual goals and aspirations. In a similar lens, my respondents manifested a new form of politics that rejects being viewed as disenfranchised youth and instead reproducing competitive subjects in the changing labour markets. The depoliticization and professionalization of student environmentalism was in relation to the national environmentalisms and student politics. Young farmers disguised their political and cultural resistances by defying certain gender norms, changing migration

patterns, defying certification processes, and reconstituting green jobs. These new politics support the views that when young people are less involved in traditional politics, it does not imply their lack of political interests; rather it may show their willingness to displace their present political views to the future when they have garnered adequate capitals to embody political identities (Farthing, 2010; Tsing, 2011).

Contribution to Research and Policy

The findings of this thesis are relevant to national and regional policies on the so-called youth empowerment programmes. The research emerges at a time when there is increased interest by governments, regional organizations and the private sector to invest in developing the human capital of the youth demographic dividend through entrepreneurship (African Union, 2014; AGRA, 2015; IFAD, 2011b). In particular, there has been increased focus on investing and retaining African youth as agricultural labour force and in supporting youth agribusinesses (FAO, 2014; Filmer et al., 2014). In national development blue prints, Kenyan youth have been staged as the country's promise for prosperity (GoK, 2012), yet the opportunities expected to enable them make such significant transitions are short lived, uncertain, and risky. I have offered a critique of the government's Kazi Kwa Vijana and AgriVijana Loans and the different programmes of non-state actors noting that the models overlooked the costs of building and maintaining social capitals (the prerequisite for most funded programmes) and the structural inequalities that traditionally marginalize young people from the formal economy.

These bottlenecks notwithstanding, this study has revealed how educated youth developed distinctive strategies that respond to the narratives of youth empowerment. Most of them demonstrated that 'moving back' to farming was indeed an act of 'moving forward' through self-employment. They were motivated by the freedoms associated with being their own bosses and having the flexibility to alter the direction of their occupations. In becoming

entrepreneurs rather than seekers of white-collar employment (as expected of educated elites), these young people challenged the normative assumptions of the freedoms and privileges associated with education and the stigma of agriculture.

The thesis illuminates the lack of synergy between the strategies of government and other actors to ‘empower youth’, with the dynamism of educated youth operating on the margins of formal and precarious economies. Young people, despite the government policies and discourses, have attempted to create decent livelihoods in new opportunity spaces. These call for attention by those interested in ensuring better understanding (and targeting) of multiple subjectivities of educated youth and how these can be enhanced to ensure secure livelihoods and youth resilience to global wretchedness.

Regarding further research, an expanded study could explore to what extent different types of higher education and the traditional university education route continues to provide significant capitals towards decent livelihoods in neoliberal societies and the extent to which it remains a preferred pathway towards occupational aspirations and elite distinctions. This study’s focus on educated youth subjectivities could also be expanded into other fields, such as consumerism and technology and to explore further gendered youth subjectivities. Furthermore, the category of youth needs to be disaggregated to bring out the diversity of neoliberal youth subjectivities. A gap exists with respect to uneducated youth subjectivities in Kenya’s precarious economy.

In conclusion, educated youth, in their entrepreneurship, romanticism of nature, pursuit of certified experiences, professional socialization, portfolio occupations, tarmacking, side-hustling, or even in their anti-political environmental actions, shifting gender norms, and performances of farming and greening livelihoods and associational life, continue to be social shifters. In their vital conjunctures, they create alternative visions for themselves and of their

social world by occupying multiple positions (habitus) as students, leaders, environmentalists, volunteers, farmers, entrepreneurs, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, friends, and group members, all in an effort to either shrink or expand their youthhood and negotiate for social adulthood markers. Student environmentalism and youth agri-entrepreneurship are forms of active waiting which demonstrate an awareness of the economic austerities and the efforts of educated youth to overcome these moments of ambivalence. Even when this means resisting certain gender norms, dropping out of school, investing their meagre capitals in risky ventures in anticipation of economic and social gains, or openly playing anti-politics, educated youth demonstrate a revitalizing agency. Negotiating waithood and greening livelihoods is thus a complex and intertwined process involving detours, tactics, and chance opportunities to garner and maintain capitals and produce neoliberal subjectivities which remain unstable and insecure in the contemporary neoliberal economy.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - 2012 University Focus Group Discussion Guiding Questions

Bio Data: Name, Degree Course, Year of study, Gender, Member/Leader, Contacts

Introductions

Describe your life besides being a student

Why did you choose your particular course and what are your reasons for joining the club?

What is your greatest motivation in the club/course?

What is the membership criterion for the club?

How is the club governed? (Leadership structure, constitution etc.)

With whom does your club work with?

What are the challenges and opportunities for the club?

How does the leadership position help you during and after university?

Do you intend to be an environmentalist after university?

How does the club contribute to your degree?

How do lecturers participate in your club?

Environmentalism

What is environment and whose responsibility is it?

What are the most pressing environmental issues in Kenya?

Is there a conflict between the students and the government as the environment is concerned?

What is the relationship between environmental issues and politics in Kenya?

Future aspirations

What excites you about the future?

What is your greatest fear for the future?

Where will you be, and what will be your responsibility to Kenya be in 2022?

Appendix II - 2014 University Focus Group Discussion Guiding Questions

Session One

Introductions: Biodata collected on a separate fill-in form.

Why are you studying this particular course & why have you joined the club?

What do you think about the two presentations made?

What are the similarities and differences between student environmental activities and youth and agriculture in Kenya?

Have you ever considered becoming a farmer after university? Why? Why not?

If you were to become a farmer:

- What is it that you would require?
- What would be your sources of information, capital, market, etc?
- What would you do differently from these young farmers?
- What new challenges might you encounter?

Session Two

Do you have any success/failure stories you can share of young (educated) farmers you have come across?

How is environment and agriculture related in the context of development?

What policy frameworks and government support mechanisms do you think will enhance youth in agriculture?

Depending on your gender, do you find it difficult to choose what career options you might take up after university?

As environmentalists, what are the some challenges that you find critical in addressing agriculture and food security in Kenya?

Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?

Appendix III - 2014 Young Farmers' Interview Question Guide

A. Bio data

Name, Age, Gender, Marital Status, Location (where one is farming/living), Highest level of education attained, Courses studied, Membership to groups.

B. Context

1. Describe your upbringing. Where did you grow up? What do your parents do? Where did you go to school? Do you have any responsibilities in your family?
2. Why did you choose the particular tertiary education you undertook? What career choices did you have when growing up?
3. What were you doing before becoming a farmer? Why the transition?

C. Farming Strategies

4. What motivated you to join agriculture? What are your goals? Why did you not pursue your prior intended career (if it's not agriculture)?
5. How/where do you acquire agricultural information?
6. What technologies/innovations are you applying?
7. How sustainable are your agricultural practices? E.g. What fertilizers do you use? Where do you get water from? How do you retain soil fertility? How do you control pests and diseases?
8. What risks are involved in your practices? What potentials have you (failed to) tapped into?
9. What strategies have you put in place to ensure that you are successful in your agriculture?

D. Resources

10. How did you access the land and capital/resources to start? How do you ensure a steady income from your practice?
11. If you are getting land from your parents, what was the reason for access? (e.g. idle land, need to raise income for self/family, lease, gift, inheritance, assisting parents etc.)
12. What is the market opportunity and size of your agricultural products?
13. Approximately how much do you earn per month from the farm?
14. Do you have any other sources of income besides the farm? Which ones? Which one would you consider the first priority?
15. If you had more resources, in what would you be willing to invest? Why? E.g. another business, real estate, travelling, consultancy, education etc.
16. Do you intend to remain in the agricultural sector? Why?

E. Support Networks

17. Are you a member of any youth/volunteer/farmer groups/Sacco's/cooperatives etc.?
18. How do family and friends contribute to your farming?
19. How has your education contributed to your agricultural practices?
20. How do you manage the expectations of the society/family as a young elite who has decided to go back into farming?
21. Do you have labourers on your farm? What's the relationship between you and them?
22. Did you learn anything from your parents/community on farming? Are they learning anything from you?
23. What and how have government and non-government mechanisms supported your agricultural practices?

F. Sustainability

24. Do you have any short term or long term plans for your farming practices?
25. If you were to make a choice between agriculture and another livelihood career/source of daily income, what would that be? Why?
26. What's the most significant change that needs to happen in the Kenyan agricultural sector?
27. How would you describe the relevance of the current national policies/ laws to agricultural development in Kenya?
28. Where do you see yourself in 10 years? What role do you think you will play in this country then?

Appendix IV - 2012 Informed Consent Form

Grace Mwaura,
MPhil Candidate,
School of Geography & the Environment
Oxford University,
Email: grace.mwaura@ouce.ox.ac.uk
Tel: 0725901420/+447748875973

Dear participant,

Informed Consent Form

I am a graduate student of Geography and Environment at Oxford University. I am here to conduct research on the participation of university students in environmental activities, under the topic, '**Youth geographies: student environmentalism, and the future of young people in Kenya**'. The main aim of this research is to provide an empirical case for environmentalism as an identity and space for negotiating youth futures in Kenya. I am conducting this research with university students from select university environmental clubs, university lecturers, and key informants from government offices, non- governmental and international organizations.

I will conduct recorded focus group discussions and interviews with a selection of students from each of the clubs. Your responses will be used as data for my thesis and will be handled in confidentiality. Any requests not to disclose certain kinds of information will be observed and appropriate acknowledgements made. In the final thesis, your names, university's and club's will be anonymized. By signing this consent form, you agree that I can use the information you share during this research period. Many thanks in advance.

Name.....Sign.....Date.....

University:

Yours sincerely,

Grace Mwaura

An Investigation of Kenyan Educated Youth Engagement in Farming

Researcher: Ms. Grace Muthoni MWAURA

Institution(s): University of Oxford, United Kingdom; and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Kenya.

Location: _____

NCST Research Permit No. NACOSTI/P/14/1251/843

Purpose of Research: This research is being conducted in fulfillment of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography and the Environment requirements by the above mentioned student. The research examines why, how, and with what implications educated youth engage in farming in contemporary Kenya.

Category: _____

Consent

I _____ agree to the use of the information (audio, visual or digital) I provide to the researcher for the purposes of fulfilling her research requirements. I understand that this information will be treated with confidentiality and will be in no way be used for other purposes and without my acknowledgement. I do not expect to be compensated for this time and I agree to be acknowledged in the research, where necessary.

Signature of participant _____ Date: _____

Appendix VI - National Research Permits

2012

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

Research Permit No. NCST/RCD/14/012/1366

Date of issue 9th October, 2012

Fee received KSH. 1,000

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

Prof./Dr./Mr./Mrs./Miss/Institution

Grace Mwaura

of (Address) University of Oxford

UK

has been permitted to conduct research in

Location

Selected Districts

Selected Provinces

on the topic: Youth geographies: Student

environmentalism and futures of youth and

environment in Kenya

for a period ending: 31st December 2012.

Applicant's Signature

Secretary

National Council for Science & Technology

2014

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

MISS GRACE MUTHONI MWAURA

of OXFORD UNIVERSITY 0-621

Nairobi, has been permitted to conduct

research in Nairobi County

on the topic: YOUNG ELITES,

LIVELIHOODS AND POLITICS: AN

INVESTIGATION OF YOUTH

-AGRICULTURE NEXUS IN KENYA

for the period ending:

31st December 2014

Permit No. : NACOSTI/P/14/1251/843

Date Of Issue : 13th March, 2014

Fee Received :ksh 2,000.00

Applicant's Signature

Secretary

National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

Appendix VII - List of club partners

PARTNER	NATURE OF SUPPORT
University institutions	
University Administration, Office of Dean of Students	Approved students' clubs; Invited clubs to university planning committees
Schools of Environmental Studies, Earth Sciences, Natural Sciences, Biological Sciences etc.	Funded club projects; Acknowledged role of clubs in degree programmes
Student Unions	Funded and partnered with clubs in university wide projects
Red Cross Association	Collaborated in disaster -related projects like donating to internally displaced students
Society of Engineering Students	Collaborated in designing of dustbins
International Association of Students in Economics and Commercial Sciences (AISEC)	Collaborated in sensitization campaigns
World Students Community on Sustainable Development (WSCSD)	Involved and invited most of the clubs to the Students Sustainability Summit (S3)
Religious Societies-Christian Union, Seventh Day	Participated in clubs activities like tree planting , clean ups and advocacy campaigns
Peace Clubs	Collaborated in peace campaigns
Government institutions	
Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources	Clubs invited senior government officials, including the Environment Secretary to club events; Invited students to climate change stakeholder meetings
National Youth Service (NYS)	Collaborated with the club in establishing an environmental group at NYS
Kenya Wildlife Service	Participated in advocacy campaigns on human-wildlife conflicts; Organized clean-ups inside the national parks
National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)	Invited students to their public awareness and advocacy events; Students invited them to events like the seminars, workshops, conferences; Funded students' projects like clean-ups and the S3
Office of the Prime Minister	Held workshops on Green Economy for the students; Funded the Students Sustainability Summit; Offered internships to students who were members of one of the clubs
Non- governmental organizations	
United Nations Environment Programme	Distributed their publications to students clubs Participated in clubs' events on Green Economy, Rio +20, and climate change; Funded students projects like WSSD; Invited students to their environmental awareness events
Eco-Ethics International	Supported environmental health projects along the coast
Prima flower company	Collaborated in organizing the World Environment Day
International Coasts Campaign	Supported student participation in the International Coastal Clean-up Day
Kenya Forest Working Group	Funded the Mazingira Challenge- a environment- theme quiz challenge for university environmental clubs
Ruiru Youth Community Empowerment Programme	Supported community youth programmes, including visiting children homes, tree planting and clean-ups
African Youth Initiative on Climate Change- Kenya	Worked with students on climate change policy and advocacy programmes; Students became leaders of some of their projects
Kenya Youth Climate Network	Students were members of the network; Implemented climate change awareness programmes around the country.
Green Africa Foundation	Was invited to speak at university lectures; Invited students to advocacy events

Appendix VIII - Database of selected websites, blogs, TV & Radio programmes on youth in agriculture

Platform	Links
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ACLECOPS (Agriculture, Climate Change And Education Community Programmes)	https://m.facebook.com/Aclecops?refsrc=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Fm&_rdr
African Agribusiness Academy	http://www.aa-academy.org/
Agro-Environment Initiative	http://yagrein.blogspot.co.uk/p/home.html
Amiran Kenya (AgriVijana Loans)	www.amirankenya.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=319
Cookswell Energy Saving Jikos And Charcoal Ovens	http://kenyacharcoal.blogspot.co.uk/
Cultivating Youth Entrepreneurship Through Agribusiness	www.ke.undp.org/content/kenya/en/home/ourwork/inecgr/successstories/cultivating-youth-entrepreneurship-through-agribusiness.html
Danny's Farm	https://dannyfarm.wordpress.com/2014/08/23/affordable-farming-ventures-for-young-starters/
Farm Concern International	http://farmconcern.org/youth-in-agricultural-trade-and-enterprises-yate.html
Farming Kenya	http://www.farmingkenya.org/
Foodtank	http://foodtank.com/news/2014/07/making-agriculture-cool-for-youth
Foundation For Young Farmers – Kenya (F4yfkenya)	www.tffchallenge.com/team/foundation-for-young-farmers-f4yfkenya/
Gad-Eden Greenhouse Seedlings And Nursery	http://www.edengads.com/
Grandeur Africa	http://www.grandeurafrika.com/
Human Development International	http://www.hdikenya.org/
IITA Youth Agripreneurs	https://iitayouthagripreneurs.wordpress.com/
Infonet-Biovision	http://www.infonet-biovision.org/
Kenya Agricultural Rural Youth Programme	www.youth-employment-inventory.org/inventory/view/954/
Kilimo Media International	http://kilimomedia.or.ke/
M-Farm	http://mfarm.co.ke/
Mkulima Young	http://www.mkulimayoung.co.ke/
Seeds Of Gold	http://www.nation.co.ke/seedsofgold
Shamba Shape Up	http://www.shambashapeup.com/
Tracking The Agricultural Scent	http://www.emmiekio.com/
Ukulima Smart	http://www.ukulimasmart.co.ke/
UNIBrain	http://anafe-africa.org/cgi-sys/suspendedpage.cgi?project=unibrain
Wendy Farms	http://wendyfarms.com/
Young Champions in Agribusiness	http://youngagrochampions.blogspot.de/?m=1
Young Farmers Clubs Of Kenya (Y.F.C.K)	https://m.facebook.com/yfcknairobi?refsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fyfcknairobi
Young Farmers Foundation	https://youngfarmersfoundation.wordpress.com/
Young Farmers Market	https://m.facebook.com/youngfarmersmarket?refsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fyo

Young Organic Farmers Project	https://m.facebook.com/Profarms?refsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FProfarms
Young Professionals' Platform For Agricultural Research For Development (YPARD)	www.ypard.net
Young Unexpected Farmer	https://youngunexpectedfarmer.wordpress.com/unexpected-young-farmer/
Youth Enterprise Development Fund	http://www.youthfund.go.ke/loans/agri-vijana/
Radio Shows & TV Programmes	
Ekialo Kiona Suba Youth Radio Or EK FM	http://organichealthresponse.org/programs/technology/ek-fm-ek-youth-community-radio/
Farm Radio	www.farmradio.mw.org
Farmer Tv	
“Kabatishet” On Kass FM	
Sauti Hundhwe Fm	
Shamba Shape Up	
Shujaaz FM	
Young Rich	

Appendix IX - Shades of green practices among student environmentalists and young farmers

Category	Shade of green practices
Green Professions	Higher education and specialized professional development courses
	Formal work in government, NGOs and private sector
	Green service-sector businesses e.g. service providers
	Organizing and participating in environmental activities
Water Conservation & Management	Drip irrigation
	Rain water harvesting
	Drilling boreholes
	Farming in <i>Zai</i> pits
Hybrid seeds	Buying quality seeds for multinational seed companies
	Buying local seeds from farmers with healthy mother plant
	Sourcing seeds from other countries
	Cross breeding to produce high quality hybrids
	Producing and selling quality seeds to state and non-state seed initiatives for redistribution
	Maintaining indigenous seeds
	Contractual seed (and other inputs) testing for agro-companies
Modern and protective practices	Drip irrigation
	Greenhouse farming
	Pre-germination of seeds
	Hydroponic farming
	Sunken & raised beds
	Timing the reproduction of farm animals during the rainy season
	Use of agro-nets
	Refrigeration of perishable commodities
	Experimenting with new technologies
Sustainable soil and land management	Use of organic fertilizers
	Mixed crop and livestock farming
	Crop rotation
	Soil sampling and testing
	Integrated farming
	Growing drought tolerant crops
	Agroforestry
	Minimum tillage
	Integrated pest management systems
Agricultural information & services	Formal and informal skills training
	Using weather forecasting information from radios, TVs and government updates
	Timing of planting and breeding seasons
	Accessing agricultural information from Mobile Applications and online platforms
	Scheduling planting and harvesting times with rainfall patterns
	Hiring of private extension services
Diversification	Visiting other farmers
	Diversifying range of crops, animals and trees
	Diversifying into on- & off-farm products and services e.g. trading, training farmers, etc.
Institutional adaptive Capacities	Diversifying into salaried work
	Certification, eco-labelling and branding
	Participating in national research and policy-making processes
	Gendered practices
	Involvement in collectives- <i>chamas</i> , Saccos, non-profits organizations, online communities
	Rural-urban-rural migration
	Marriage and friendships
	Visiting other farmers, organizations, businessmen etc.
	Building and maintaining professional networks
	Higher education

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