

Disenchanted but Optimistic: The Living Conditions of the Urban Youth in Kagera Region, Tanzania

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Abstract

In this paper, we discuss the living conditions of the urban youth who have acquired non-agricultural skills, and are employed or self-employed in Tanzania. Using the case of Kagera Region, we collected qualitative data from the youth and community leaders to get to know about the lives of the urban youth. We show that the urban youth live under precarious conditions of low-quality houses, limited access to services like safe water and electricity, and inability to buy culturally valued food (bananas) among others. These conditions have become biopolitical because the urban youth think they are themselves to blame because they have almost no view of the forces beyond themselves, which might be shaping their conditions. It is concluded that to understand the living conditions of the urban youth, it is imperative to understand the biopolitical processes of both neo-liberalized accumulation in rural areas and the acquisition of non-agricultural skills for both employment and self-employment.

Key words: Living conditions, Biopolitics, Youth, Kagera Region

Introduction and Background

Concerns about the plight of the youth, especially their employability - which can, in turn, ensure them a decent living are numerous. Such concerns are constructed and legitimated around the relationship between the increasingly big number of the youth and the limited ability of the labour market to absorb them. Solution for Youth Employment Coalition (S4YE Report, 2014: viii), for instance, shows that the youth “constitute 1.8 billion of the global population, of which nearly 85% live in developing countries and are 40% of the world’s unemployed people”. In response to such concerns, there have been concerted efforts to equip the youth with the

necessary skills to enable them to acquire alternative sources of livelihoods (Arubayi, 2015; Asakura, 2015; Carpenter and Mojab, 2017).

Unfortunately, it seems that despite equipping the youth with skills and employment, most of the youth's living conditions have remained precarious. 'Precarious' is an adjective derived from the word *precariat* which is used by Standing (2011) to denote an emerging socioeconomic class of people who are even more insecure than what the working class (in Classical Marxian literature) used to be. Among other aspects, flexibilization of the labour market in the form of short-term contracts, has resulted in what Burayow (2015) has termed as excommodification of labour such that some people go temporarily employed, unemployed or underemployed. Thus, a person may have skills but still remain precarious because sometimes they may be having work to do, and sometimes they may not. Equally, one may be (self) employed but still earn insufficient income to make a reliable living. Additionally, precarity denotes the processes which produce precarious conditions and the precariat. In this context, a big number of the youth are living in precarious conditions in urban areas. It is necessary at this juncture to look into the concept of living conditions.

The sociology of living conditions (SLC)

This concept has a long history in the social sciences literature, starting with the work of Engels (1859) on the living conditions of the working class in England. In this work, Engels documented the manner in which orthodox capitalist relations had nurtured/fermented subhuman living conditions among the working class in England. These included, among others, abject poverty, hunger and un-nutritious meals, congested homes, and lack of access to social services like water and health care. Writing within the framework of classical Marxism, Engels thought that the destitute living conditions were fully a function of the class capitalist relations which concentrated most of the wealth in the hands of capitalists who owned the major means of production. Some scholars however, did not buy Engels' Marxian analysis. Instead, in the later years, especially in the post second world war period, these scholars continued to wonder why financial improvements attained through modernization of production did not correspondingly improve people's living conditions. They wanted to know why would good economic conditions coexist alongside precarious housing conditions, poor education and health outcomes.

Eschewing class analysis, scholars like Sen (1987) using his capability approach and Scoones (2010) in light of his livelihoods approach, sought

refuge in the sociological mid-range theories as propounded by Merton (1967). These theories thought to combine structural factors like improvement in the economic conditions of society and subjective experiences, aspirations and meanings which individuals attach to their lives. For example, De Vries (2007), Long (2007), and Hawkes et al (2015), among others, have a feeling that Sen's analysis can be exploited to develop a sociology of living conditions (SLC). In particular, these scholars see the potential in the Sen's concept of capability which alludes to the idea of human agency. On the basis of the latter, individuals are concerned about the realities of their everyday life, namely the social, political and economic realities available or unavailable to them as the means to achieve the ends they aspire.

In order to conceptually enrich SLC, Freitas et al (2016) think that Sen's capability approach, ought to be complimented with livelihood approach by Scoones (2010) and Schneider (2010). The latter concerns the diversification of assets and opportunities as the means to expand capabilities and hence achieve freedom of choice, (i.e. increases chances for individuals to both, lead lives they want and cope with various vulnerabilities). In other words, the core aspect of SLC is that, while structural elements may be availed or denied by authorities, individuals position themselves to make use of such elements to increase their freedoms.

Developing in the post second world war era, SLC presupposes the presence of a functional welfare state through which the important elements of living conditions namely, improved housing, subsidized or freely available water supply, education, health care, and so forth. were availed to the majority of the population especially in Western Europe. Given this context, the concern became the manner in which individuals uptake these opportunities to improve their livelihoods. This probably explains why, unlike Engels' Marxian analysis, scholars of SLC have paid little attention to the quest to understand the class structure of societies in which they study the aspect of living conditions.

Attempts to apply SLC today, and especially African societies, like Kagera Region which is used as a case study here, make two issues remain disturbing. First, the welfare state was from the beginning very minimal because the majority of the people in Africa and Tanzania in particular work in the informal sector where coverage of by official welfare arrangements is only minimal (Mchomvu, 2002). In this context therefore, SLC would still achieve less because the structural elements of the capability approach

render individuals almost wholly vulnerable. Secondly, is the ascendancy of neoliberalism, which, since the 1980s has implied erosion of the welfare state in developed societies, but more so, in developing societies in Africa and elsewhere. The idea behind its erosion is that it is an irrational choice for the state to bear the burden of providing social welfare to individuals, who instead, ought to purchase their welfare needs from the market (Foucault, 2008; Kristensen, 2013). In Tanzania in particular, most of the elements of subsidization were removed including farm implements (Bernstein, 2002; Mugisha and Sigalla, 2019, 2020) and the destabilization of prices through the suffocation of peasant cooperatives (Mugisha, forthcoming). Thus, if applied to the study of living conditions of the urban youths in Kagera, SLC would very likely pay attention to, on the one hand, issues of unemployment and underemployment, as a discrete element in that area, and, on the other hand, the manner in which the youth deploy their agency to deal with it that situation, without connecting it historically to the neo-liberal policies which intended to restore class power on a global scale.

We are also aware of the likely debate over how good conditions are measured. On this, we borrow the Sen's view of the subjective articulation of the urban youth's view of good living conditions and juxtapose it with what is generally considered to be good living conditions in the study area. Generally, and as will become clear in the next sections, some of these indicators include modern housing facilities (with cement or clay floor, iron roofing and painted walls), reliable sources of income (to buy items like new quality clothes, means of transport), access to culturally valued food especially bananas; access to services like electricity, clean water, and health care, to name but a few.

This study was conducted in Bukoba Municipality and Kyerwa District, Kagera Region. This region was deemed suitable for this research because, in the last three decades, it witnessed a decline in agricultural production especially cash crops (coffee and tea) and the staple food, (that is, plantain). Generally, in Tanzania, the volume of export of traditional cash crops, one of which is coffee, dropped from 56% in 1996 to 15% in 2010 (Wuyts & Kilama, 2014:25; Mugisha & Sigalla, 2019:4). These crops have historically constituted the economic mainstay of the Region. The decline in cash crop production has added to the number of unemployed youth with limited options to apply their agricultural skills, such that precarity or insecurity has extended to and is quite evident in peasant agriculture (Standing, 2011; Burawoy, 2015).

The situation of declining cash crop production has made non-agricultural skills and occupations increasingly important for the livelihoods of the youth (Mugisha & Sigalla, 2019). Eventually, various actors, including the youth themselves, their families, government agencies, NGOs, and private entities, have increasingly taken part, directly or indirectly, in training them in order to equip them with skills which could help them find employment or employ themselves (ibid.). Yet, as will be shown in the next sections, these have not translated into admirable living conditions.

Thus, using a case of Kagera Region, we seek to discuss the basic argument, that non-agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in which the youth are involved, do not constitute adequate structural elements for the youth to appreciate their capabilities as Sen suggests. Besides, there is no diversification of assets as the means to expand freedoms of choice as alluded by Sconnes (2010) in their livelihood approach. Eventually, the youth lead a precarious living which is also biopolitical because the youth view their situation as transitional. In order to appreciate how biopolitical the living conditions of the urban youths in Kagera are, it is important to go beyond the SLC.

Conceptual Issues: Living Conditions, Precarity and Biopolitics

Under neoliberalism, capitalist accumulation is ensured through techniques, practices and mechanisms which Foucault (2008) calls biopolitics. By biopolitics, Foucault refers to knowledge-based techniques with which to mould human bodies and populations into docile, manageable and usable individuals (1976:140). In this context, the urban youth believe and behave in the manner that they could make reliable livelihoods (decent living conditions) through entrepreneurial training. Following the decline in agricultural activities in the countryside (Mugisha and Sigalla, 2019, 2020), urban entrepreneurship becomes a new normalcy on the basis of which the youth have to gauge their success and benchmark their aspirations of improved living conditions.

Biopolitics strives to transcend the capitalist-labourer relations, which dominate the orthodox Marxist narratives of capitalism, by representing individuals (the youth in this case), not as mere labourers or workers, but as “ability-machines whose skills, knowledge, health, genetic make-up and so forth, are all ways of making income through their application towards different ends” (Kristensen, 2013:85). Eventually, an individual under neoliberalism, develops:

“a self that is a flexible bundle of skills that reflexively manages oneself as though the self was a business.....and becomes an autonomous agent negotiating for goods and services in a context where every other agent should ideally be also acting like a business partner and competitor” (Gershon, 2011:538-540).

Unfortunately, the neoliberal agency - which seeks to represent the youth as capable of self-employment, business partner or competitor who banks on his/her skills, rather than a labourer who lives precariously - has not been very successful. This is because rather than countering accumulation by dispossession processes which have characterized African societies since the colonial period to date, and amplified by neoliberal practices, biopolitical techniques mask, reproduce and enhance such accumulation by dispossession processes. Eventually, the living conditions of the youth in particular and other sects of the population in general, remain precarious. In this regard, Hardt and Negri (2004: 278) observe that:

South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa account for about 70 percent of the global population living on less than a dollar a day, up from about 60 percent ten years ago. The average income of the richest 20 countries is thirty-seven times greater than the average in the poorest twenty - a gap that has doubled in the past forty years. Even when these figures are adjusted for purchasing power - since some basic commodities cost more in rich countries than in poor-the gap is astonishing. The construction of the global market and the global integration of the national economies has not brought us together but driven us apart, exacerbating the plight of the poor.

Furthermore, in the context where the youth are being represented as business partners and competitors, Amin (2009) alerts that overt and covert mechanisms of accumulation of the surplus largely contribute to both, international and intra-national inequalities. With regard to intra-national inequality, Amin (2009:260) shows that:

... the inequality in the internal, national distribution of income is considerably more pronounced in peripheral societies than in the societies of the center. Thus, 25 percent of the population has 10 percent of the income in the center and 5 percent in the periphery; 50 percent of the population

has 25 percent of the income in the center and 10 percent in the periphery; and 75 percent of the population has 50 percent of the income in the center and 33 percent in the periphery.

This quote suggests the differential flow of resources among the people within third world countries such as Tanzania and Kagera Region in particular. It also implies that the skewed accumulation of surplus coexists with the efforts of acquainting the youth with skills in order to enhance their employability or self-employment. Within this co-existence, the youth earn incomes which enable them to earn just a biopolitical livelihood framed as transitional, to conceal and/or reproduce a skewed flow of resources which concentrates resources in the hands of some few people while denying others such privilege. Additionally, denial or lack of privilege of access to resources is a fundamental factor for a precarious living despite possession of skills, because they do not earn enough to ensure a secure living.

Methods

This study was mainly qualitative, and sought to explain the living conditions of the urban youth, based on a case study of Kagera Region. Specifically, it relied on three data collection methods, namely in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), observation and documentary review. The IDI method was the main data collection technique for this study. It was used for collecting data from the youth about their life skills, employment and self-employment experiences. The intention was to gain an understanding of their backgrounds and personal skills on the basis of their source of livelihoods (source of income). This technique enabled researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of personal skills, competences and capabilities of each respondent related to entrepreneurship and employment.

Field observation was also used by the researchers to observe some of the activities undertaken by the youth and the researchers took some photos in order to gain in-depth understanding of young people's skills and experiences. This technique also helped researchers to verify the information they collected through in-depth interviews. The final method was documentary review, which included a review of reports such as district profiles, nutrition and demographic, health survey reports, entrepreneurship, education and employment policies.

The sampling procedure was mainly purposive, that is, the youth, community leaders and relevant experts in Bukoba Municipal and Kyerwa

District Councils were approached for participation in this study because they were thought to have the information which we needed for addressing our research questions. At the district and municipal levels, interviews were conducted with community development officers because the latter are in charge of youth development and entrepreneurial activities. In each of the two districts, the study was conducted in two *mitaa* (like streets) from two wards. At the *mtaa* level, a chairperson or *mtaa* executive officers introduced us to the youth of varied socioeconomic characteristics and occupational activities. Some were carpenters, others welders, *bodaboda* (motorcycle taxi) riders and bicycle transporters; others were tailors, masons, shopkeepers, and *machinga* (street vendors). The selection of informants was convenient, basing on the availability and readiness to participate in study. Ultimately, out of the 64 youths who were contacted, 60 agreed to participate and were interviewed, 30 from Kyerwa District and 30 from the Bukoba Municipal Council.

From the IDIs, those participants who proved to be more knowledgeable about the youth's conditions were invited for the Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). Recruitment for FGDs also considered the socioeconomic and occupational differences such that those who were involved had diverse backgrounds.

Research clearance was sought from the University of Dar es Salaam which introduced the researchers to the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) and the District Administrative Secretary (DAS). RAS then introduced us to the Bukoba Municipal and Kyerwa Executive Directors. From the executive directors' offices were introduced to community leaders and then communities.

At the community level, oral consent was sought from participants. The objective of the study, namely, the quest to understand the social character of activities performed by the youth in urban areas, was clearly explained to the participants. We also informed them that their participation was completely voluntary, and one could wish not to participate, refrain from answering certain questions, or withdraw at any stage of the interview.

Data were analyzed thematically. The idea was to review all the data and draw some important themes which best captured young people's personal skills, competences and livelihood seeking experiences. The data collected through observation were used to triangulate the evidence collected from interviews.

Socioeconomic background of the youth

Findings reveal that the youth who participated in this study, either come from low income families or were raised by a single parent (especially mother) after their parents' separation or fathers' irresponsibility. For this reason, these youth experienced hard life since their childhood. Responding to the question on why they did not join secondary school and later college, they almost unanimously, with the exception of few cases of those cases who did not join secondary school because of their low intellectual ability, explained that the main reason was that there were no financial resources to support their secondary education²².

For this reason, despite earning low incomes from the activities they do, youths also have a task of helping their parents and other relatives (siblings). One youth who is a carpenter reiterated that:

My income is small, still I have several obligations which also need money. I have to support my family (wife and two children), my parents and also siblings. In the end, the income I earn monthly or weekly does not suffice my needs.

Another case was noted at Bilele ward by a young man, aged 30 years, a bodaboda rider who for many years, has been assisting his mother to pay the school fees for his siblings. He confirmed that some of his siblings have gone up to tertiary level of education. In general, it is common for young people to use part of their income to support their families in terms of school supplies (uniforms, equipment, books, fees, etc.) and general support to their families' amenities. The situation is even worse for those young men who are married because they have to endure expenses of taking care of a wife and children, as well as their parents and siblings.

What can be discerned from this section, is that while skills enable the youth to make some subsistence, the incomes which the youth earn are too little for them to escape precarious living. In fact, the youth almost unanimously revealed that the income they earn is insufficient to satisfy their needs. Yet, none of the youth related their precarity with the declining coffee production in their home villages. Moreover, many of them had hope that they could make it and become rich by engaging in small scale entrepreneurial activities.

²² This study included youths who completed primary education during the 5th Phase Government which abolished school fees for public primary and secondary schools.

The Myth of Income Earning and Precarity among the Youth

The thinking behind policies which seek to enhance employability and self-employment among the youth, is that regular incomes would improve the youths' living conditions (Arubayi, 2015; Asakura, 2015; Carpenter and Mojab, 2017). Such thinking, however, overlooks the severity of income insecurity, especially the ways in which such insecurity is propelled by commoditization processes under neoliberal policies (Standing, 2011; Burawoy, 2015). The complaint among the youth that they do not earn sufficient money was, for instance, aired by all the participants.

Additionally, all participants in both districts said that they do not have disposable money (Table one) because what they earn is not even sufficient to cater for their needs and those of their dependants. As Table one shows, there was dissatisfaction among the youth about their capacity to support themselves and their loved ones. The youth underscored issues such as inadequate financial support from parents, unsatisfactory condition of the houses they rent, lack of disposable income, and poor quality food they eat at home. There was a consensus among study participants at Bukoba Municipal Council, i.e. 29 out of 30 interviewed youth (equivalent to 97%, Table 1) for instance, they and other youth rented one to two rooms. The rent per room ranged between TZS 15,000.0 and 20,000 (equivalent to 6 to 8 USD) per month. The conditions of the rooms they rented ranged from having cement floor and plastered wall to mud floor and walls.

Members of an FGD for instance, converged around a view shared by one of them that:

The rooms we rent are not of such good quality. Most of them are small; may be painted, plastered, or just bare bricks. Besides, most of them have no ceiling and the floor is mostly cemented. However, you may find that they are overcrowded because if one rents a room he/she lives with other relatives who come to town. For some of us who are married, if one rents two rooms (a bedroom and a living room), the living room is also used as a bedroom at night especially if they live with relatives. The majority of the youth rent one room, and that becomes a bedroom, living room and kitchen, at different times.

In addition to rent, some youth also pay water and electricity bills which range from 3,000.00 to 5,000.0 (equivalent to 1.8 to 2.2 USD) each per month. Electricity and water services are supplied by government organs,

and are subsidized, thus making them less expensive. Those who rent the houses which are not connected to the municipal water supply use unsafe water from nearby streams. Some of them rent houses which are not connected to the national grid electric supply. Such youth use kerosene for lighting. During the interviews, they revealed that they succumb to the real situation by lowering their wishes and expectations for which they have no financial capacity.

The situation of the youth with regard to housing conditions in Kyerwa DC is a slightly different from the situation in the Bukoba Municipal council. Renting is less pronounced in Kyerwa than in Bukoba Municipal council. This difference is probably because Kyerwa is less urbanized (rural district) than Bukoba town which is a municipal and the Kagera Region's headquarters. Being a rural district, Kyerwa's headquarters has not attracted the youth from other places who look for employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Most of the youth at Kyerwa, 22 out of 30 (equivalent to 73%) who were interviewed for instance, do not rent rooms like their counterparts at Bukoba MC but live at their parents' homes. For this reason, such youth at Kyerwa do not incur other costs such as electricity and water bills. It is thus not surprising also to learn that nearly two-thirds (60%) of the youth can satisfy their needs, while for the Bukoba Municipal council it is only 13 percent.

It was clearly apparent that some of the youth who participated in this study were dissatisfied with the standard of life they live. They prefer the term "*kawaida tu*", meaning as usual, or no remarkable positive changes from their previous life. Most of them still stay at their parents' residences in what they call *nyumba za kawaida* meaning, ordinary housing (not very modern housing). They do not have modern houses, but at least they have permanent houses built of brick and iron roofed. These houses have no electricity. Like the situation in the Bukoba Municipal council, some of the youth at Kyerwa, rent a maximum of two rooms in Kyerwa and Nkwenda. The monthly rent is not high; and, on average, it is around TZS 10,000/= (equivalent to USD 4) per room. Additionally, one also pays electricity costs, and most of them still use water from the streams, which explains that there are is no water supply system. What is also worth noting, however, is that the youth do not blame their situation on anyone else but themselves. Self-blame reveals that the effectiveness of the biopolitical techniques which conceal the manner in which the youth's precarity relates to the decline in agricultural production. Moreover, they also have hope for improving their living conditions through their personal efforts. This also implies the manner in which the dominant discourse has succeeded in

inculcating among the youth, and moulding them to believe that there are no structural forces beyond themselves which are largely responsible for their situation.

Diet for the youth

Due to low incomes earned by the youth, even the type of food they eat was not considered by them to be of a high quality. In Bukoba Municipality, for instance, where farming is restricted, much of the food is bought from the market. And, among the Haya, the culturally highly valued food is plantains. During interviews, it was only in very rare cases where plantains were mentioned to be part of their regular diet. The main explanation for the omission of plantains from the diet is inadequate financial resources to buy them²³. Meat was also a rare food stuff, the explanation being the same, that it is expensive to afford. The commonly mentioned food supplies were ugali rice, beans, potatoes, sardines, and sometimes fish. In an interview, one youth reiterated that:

Our staple food is increasingly becoming ugali and sometimes rice. Plantains are a highly valued food in our society but my income is too little to afford them regularly. Likewise, meat is very expensive; too expensive to afford. So ugali and beans or sardines is our staple food nowadays.

The switching from regular eating of plantains to ugali can be expressed here as cultural precarity in the sense that youth have to unwillingly eat ugali rather than plantains because they do not have sufficient income to purchase plantains regularly. Thus, our usage of precarity in this case is not assessed in terms of nutritional values which one would miss by eating *ugali* regularly (rather than plantains). Instead, the point is to insist the fact that the youth have to unwillingly forego some of their culturally valued items such as the regular eating of plantains due to financial constraints. Self-restraint is an evidence of the effectiveness of biopolitical techniques which require the youth to look into their problems as exclusively their own, and whose solution is within the youth themselves.

²³Banana and plantain production has been on the decline due to deteriorating soil fertility induced by leaching heavy rainfalls in the region and infestation of banana plants by various diseases (Nkuba, 2007). In the previous decade there has been infestation of banana plants by disease locally known as *mnyauko* (wilting). This has made plantains inaccessible, and relatively expensive to afford.

Table 1: Young People's Living conditions

	Bukoba MC			Kyerwa DC			Overall (%)
	Bilele	Kashai	Subtotal (%)	Kyerwa	Nkwenda	Subtotal (%)	
Housing/accommodation							
Renting	20	9	29 (97)	4	4	8 (27)	37 (62)
At his/her house							
At parents' home	1		1 (3)	14	6	22 (73)	23 (38)
Total			30 (100)			30 (100)	60 (100)
Support to relatives							
Supports	19	9	28 (93)	13	7	20 (67)	48(80)
Does not support	2		2 (7)	5	5	10 (33)	12 (20)
Total			30 (100)			30 (100)	60 (100)
Disposable income							
Has disposable income	1	3	4 (13)	3	3	6 (20)	10 (17)
Does not have	15	11	26 (87)	17	7	24(80)	50 (83)
Total			30 (100)			30 (100)	60 (100)
Marital status							
Married	8	4	12 (40)	4		4 (13)	16 (27)
Single parent	2	2	4 (13)		3	3 (10)	7 (12)
Unmarried	14	0	14 (47)	14	9	23 (77)	37 (61)
Total			30 (100)			30 (100)	60(100)
Earning							
Satisfactory	3	1	4 (13)	12	6	18 (60)	22 (37)
Unsatisfactory	15	11	26 (87)	8	4	12 (40)	38 (63)
Total			30 (100)			30 (100)	60(100)

Source: Field Findings, 2018.

Conclusion

We have shown that the youth's livelihood standards are not sufficiently satisfactory. Most of them complain of the hardships of life which subject them to poor housing conditions and perceptively low-quality diet. These observations are in line with the available literature, particularly, Hardt and Negri (2004), Amin (2009) and Shivji (2009) who show that precarity in terms of job insecurity, income insecurity and poverty are on the increase in developing countries. We argue that biopolitical techniques, which represent youth with skills as entrepreneurs, rather than appreciably improving their living conditions, serve two important purposes. First, they serve to place the responsibility of reproduction of livelihood of the youth almost

exclusively, on the shoulders of the youth themselves and their families. Second, and consequently, they legitimize such biopolitical entrepreneurial approaches as means of averting the possibility of radicalism among the youth over hardships of life.

What is missing in youth studies is an understanding of their socioeconomic background, which requires an analysis of the social class to which the youth belong. The point which is underlined in this article is that, representing the youth as responsible for their own living conditions is a biopolitical technique in that, it conceals and reproduces the conditions responsible for the youths' precarious situation. Thus, such biopolitical techniques cannot be a panacea for any notable improvement of the people's youth's living conditions.

Instead, it is important to relate the emergence of the so-called entrepreneurial skills to the underperformance of the crop peasantry activities. Such under-performance is, for instance, evident in the decline in public subsidies for farm implements since the mid-1980s, as underlined in the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Jorgen and Rald (1975:55) have, for instance, shown that in the decade of 1974 to 1983, "Kagera alone produced 40.5% of Tanzania's coffee.....and also accounted for about 11% of the country's foreign exchange earnings". Following the adoption of the SAPs, the emphasis shifted from traditional cash crop production to other sources national income. Table 2 below was constructed using the data provided by Wuyts and Kilama (2014) and also used in Mugisha & Sigalla (2019, 2020), from which it has been extracted. It compares traditional cash crops with other products (minerals and manufactured goods).

Table 2: Structure of goods exports: 1996–2010 (selected years)

Export sector (% of total export)	1996	2001	2005	2010
Traditional cash crops	56.8	27.0	21.2	15.0
Minerals	6.9	35.6	42.2	41.4
Manufactured goods	14.2	6.6	9.3	25.9

Sources: Wuyts and Kilama (2014, p. 25); Mugisha & Sigalla (2019, p. 4).

It is in the context of the above decline in cash crop production (e.g. from constituting total export of 56.8% in 1996 to 15% in 2010), that some youth opt for non-agricultural entrepreneurial activities. We have also argued elsewhere that the youth engaged in small businesses are not entrepreneurs but, instead, ekers because such youth engage in small business activities as a means, (earning a living) following the decline of peasant activities, rather than the pursuit of business opportunities for profits and further expansion

of business (Mugisha & Sigalla, 2020). It is these ekers whose living conditions are characterized as precarious in this study.

Beyond the biopolitical techniques therefore, scholars and policy makers have to both, connect the youths' living conditions to their socioeconomic backgrounds and interrogate the taken-for-granted concept of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition among the youth. The so-called entrepreneurs, for instance, cannot be lumped together as one category. Instead, a classification has to be attempted basing on the socioeconomic positions of and the opportunities available to the entrepreneurs in question. This classification is important in order to sort out which entrepreneur is capable of excelling including improving his/her living conditions and which one is likely to remain precarious. In the final analysis, what is important, is to rethink the skewed flow of resources which ultimately produces and reproduces the precarious youth. For instance, investment ought to be done in the peasantry sectors (agriculture, livestock keeping, fishing, etc.) in terms of subsidization of farm implements, access to markets and processing facilities.

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