

CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

DEVELOPMENT AS CHAOS:
AGROMANUFACTURING, DISPOSSESSION AND PLANTATION
LABOURERS' EVERYDAY LIVES IN KENYA

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology and Social Anthropology by the
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DEDICATIONS

My daughter Nikita has been a source of inspiration, support and sobriety in my life. While my fieldwork was confronted with a myriad of domestic chaos, she never stopped pushing me to finish the dissertation. It is amazing how she comprehends all the complex anxieties of my life without losing sight of that which needs to be done. Somehow, she manages to explain my long absence to her brother and sister. I dedicate this work to her, her sister and brother.

To

Nikita Kerubo:
Strength and confidence.

Tariq Wambui:
Tenacity and mystique.

Yuro BwOnderi:
Vivacity and spice.

==

DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university for award of degree or any other qualification.

SignedDate.....
Budapest, Hungary.

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ABSTRACT

Development works. Development does not work. What makes development such a contradictory and self-subverting process and how do those caught at the core of this contradiction live through it? This is the central dilemma in my dissertation explored through the experiences of migrant sugar plantation labourers in South Nyanza, Western Kenya. The study finds that the relations generated by the establishment of the sugar factory are characterised by extreme deprivations, dislocations and dispossessions. These have engineered a myriad of chaotic personal, spatial and social transformations. These chaotic transformations adhere to and perpetuate a process of continuous reproduction of power through responses to the challenges and compromises confronting their everyday survival. To survive, the labourers are reduced to invisible bodies ‘sweating to eat, and eating to sweat’. The dissertation examines what it means to be such a body, struggling with invisibility and exclusion; and yet remain a legitimate actor in a development intervention driven by the will to improve.

The study traces agromanufacturing from the colonial period to the present-day Kenya to show the evident underlying continuity of colonial structures and contradictions characteristic of different agromanufacturing complexes across the country. By focusing on everyday lives of the plantation labourers in the South Nyanza sugarcane belt, the dissertation reveals the nature and dynamic of development generally and the large scale commercial farming economy in particular as unpredictable and chaotic. What is more significant from the findings is the demonstration of the general integration and accommodation of chaotic existence into the constitutive and operational logic of the plantation economy and its development itinerary. Throughout the dissertation, the relations between the agromanufacturing complex as a structure designed for modernization intervention and the everyday lives of those in its orbit are shown as chaotic, defined by unpredictability, contradictions, differentiations, violence, deprivations and exploitative dispossession. Combined, these make lives under such development interventions insecure, disjointed, vulnerable and disorderly.

My study contributes to the sociology and social anthropology of development by proposing a fresh look at development interventions as ‘chaotic projects’ which produce disorder rather than smooth solutions to technical disorder. Such a look, building on works of others such as Tania Li and James Ferguson, integrates the ideas of Foucault to show how development has in effect become a series of normalizations where more attention is focused on making things seem normal rather actually transforming them. For instance, the study shows how dispossession of land, labour and employment safeguards are part of repertoire of tactics employed to enhance efficiency and productivity by the factory though they expose the plantation workers and villagers to extreme deprivation and invisibility. Furthermore, the study responds to the significant absence of a disciplinary society approach to development related research in Africa though much of the interventions are implemented as disciplinary projects. By combining Foucault’s conception of power and the concept of chaos in studying agromanufacturing as development in Kenya, the study shows how development is not only chaotic but sustained by chaos: under development disorder is the order.

Lastly, by taking a biographical narrative and anecdotal approach to the exploration, the dissertation captures the reality of structural violence as a lived experience. This exposure hopefully contributes to a re-examination of rural development in Africa especially land-transfers to large-scale commercial enterprises designed as development. It raises questions with regard to who benefits and at what cost. The dissertation offers a starting point for a discussion along these lines.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION ..	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	3
1.3 CONCEPTUALIZING AGROMANUFACTURING AS DEVELOPMENT, MODERNITY AND RULE	11
<i>1.3.1 Encountering Development: Discourses and Imaginations of Rule.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>1.3.2 Expectations and Shadows of Modernity: Limits of Projects of Rule</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>1.3.3 Will to Improve: Creating Projects of Rule</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>1.3.4 Development as Chaos.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>1.3.5 Dealing with Chaos: Agromanufacturing Complex as Panopticon.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>1.3.6 Conclusion: Contextualizing the Dissertation Argument and Findings.....</i>	<i>37</i>
1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	40
<i>1.4.1 Logic and Research Design</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>1.4.2 Choices: Ethnographic Site Location of the Study</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>1.4.3. Data Gathering.....</i>	<i>45</i>
CHAPTER TWO CIVILIZING THE NATIVE, INSTITUTIONALIZING CHAOS: DISPOSSESSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AGROMANUFACTURING IN KENYA.....	52
2.1 INTRODUCTION	52
2.2 ENCOUNTERS OF CIVILIZATION: COLONIZING TO CIVILIZE KENYA	53
2.3 RULE AS DISLOCATION: DISPOSSESSING AND DISPOSING LABOUR ...	61
2.4 MANUFACTURING SUBJECTS: CAPTURED AND CONTROLLED LABOURERS.....	66
2.5 EXPECTATIONS AND DYSTOPIA: TRANSFORMING PLANTATION LABOUR	68
2.6 AFRICANIZATION AND AGRICULTURE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN KENYA	72
2.7 TRANSFORMATION: INDEPENDENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE	78
2.8 CONCLUSION: MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENTS	80
CHAPTER THREE SWEATING BODIES: LABOURERS' LIVES AND EMPLOYMENT CHAOS IN THE SUGARBELT	84
3.1 INTRODUCTION	84
3.2. LABOUR ENCOUNTERS: MAKING THE MIGRANT PLANTATION WORKERS IN SOUTH NYANZA.....	87
3.3 PRECARIETY AND DISPOSABILITY: FROM EMPLOYMENT TO CASUAL LABOUR	93
3.4 FROM MEN TO BULLS: BECOMING INVISIBLE LABOURERS.....	98
3.5 DISTANCING, MAXIMIZING LABOUR AND EASING DISPOSABILITY .	101
3.6 OFFICIAL ABSENCE VERSUS BODILY PRESENCE: WORKING AS MIGRANT LABOURERS	105

3.7 WORKING DEFIANCE: SURVIVING ON SIDE PLANS	110
3.8 CONCLUSION: THE DYSTOPIAN TURN, SWEATING AND SURVIVING	122
CHAPTER FOUR: THE MAKING OF A DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY: THE SOUTH NYANZA SUGARBELT IN KENYA ..	126
4.1 INTRODUCTION: AGRICULTURE AND CONTINUITIES OF RULE	126
4.2 BACKGROUND OF AGROMANUFACTURING IN SOUTH NYANZA SUGARBELT	127
4.3 ESTABLISHING THE FACTORY: POLITICS AND REALITY	131
4.4 PLANTING CHAOS: DEVELOPMENT AS DISPOSSESSION AND DISLOCATION	133
4.5 CONTINUITIES OF PLACE: DISLOCATIONS AND RELOCATIONS IN SOUTH NYANZA	138
4.6 NARRATIVES OF THE DISPOSSESSION OF THE SUGAR PROJECT	142
4.7 CONCLUSION: DEVELOPMENT AS DISPOSSESSION	151
CHAPTER FIVE THE SUGARBELT AS A CHAOTIC MOSAIC: DEPRIVATION, DIFFERENCE AND ABANDONMENT IN SPACE	153
5.1 INTRODUCTION	153
5.2 CONVERGENCE OF CHAOS: THE LABOUR CAMP AS HOME OF THE DEPRIVED	156
5.3 DISPOSSESSION AS PRODUCTION: THE FACTORY COMPLEX AND ITS CHAOS	165
5.4 THE LIMINAL SPACE: REGULAR WORKERS' RESIDENCES	172
5.5 DISPOSSESSED AND DEPOPULATED: THE DESERTED VILLAGES	177
5.6 CONCLUSION: SPATIAL CHAOS OF DISPOSSESSION AND SUBJECTIVITY	185
CHAPTER SIX EATING OUR SWEAT: CONSUMPTION AND LIVING AS A LABOURER	189
6.1 INTRODUCTION	189
6.2 CHRISTMAS WITH JACK /PRIVATE SUFFERING	190
6.3 CHRISTMAS WITH ROY: PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASCULINITY... ..	201
6.4 CHRISTMAS WITH ROSE: INDEPENDENT WOMEN	206
6.5 CONCLUSION: RECONCILING PRIVATE SUFFERING AND PUBLIC ENJOYMENT	211
CHAPTER SEVEN OVERVIEW, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY	213
7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	213
7.2 DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS	216
7.3 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY	221
7.4 FINAL COMMENTARY ON STUDY	222
BIBLIOGRAPHY	225

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

After high school, bored with home and wanting to travel, I made acquaintance with Ouru¹, a childhood classmate who had dropped out of school five years earlier and gone to work in one the major tea estates in Kericho. During that December of 1991, I became enchanted by his tales about tea picking, getting paid in cash everyday, getting hire purchase electronics from Asian shops in Kericho and of course his flamboyant dressing. Having recently completed high school, I was at that liminal state- between childhood and adulthood, school and career; parental restrictions and freedom. One afternoon, I asked him what it felt to be employed, whether he would take me along. He kept silent for what seemed an eternity. Then he turned to me and grabbed my hands. Holding them firmly in his, he studied my open palms intently for another long moment. He dropped them, and staring into my eyes he said: *It is a hard place. Things are bad. For clean hands; like yours. Yes, you can make your money. But, you eat your sweat*.

I found the juxtaposition of ‘making money’ with ‘things are bad,’ hard places’ and ‘eating sweat’ quite oxymoronic. As a village boy, my only outside contact till then consisted the four years spent in an urban boarding high school. The idea of working out there, the idea of employment, conjured up images of offices, clean and easy paperwork -no sweat, no hard places and definitely no bad things.

It took six years, graduation from university and deployment as a teacher in a sugarcane growing region to begin comprehending what Ouru had meant. This comprehension evolved

¹ Throughout the dissertation names and places have been changed to enhance confidentiality and security of the respondents rather than anonymity which somewhat would imply an attempt to erase their identities.

as I pieced together the constitutive elements of the statement: Ouru as labourer working as a tea picker under the harsh deteriorating conditions which contradicted what actual employment meant; and the precarity of work within the plantation-processing factory complex. The three elements- Ouru's identity as a mobile wage worker who could make money; the plantation-factory complex as a hard place; and the practices and acts of sweating to eat or eating sweat- filtered from a more incisive interrogation of Ouru's statement over time are the core issues of my dissertation.

Sadly, Ouru succumbed to a severe case of tuberculosis about five years ago. After spending ten years working in Kericho as a tea picker, he had moved to cutting cane in the South Nyanza Sugar Company. He died rather anonymously. His death from a transmittable but curable infectious disease that has become a feature of poverty and deprivation²; absence of credible records of his working life to enable his widow to claim any retirement or dismissal compensation capture another aspect of the mobile plantation labour and agromanufacturing complex in Kenya: Their lives are invisible and indelible and nobody seems to care³. My study is in some small way a tribute to Ouru as it is an exploration of life within Kenya's dominant mode of development: how it is conceived and actually lived in terms of 'hard place' and 'eating sweat' by those who labour in it while being propagated as a development nirvana by the local and national State agencies and non-state enterprises⁴. What comes out is an array of contradictory accounts of experiences exposing development as chaotic- a processual

² Tuberculosis though curable requires a relatively strict and demanding adherence to a prescribed drug regimen which is hardly accessible to many of the labourers working in rural plantations. It is easily spread due to the poor and inadequately ventilated housing in many of the plantation complexes.

³ The information here includes interviews I held with Ouru's widow in my village. She was not alone, there are many widows of deceased tea pickers from my village whose husbands died in similar circumstances and none has ever been able to access any employment benefits accruing from their husbands work. Pension schemes for mobile plantation labourers are very rare in Kenya. When they get sick or too old to work, the company gives them 'a one-way ticket back to their villages', she told me.

⁴ The Kenyan government has a number of quasi-autonomous state parastatals which operate as private companies but are often capitalized by the State. Under pressure from multilateral donors especially the World Bank, the government has been divesting and privatizing them.

production of determinate nonlinear overlapping experiences, practices and imaginaries; and subjectivities.

1.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Plantation communities and their mobile labour hold an enduring fascination in the anthropology and sociology of political economy in many parts of the world (Geertz, 1963; Breman, 1989; Bates, 1981). In Kenya, this interest has been largely on the macro-level and conducted either from a world systems or dependency perspectives (Nyongo, 1981). Much of these studies suffer from the weaknesses of modernist development dichotomy— seeing the plantation as a logical step from the village on the way to the urban centre (Sahlin, 2000). Furthermore they predominantly rely on archival data and national policy documents generated by those in power thus their problematic singularity of voice and narrative (Little, 1994; Collier and Lal, 1986).

The outcome of these studies in many cases tends to be discussions of absent plantation labourers and conditions within the plantation complexes as lived spaces. For instance, plantation labourers' existence is acknowledged simply as 'the labour providers or workers' (an equivalent of the other components of production, land and capital). In others, the labourers are viewed as a class identity made and wasted as capitalism moves on to the next temporal phase or location (Maxon, 2003; Leitner, 1977; Kanogo, 1987, and Hyden, 1987). The live voices of the labourers as living subjects are in most cases muffled, silenced or expediently ignored. Such studies elaborate the systemic dispossession and its processual structural violence on one hand, while they mute the brute reality on the other. My study attempts to reveal some of it, taking cue from Roseberry's (1991) advocacy for inclusion of 'local populations' to privilege the personal narratives of the labourers over other sources of data.

Large scale agricultural enterprises combine plantations and processing plants (herein referred to as agromanufacturing complexes) in rural communities in the Americas, Africa and Asia. Studies of these agromanufacturing complexes are often presented as social and spatial narrative tropes of landscape transformations. Of the two, the social landscape strand is more dominant through a spectrum of nuanced renditions of their social dynamics, political economies, and relations within and beyond the rubric of plantation life studies (Cooper, 1980). In many instances, social relations, practices and processes in the colonial plantations have received intense scrutiny and analysis as socio-economic organizational units (Jones, 1975); or as total and ambivalent institutions (Knottnerus, Monk and Jones, 1999). The emphasis on the social dimension has tended to show the plantation complex as a project of development through which deliberate and processual insertion of rural peasantry into the social institutions and logic of capitalism is enacted by the state (Dawson, 2004).

In Kenya, agriculture is the ‘backbone of the economy’, which according to the government accounts, contributes over 50% of the national economy and accounts for over 65% of the national exports and provides over 70% of informal employment and 18% of national formal employment (Republic of Kenya, 2007). Commercial agriculture which was introduced during the colonial period as part of the processes of civilizing presumed indolent Africans by inculcating work habits into Africans by European settlers became proxy for wage employment in contemporary Kenya (Oucho, 1984). The large scale commercial farming of industrial crops was initially adopted as a strategy of transforming rural peasant communities into modern agrarian societies (Republic of Kenya, 1965; 1974⁵). Over the years it has become the elixir to development and regional inequalities across the country with more effort and resources being invested in increasing the sector’s productivity and commercialization.

⁵ The 1974-79 National Development Plan specifically emphasizes that transition to commercial farming is an ‘intimate link to the modernization processes in the country.

Generally agromanufacturing refers to the adopted agricultural and community modernization system of growing and processing cash crops - tea, coffee, sugarcane, pyrethrum and horticultural crops- on large scale. Inherited from the colonial regime, the system has been promoted by the government through state corporations, private companies, wealthy land owners and in few cases, specially formed farmer-cooperative societies. The typical Kenyan 'agromanufacturing plantation complex' is composed of plantations, a processing plant (factory) and administration offices at the centre. The residential quarters are distributed around the factory and administration quarters on the basis of seniority in the administration and technical expertise structure. In many cases, villagers living outside the plantation complex are compelled covertly to take up production of the cash-crop as small scale farmers and actually form the bulk of the national production of all the major cash crops in Kenya. The consequence of this is dominant monoculture- the geographical dominance of particular cash crops in particular areas, excluding and suffocating any other agricultural activity which is not connected to the growing and processing of the cash crop⁶. Commercial farming of such crops is often introduced as part of wider development interventions but grows to be the key and sometimes only form of development in such places. Sugar cane growing and processing was similarly introduced into South Nyanza region through the South Nyanza Sugar company (Sony Sugar); and is now the socio-economic activity in the region. My dissertation explores life as lived under this development intervention.

⁶ Monoculture refers to the [agricultural](#) practice of producing or growing a single crop or plant species over a wide area and for a large number of consecutive years. It is widely used in modern [industrial agriculture](#) and its implementation has allowed for large harvests from minimal labor. I used here to refer to geographical balkanization of regions and communities according to the cash crops grown in them socially, economically and even politically in Kenya. For instance there are organizations serving sugar growing regions which are not nationwide. The strength of monoculture in Kenya is underlined by the state insistence on 'processing of agricultural products from such crops be done on site thus ensuring the complexity and modernization of the classical plantation- detailed in the 1974-79 Development Plan.

The decision to establish the South Nyanza sugar project appears like an afterthought in national development planning because it is not mentioned in the 1974-1979 National Development Plan. From interviews and speculative analysis of events in the country, three factors offer credible explanations for the manner of the decision and its swift implementation. First is the abundance of arable swampy land used by local herdsmen but considered inhabitable due to the high number of tsetse flies and mosquitoes. Secondly there was increasing unemployment and outward emigration of young men to urban areas outside the community in search for employment. By 1977, there was no agricultural industry in South Nyanza making most of its inhabitants to source livelihoods from casual labour, subsistence farming, fishing in the distant Lake Victoria and other forms of informal employment in the urban centres in and outside the region⁷. The third factor that made the establishment of the sugar factory politically imperative was the ascension of Daniel arap Moi to the Kenyan presidency following the death of founding President Jomo Kenyatta. Moi was keen to consolidate the support of the populous Luo community⁸. Luo politicians who had been sidelined during the Kenyatta regime found an opportunity to push for rapid insertion of the region into the agromanufacturing development plans as a remedy to increasing local poverty. Luo Nyanza had remained extremely poor compared to the Gusii Nyanza and other regions of the country. This was inspite of the significant economic growth experienced by the country between 1963 and the late 1970s when it begun a steady decline.

The three factors combine to provide the logical basis of the sudden ‘appearance’ of the South Nyanza sugar growing and processing plant in 1978 as a development intervention for

⁷ Ibid. pp.8-20.

⁸ Due antipathy between President Jomo Kenyatta and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga his former vice president and de facto leader of the Luo, Kenyatta had in effect shunted the Luo community. His death in 1978 and succession by Moi was seen as an opportunity for the ‘political and economic rehabilitation’ of the Luo. On the other hand, Moi was facing opposition for the other populous community in Kenya- the Kikuyu and needed ethnic backing of the Luo as a counter measure. Hence despite the positive projections and justifications for the establishment of the South Nyanza sugar company, the political project underneath can not be underestimated. This also highlights the link between political permutations and development planning in Kenya.

the region. Through it the state under President Moi launched an initiative to ‘alleviate poverty by creating more job opportunities, increase agricultural production and raise income levels from cash crops rather than subsistence farming’ (Republic of Kenya, 1980)⁹.

Despite the establishment of the sugar project, little changed. By 1980, household poverty was increasing and exacerbating due to the national economic decline of the 1980s, 90s and after¹⁰. There has been continuous increase in illiteracy and worsening life expectancy and child mortality in South Nyanza (Republic of Kenya, 2003) making it a national poverty hotspot (World Bank, 2007)¹¹. There have been net negative changes in absolute poverty in South Nyanza: 47.4 % in 1992; 63.0% in 1997; and 71.0% in 2000 (Kimalu, Nafula, Manda, Mwabu and Kimenyi, 2001)¹². Local accounts show that the villages and settlements within and around the sugar plantation complex have highest number of vulnerable households and individuals classified as desperately poor, characterized by widowhood, perpetual illness, absent or precarious employment and landlessness¹³. On the other hand, the production of sugar by the company has increased over the years, becoming more productive and efficient from 60% in the 1980s to 83% in 2005. It produces about seven hundred thousand tonnes of sugar annually (14% of the national sugar production in Kenya) thus making Sony a significantly successful economic enterprise (Gicheru, Waiyaki and Omiti, 2007)¹⁴.

The presence of increasing poverty in the community alongside the success of the company reveals the inherent disconnect between the development projections and expectations on one hand and its implementations and reality on the other. It also reveals the

⁹ Detailed in the South Nyanza District Development Plan of 1979-1983.

¹⁰ Nationally there was a decline in per capita incomes (to an average of 3400 shillings by the year 2002 vis a viz the estimated household minimum budget of 5000 shillings per month); rise in unemployment rates to about 15% and rise in extreme poverty to over 56% in 2001 worsened the situation in with 75% of the poor living in rural areas.

¹¹ Background information by the World Bank contained in the Kenya Country Assistance Strategy Progress report, 2004-2008 published in 2007.

¹² The data is inferred from situational poverty analysis background data by the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Analysis (KIPPRA) Working Paper No. 6.

¹³ Data from local district development plans and reports – Migori District development plan 1994-1996; then 1997-2001;

¹⁴ See KIPPRA Discussion Paper No. 84 on technical Efficiency of Kenya’s Sugar factories.

contradictions development as projects of improving local communities which concurrently target living standards, and successful economic entrepreneurship. The contradictions are captured in the disparity that manifests itself locally through the myriad forms of dispossession and deprivation characterizing the relations between the factory and the people (and their households).

The disparity can be traced to the processes of establishing and managing of the agromanufacturing projects such as the Sony sugar as development interventions. The establishment of agromanufacturing projects in Kenya is premised on massive acquisition of land and labour by and for the projects. Thus, there is always displacement of people from ancestral lands and the exploitation of youthful labour predominantly males, aged between 15 and 30 years from poor families.. It appears that the intention to improve communities is implemented through dislocating and rendering vulnerable a large number of people who in turn become available for its labour requirements. This, I argue, is the chaos of agromanufacturing development. For instance, in setting up the South Nyanza manufacturing plant, 1600 families were evacuated to create space for the factory and nucleus plantation covering about 3500 hectares and another 15000 in the immediate outgrower plantations (Republic of Kenya, 1980)¹⁵. This dislocation disrupted livelihood procurement practices of families in the region, leading to household income and food insecurity (Republic of Kenya, 1983).

This is not new or a particularly unique case. Kavetsa Adagala in a study of households changes linked to plantation establishment in Kenya found that the health status deteriorated overtime in the regions due to monocropping¹⁶; increased pollution; dependency on inadequate wages and poor housing within the plantation complexes. She asserts that as things stand, the

¹⁵ By 1980 the nucleus plantations covered an area estimated to be 13 km in radius (about 530 square kilometers).

¹⁶ Refers to the regional dominance of one crop mostly cash crops which take all the available productive land and labour to the detriment of other crops especially food crops and other livelihood support activities.

agromanufacturing plantations have reproduced both the structural violent symbolic and material conditions of the colonial dispossession, deprivation and multilayered dislocation (Adagala, 1991)¹⁷. It (cash crop agriculture) engineers overlapping and complex relations of dispossession, dislocation and deprivation. It also produces sets of connected conditions which make lives difficult, exacerbate social inequalities and extremely compromise strategies of survival within a fastly transforming environment. These forms of survival are characterized by social ambiguities, structural violence and series of exclusions which Ouru's statement about hard places and eating sweat and biography illustrate. At a deeper level, they expose mode of development which though conceived as inclusive, egalitarian, systemic and smooth, adopts a 'symptomatic silence' (Leys, 1996) over its contradictory, chaotic and shocking outcomes for many as the dissertation will show.

On the whole, the agromanufacturing 'institutions' made of the factory and its plantation complex have managed to firmly stake an unquestionable position in the national development narrative of Kenya. In its wake, starting from the colonial period, agromanufacturing has produced a novel demographic and social category with an identity to match: migrant and mobile labourers who work in the plantations as temporal workers- as will be traced in the subsequent chapter. These labourers are at its core as critical components of its working mechanisms and framework. Yet, there is a loud silence over the presence and lives of migrant and mobile plantation labourers who provide the labour that sustains agromanufacturing.

Local and national development reports and plans ignore them despite their central role in the workings of the sugar production system. For instance, even the most recent National Census of 2009, migrant labourers are not captured. If this were done, it would show

¹⁷ Alfayo Chilivumbo (1985)'s case study of uneven rural migration in Zambia which highlights such consequences. In context, the South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile study conducted by the University of Nairobi in 1983 highlights this too.

the migration of young males between the age of 15 and 30 from the villages to the various plantations for seasonal and temporary casual employment (Oucho, 1984; 1996). In South Nyanza those who migrate from outside the region compete with about 75000 local people who depend on the sugar factory complex as a source of employment (Republic of Kenya, 1983; 1986)¹⁸. Such silence over their existence and place in the agromanufacturing development serves to obscure the effects of commercial monoculture agriculture in rural communities in Kenya as whole and individual lives in particular.

My study explores the experiences of migrant plantation labourers like Ouru and their households who are invisible in this development binary to show how they make place and lives amid the contradictions. The study finds that the contradictions and survival responses by the labourers recast Ouru's view of 'hard place' and 'eating sweat' onto a wide and structural plane to expose the chaos of development through agromanufacturing. The study traces agromanufacturing from the colonial period to the present case. The evident underlying continuity further explains how these contradictions are characteristic of different agromanufacturing complexes across the country, be they coffee, tea, pineapples or sugarcane over time and space. Lastly, the Ouru's imagery of 'hard place' and 'eating sweat' captures the agromanufacturing complex such as Sony as a representative site of the overlapping capitalist processes at work. They reveal how individual and relational subjectivities are manufactured and lived out in Kenyan agromanufacturing complexes. The subjectivities contradict the expectations of a development intervention promoted as a socio-economic elixir for positive social transformation in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

By focusing on people like Ouru found in the Sony sugarbelt, the dissertation reveals the nature and dynamic of development generally and the large scale commercial farming economy in particular as unpredictable and chaotic. What is more significant from the findings

¹⁸ See the 1993 and 1996 Socio-Cultural Profiles of South Nyanza district. They do not mention migrant labourers but use it to describe the profile of those who work and depend on the Sony for livelihoods.

is the demonstration of the general integration and accommodation of chaotic existence into the constitutive and operational logic of the plantation economy and its development itinerary. Throughout the dissertation, the relations between the agromanufacturing complex as a structure designed for modernization intervention and the everyday lives of those in its orbit are shown as chaotic, defined by unpredictability, contradictions, differentiations, violence, deprivations and exploitative dispossession. Combined, these make lives under such development interventions insecure, disjointed, vulnerable and disorderly. To examine and highlight how existence becomes organized around chaos and uncertainty is the focus of dissertation.

1.3 CONCEPTUALIZING AGROMANUFACTURING AS DEVELOPMENT, MODERNITY AND RULE

Studies of the plantation and commercial agriculture in Kenya has been captured by works of among others, Frederick Cooper who explored the conditions and workings of plantations along colonial Kenyan Coast and reveals the racial structure of extraction and accumulation (Cooper 1980). Hyden (1987) on his part, reiterates the unquestionable position of commercial agriculture in Kenya's economic development while Carlsen (1980) shows how even during the colonial period agricultural production and expansion was pursued as the central framework for development.

Leys (1975) finds that agriculture provided the resources for processual insertion of Kenya into the imperialist capitalist economy albeit as a source of raw materials and cheap labour. Transitioning his analysis from colonial to independent Kenya, Maxon (2003) demonstrates the variety of responses to cash crop large scale farming by rural communities and the different social formations and lifestyles they engender. For Himbara (1994) it was also the site for the socio-economic and cultural Africanization, Kenyanization and indigenization

of the state after independence¹⁹. Further afield, Jan Breman has elaborately discussed the contradictions of plantation agriculture in selected sites across Asia. In particular, he highlights the social transformation of production relations and the social and economic identities such transformation generate over long periods (Breman, 1989; 1996²⁰).

More locally, Kennedy (1989) analyzed the effect of sugarcane plantations in Kenya and established how they created income disparities between families while Little (1994) exposes and disabuses the myth of employment in plantations in Western Kenya. Other studies have demonstrated how plantations displace residences, disrupt livelihoods as well as dislocate labour from communities, creating economies that are perpetually transient (Barclay, 1977; Akroyd, 2003). Yet, prevailing government and general development policy logic insist that agromanufacturing promotes better living standards and general community development in Kenya. Accordingly, commercial large scale agriculture continues to be accorded 'highest priority' (1974-1979 Development Plan); as the most reliable 'stimulant and guarantor for development' (1997-2001 Development Plan); and the 'mainstay of national development' (Vision 2030).

In my study I view development as social system of relations of power, agromanufacturing becomes a social process of rolling out those relations with the intention to transform²¹. Thus, development becomes a systemic imposition of transformative rule; and implementation of varying regimes of enforced modernization of rural and/or traditional peasant communities. This way development can write over the specific (among them unpleasant) realities of its processes (such as agromanufacturing) as they fundamentally

¹⁹ This refers to the deliberate efforts by the newly independent Kenyan state to transfer power, resources and agency to Africans from the colonialists and foreigners who till then dominated both government and private business institutions.

²⁰ Breman's studies traverse plantation agriculture and informal urban employment which are linked in India. Rural deprivation and dispossession engineer labour dislocation to urban areas where exploitation and deprivation are replayed.

²¹ KIPPRA working paper No. 6 asserts that indeed development should be seen and promoted as a social system. However, they do not link agromanufacturing to this notion. Instead, authors advocate for a relatively rigid econometric and deterministic conception of agromanufacturing with regard to household poverty in rural Kenya.

reconfigure local histories, biographies and landscapes. To manage the imposition of these regimes, it adopts and in turn generates novel practices and social relations. Under these practices and relations, adaptive forms of survival emerge; modes of livelihoods and production relations are constantly changing and ultimately manufacture identities which reflect the workings of the particular development. In Sony, life, social identities and places have emerged such as migrant labourers and labour camp dwellers which make sense only in relation to the processes of sugar production.

Agromanufacturing structurally and discursively imposes itself as part of a natural turn in local everyday lives. Yet, this insertion gets complicated by its legacies with regard labour relations and organization as an economy based on a continuum of extractive domination. It continuously reproduces the shifting labour relations from slavery to bonded labour and wage labour (Gudeman, 2004)²². As the South Nyanza case shows, these labour relations overlap with other forms of extraction and dispossession to produce varying forms of contradictions and uncertainties. Using a spatial motif Smith (1990) argues that the overlaps expose the contradictions and ‘unevenness’ that are the core of development²³ The spatial motif employed by Smith captures how development pursues both differentiation and simultaneous equalization in the built environment to produce surplus and expand the capital base itself.

The actions and projects of the state and other actors like local administrators, business people, politicians and residents transform spaces beyond the dimensions of surplus and capital. Instead they build them into a ‘social field of power and knowledge’ (Polier and Roseberry, 1989). Within such a social field development becomes not just a goal, but ‘method of rule’ (McMichael, 2008: 49) through which spaces and people are being willed into regimes

²² The Kenyan agromanufacturing complexes though structured along the contours of the historical European colony plantation, are a multiplicity of models: combine vestiges of feudalism, traditional rural peasantry and the modern manufacturing factory. In Sony, all these elements are in play the agromanufacturing complexes quite chaotic.

²³ Neil Smith conceives development as a capitalist project characterized by uneven expression in constitution and structure of its spaces within which nature and society are intimately integrated.

of improvement (Li, 2007). As a method of rule this appeals to national sovereignty²⁴ and mobilizes individual citizenship responsibility towards economic development. The agromanufacturing development interventions retell this view at a broad level linking the regional imprinting by capital (through the monoculture dominance of cash crops and their processing plants) with the making and maintenance of productive individual subjects as development conscious citizens of Kenya.

This dialectic between the spatial and individual effects of development and its eventual failures are the focus of the dissertation. It examines and discusses how efforts ‘to improve’ mutate and result in chaos. This differs from the way agromanufacturing as development in Kenya has been studied. Within macro-level analyses of the plantation as a system of production within the development and/or nascent entrenchment of state affiliated capitalism (Clayton and Savage, 1974; Atieno-Odhiambo, 1995; Sandbrook, 1975; Leitner, 1977; Chambers, 1969)²⁵. Taking lead from Tania Li (2007)’s work, my dissertation advances the view that agromanufacturing development in Kenya are willed projects of rule. Local socio-economic deficits have been rendered problematic by the government, transformed into technical programmes and subjected to a combination of disciplinary and government process with the aim of improving the welfare of the communities.

However, ‘the intersection of capitalist processes and programmes of improvement’ (p.11) produces continuous tensions in which the will to govern lives through a state of ‘permanent provocation’. The effects of development seem to be emergence of chaotic spaces where a complex ‘superimposition of elementary states saturate rather than increase output; or

²⁴ For instance, the development blueprint of the independent Kenya is the Sessional Paper No. 10 which encapsulates the local and international political ideologies to be adopted and the role of development through agromanufacturing in demonstrating the ability of Africans to govern themselves.

²⁵ Many depend on archival data (such as Cooper and Leitner). Most of the archival data in Kenya is based on colonial and postcolonial government reports or colonial settlers and administrators correspondences. The local African voice and presence is hardly recorded and where it is, it is inevitably mediated. Furthermore they focus on the macro-level processes in an effort to demonstrate the place of the local cases in the circulation of capital in the world system. Thus they fail to account for the chaotic nature of everyday experiences of these developments in a granular and personal way.

go different and unexpected ways' (Manneville, 2004:1-2). In the context of South Nyanza, the mobile and migrant labourers and the sugar plantation complex as a social mosaic reveal the fluid contours of the overlapping impositions. These impositions build intersections and synergy between capital interests and the improvement project of rule to produce vulnerability, deprivations,, layered exclusions and chaotic lives.

My ethnography shows that the nature and logic of development interventions is to produce 'failures', deprivation and nonlinear, in effect chaos. To put forth this view, I utilize three arguments which I think offer very nuanced critiques of development. First is the view that development represents forced 'encounters' between the Western (advanced capitalist economies) with the 'other' (the third world). The idea and practice of development provide processual apparatus for knowledge production and exercise of power over the Third World on which a series of imaginative geographies are activated (Escobar, 1995). Secondly, I take Ferguson (1995, 1999 and 2004)'s view of development as a dual process of (dis)connection through which a politically docile way of living as modern can be imposed, pursued and realized by African communities. Lastly, I follow Tania Li (1999; and 2007)'s views of development as an enactment of systematic projects of rule with objective of improving are 'willed upon' communities conceived as lacking or backward. The projects are get integrated into everyday lives as a series placemaking practices supervised by networks of local trustees.

These perspectives have three critical ingredients which are central in my dissertation and essential in fleshing out the chaotic character of agromanufacturing as development in Kenya. First, they question the teleology of modernist models of development (Ricardo, 1955; Fabian, 1983) which exhibit 'symptomatic silence over the social character' of development (Leys, 1996). Secondly, they adopt a Foucauldian mode of analysis to reveal the construction and implementation of dominance continuum (from discipline to governmentality) inherent in development. Thirdly, they capture the archetypal discomfiture of anthropology with the

deployment of the notion of chaos in the analysis of development. The three studies conceive development as a non-teleological series of deterministic intentions which produce infinite and saturating chaotic effects on the targeted places.

The dissertation establishes that agromanufacturing development encapsulates an amalgam of transformations in South Nyanza. These transformations begin with encounters and impositions, which generate expectations of 'modernity'. As development it is implemented and lived as a regime of rule that nurtures a state of everyday chaos. The findings point out that this state of chaos becomes the norm because as layers of power relations continuously emerge and form expectations and active subjects along the way. The factory at the centre of the sugar plantations and the sugarbelt illuminates and casts a panoptic effect throughout the lengths of the project, spatially, materially and symbolically. Throughout the chapters the study shows the continuous and overlapping interplay between the encounters, expectations, rule and chaos materializing as different aspects of the agromanufacturing development of South Nyanza. Structurally then each chapter elucidates the encounters, the expectations and acts of rule that define the chaotic character of agromanufacturing development in South Nyanza.

1.3.1 Encountering Development: Discourses and Imaginations of Rule

Development became a dominant feature of the post World War II international discourses and practices, and achieved iconic status in much of the postcolonial Third World. Arturo Escobar traces how development policies became the mechanisms of recasting and replaying the colonial relations of power, domination and dispossession through the 'rule of experts'. He asserts that development grew out of the 'will to transform drastically two thirds of the world in pursuit of the goal of material prosperity and economic progress' (Escobar, 1995: 4). This pursuit according to Escobar is laden with arbitrariness, cultural and historical specificity, and danger for the Third World which in itself is a creation of development

discourses. Development, Escobar points out, has established an ‘extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge. About the third world [here encompassing the poor and marginal groups]... and successfully deploying regimes of government over the [the poor]’ (p.11). Escobar advocates analyses that link the imaginative geographies with geopolitical spaces (Said, 1979). He further makes a case for research that links discursive imaginations with actual interventions so as to liberate the discursive field so that possible alternative imagining can commence. My study takes up this call.

Escobar highlights differentiation of the developed from the underdeveloped, distancing between the experts and subjects of development and a paternalistic attitude infused with a ‘colonialist move’ (Mohanty, 1990) as key features of development²⁶. I agree with Escobar’s characterization of development and the suggestion for ‘investigation of alternative representation and practices in concrete local settings’ (p.19) as ‘regimes of discourses and representation’. However, my study is not overly focused on discourses or representations, but actual life courses and experiences of people and groups in ‘places of encounter where identities are constructed; and where violence is originated, symbolized and managed’ (p.10). Taking the Sony sugar complex as a development place, the study reveals the series of encounters between rural poverty and a technical programme of improvement. It exposes the social identities that have resulted from the deprivations and dispossession ‘development’ unleashed and continues to maintain. Researching agromanufacturing this way highlights the intimate ways it generates its subjects and exposes the novel ways in which it connects local practices with national and global processes of modernity.

Following Escobar, agromanufacturing is a ‘social field’ through which the apparatus of development functions to produce knowledge and power. The knowledge and power in turn craft and inform a sense of self for the local community and the migrant labourers which

²⁶ Quoted in Escobar, 1995; pp. 8-9.

is constantly shaped, altered and reinforced by the sugar factory complex as an institution and series of practices (Gupta, 1998). The local operations of the factory are linked with local and national development plans which constitute 'social fields of power' (Polier and Roseberry, 1989). But more importantly for the study, Escobar's postulation allowed me to trace the development of 'fields of power' spatially and temporarily, linking the South Nyanza experience with the history of development and modernity in Kenya and particular practices common in large scale cash crop agriculture in Kenya. This way, my hypothesis that mobile and migrant plantation labourers are a manufactured social category and identity on whom both the continuity of colonial capitalism and discontinuity of colonial domination get narrated acquires conceptual validation (p. 24). My study then shows how development regimes can be residual - producing problematic 'ex post facto' conditions which contradict initial goals and lead to chaos.

Escobar argues that development needs to be studied from the 'concrete forms that the concepts and practices of development and modernity take in specific communities' (ibid. 222), so as to reveal the relations of communities with development. As an alternative to the 'orientalist gaze of development' Escobar recommends a local stance which would allow for hybridity, mobilization and resistance by local voices against a totalizing modernity. The findings from the South Nyanza sugar plantations though showing a dichotomy between local and imposed discursive fields with regards to agromanufacturing, do not offer credible evidence for the resistance versus domination binary. Instead it reveals processual disengagement by and from the imaginary of the project (the promise of improvement) and acceptance of its chaotic reality as a dominant and normal feature of life in the region.

Escobar seems to imply that discourses of development override actual materiality. Thus deconstructive reading of development leads to 'alternative visibility and audibility' (p 223). This position emphasises the violence of discourses of modernity and development does

not account for the lives of those within or produced by its materiality. Accepting the view of development as a series of encounters between local communities and social fields of power, I move beyond discourses and examine everyday experiences. This way, I am able to address an aspect of development that Escobar does not: the process and form of the materialities development assumes and gets lived through.

The findings show development as chaotic, vainly pursuing the evolution of a 'system of trajectories' that seek to replace an 'unstable equilibrium' of traditional communities (unreliable productivity, poverty and social chaos) with a 'stable equilibrium' (Bertuglia and Vaio, 2005:73). But this replacement though predetermined in development plans and proposals becomes elusive and generates a different type of instability such as a sudden increase of migrants and eruption of diseases which in turn require another set of interventions. The question then becomes whether this turn is natural with regard to all development interventions generally (and agromanufacturing specifically) or incidental and contextually specific to Sony. My findings establish that indeed development initiatives are chaotic- they are built on the assumption of possibility, confronted by reality of place and generate excesses which go beyond or against the set expectations. I argue that within the chaos of development are both degenerative and generative possibilities- in my case between deprivation and accumulation of/for improvement. The direction it takes is determined structures and practices of inclusion or visibility and agency on site.

What determines the outcome of development interventions seems to be the level of inclusion and agency accorded to different actors. For instance, those who were more informed, economically stronger and exposed to practices of capitalism adopted and adapted fast to the dynamics of displacement in succeeded and view the sugar project as a success. Those who were less educated, poor and traditional were displaced and deprived. As shown in chapter three, traditional hierarchies and difference were reproduced but in a more severe form

that eliminated any social and cultural established protections for the affected (build on the principle of reciprocity). The problematized old order, despite being subjected to technical interventions, is not eliminated but fine tuned and made more efficient. In effect development becomes a chaotic process in which the distinction between order and disorder is lost as both become mutually constitutive of its everyday reality. However, by continuous problematization of poverty as loss or absence of, on one hand, and projecting development as gain or presence of, improvement on the other, the development project maintains its chaotic order.

As will be shown in subsequent chapters, the establishment of the Sony sugar factory was premised on the promise of large scale agromanufacturing to improve living standards in the region thus eliminating poverty. Upon its establishment it displaced more villagers than it could employ and thus shifted to finding ways of increasing employment as well as housing the migrants. Unable to meet the employment goal, it administratively disengaged from directly dealing with unemployment instead employing services of labour contractors. Apparently this was to enhance efficiency in the management of sugar production. In brief, these series of tactical moves recurrently reconstitute the unemployment and poverty of the majority as a problem which affects the factory rather than affecting the people involved. The lack of improvement is ever present; the interventions are continuously invented but targeted differently. This is the chaos of development in South Nyanza.

The discursive and material chaos of development interventions are aptly illustrated by James Ferguson's ethnography of specific projects of modernity in Africa. For him development consists of discursive and material encounters between the expectations and experiences of development as processes of modernity. According to Ferguson, the development projects take a dystopian turn which lead to cultural hybridity in which the subjects are 'shocked' and disconnected. In the context of my study, Ferguson's implicit suggestion that development produces a residual aftertaste of loss and abandonment is

persistently reaffirmed throughout the dissertation. From the chaos perspective, this further underlines the tendency of development as a deterministic but non-linear process which is built on an imaginary of order but in reality produces contradictory results. The contradictions are not a one-off passing state but an ever recurring present that eventually become its reality.

1.3.2 Expectations and Shadows of Modernity: Limits of Projects of Rule

James Ferguson details a critique of development and modernization projects in Southern Africa by highlighting the failures, contradictions and crises of development (as modernity) as crises of meaning and experience. Continuing Escobar's encounters analogy, Ferguson shows how states (and regions within states) are configured as less developed and subsequently subjected to technical apparatus for remedy. According to him the dominant apparatus of technical remedy are development projects. Unfortunately but repeatedly the project outcomes are spectacular failures (Ferguson, 1994).

Ferguson's work in Lesotho reveals what he calls the mimetic failure of development intervention: its inability to reproduce a western modernity in Africa. He finds that instead development interventions engineer a 'process of "etatization" ... that is involved in the distribution, multiplication, and intensification of tangles and clots of power' (p. 274). Ferguson argues that development projects deserve analysis as tangible ethnographic objects in which the materialization of the phenomenon of development can be read in context. Taking a Foucauldian view he identifies how disciplinary power works through projects to generate an 'anti-politics machine' discursive effect (Ferguson, 1994). The anti-politics discourses are institutionalized to link the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic frameworks to produce politically docile bodies through inculcated ways of thinking and acting within the shaped, regulated or managed forms of comportment (ibid.: xv; Inda, 2005).

Following the ethnography in Lesotho with an extended study of lives and relations in the Zambian copperbelt, Ferguson concludes that modernity oscillates between myth and reality where the ability to live and understand everyday lives is spasmodically eroded (Ferguson, 1999:14-15). In this oscillation, the transformations undergone are both deterministic and nonlinear with multiple unplanned possible forms of subjectivity. Here the processes of modernization transcend discourses and materialize as regimes of simultaneous connection and disconnection. Thus development for Ferguson becomes a series of relational movements towards a state of 'being disconnected, loss'. This implies an active relation with disconnection in which world out there casts a shadow over the poor and African countries in general, infecting them with disorientation and decomposition without possibility of reversal or specific point of return²⁷.

The disorientation and decomposition accrue from the de/re-temporalization²⁸ of development in non-progressive ways to shift transformation into 'a game of chance, a lottery²⁹...' colonized by immediate short-term expediency (Ferguson, 2007:191-3). Under this new state of possibility, the aim becomes not the elimination of poverty but rendering obsolete and unnecessary the very idea of poverty eradication. Instead, the goal becomes creation of wealth, industrialization and other schemes of managing a binary of poverty and prosperity. Subsequently, development becomes an amalgam of processes establishing hierarchies, exclusions and abjections in which both those in poverty and prosperity are present and active (ibid. p.193).

Ferguson proposes a new analytic framework of development which would value 'multiplicity, variation, improvisation, and opportunism and distrusts fixed, unitary modes of practice and linear sequences of phases ... new ways of thinking about progress and

²⁷ Unlike, Escobar who seems to suggest such a possibility in the realm of discourses, the idea of 'point of return' where the processes can retract and start afresh seems a misnomer in Foucauldian terms in which power is continuously multiplying and regenerating.

²⁸ Ferguson, (2007) p. 192-194;

²⁹ Achilles Mbembe quoted in Ferguson (2007) p. 192.

responsibility' (Ferguson, 1999:251-254). The question left unanswered still is what such progress and responsibility would look like? This question was recurrent in my findings from Sony. What would a truly working agromanufacturing development project like Sony be like? To respond, I detour to Tania Li's argument that development is a willed improvement to show that the South Nyanza Sugar company is an archetypal development project in spite of its contradictions. This is because for Li, development interventions manifest a continuum of disciplinary impulses in which welfarist desires for improvement front capitalist and imperialist realities in which politically docile and economically active subjects are produced.

1.3.3 Will to Improve³⁰: Creating Projects of Rule

Tania Li has examined both the constitutive imaginary and established practices of a variety of development interventions targeting rural communities in Indonesia (Li, 2005). In her more recent work, Li also notes that the transition from village to factory has not materialized and connects the contemporary commercial farming 'developments' with the global capital phenomenon of land grabbing (Li, 2011). At the core of these 'developments', for Li, are the overt and covert projects of rule framed as improvement interventions by experts and local technicians acting as trustees of public or national welfare (Li, 2007). Through detailed ethnography of different development projects in Indonesia, Li identifies operating 'development regimes' in which ruling powers claim progress as a goal and profile particular populations whose welfare needs improvement and then apply a mix of scientific expertise and state machinery to effect the progress (Li, 2007:16). The main puzzle for her however is the fact that these interventions routinely produce effects that are contradictory or even perverse (p.18).

³⁰ From the title of Tania Li's 2007. *Will To Improve*

Li's ethnography reveals the limits and contradictions of rule which in many cases 'falls short of the promise to make the world better than it is' (p.283). By linking governmentality with situated practice, Li shows how development subjectivities are produced through complex convergence of different power logics, subversive agency and the processual insertion of its subjects. Further there is constant incorporation of the resultant social forms into the project of rule making them appear and work as normal. She views development's 'prodigious capacity to absorb critiques' as an 'anti-politics machine' that enables its continuity and the persistence of improvement schemes irrespective of their structural incongruence. This is achieved because as a process of rule, development appears to reliably generate pliant, submissive and pitiable bodies (Ferguson, 1999; Friedman, 2007) as subjects located in networks and relations of dispossession. But Tania Li shows something else: the anticipated subjects are not exactly docile, shocked and pliant but active and adaptive. Development as a project of rule does not seem to expect its targets to be docile subjects but active and productive (Li, 2007³¹).

Linking development projects in Indonesia to colonial civilization missions, Li traces the transformational projects of rule as a sequence of imposition, appropriation, displacement, utilization (exploitation) and selective accumulation. There are silences over the acknowledgement of the character of rule, the structure of power relations between trustees and subjects, and the structural sources of inequality and deprivation. These silences reveal different and shifting outcomes possible within a range of anticipated effects of development. .

The agromanufacturing development project of South Nyanza Sugar utilizes disciplinary apparatus to produce and maintain flexible conditions of work, control and belonging. The lived, material and discursive landscape in South Nyanza is characterized by contingent interrelations of dispossession, overlapping intersections and ambiguous graduated

³¹ There are several examples in the book in which local project beneficiaries become active participants and agents of the project of rule without exactly becoming part of the trusteeship.

belonging, fluid unfurling agency³². Under these conditions, a unique form of subjectivity emerges which is both spatially imprinted on the region and socially lived in the community (see Chapter Five). The labourers who provide the critical manual labour are maintained in perpetual precariousness; they are casually employed, and are formally unrecognized as employees by the factory though they live within the plantations.

1.3.4 Development as Chaos

I argue that development is inherently chaotic. It is built on the assumption of possibility, confronted by reality of place and generates excesses which go beyond or against the set expectations. The chaos seems to exist in a state of contextual latency getting activated by development interventions. Once activated, the form of control and deployments the project unleashes produces a series of configurations of social identities, landscapes and livelihoods seemingly unplanned. Somehow they produce more contradictions than expected results. Yet the state and other agencies maintain persistent trust in them. This trust in the project of improvement is explained by Li as due to the deeply embedded hegemony of the will to improve and its prodigious ability to ignore contradictions. Implicitly, the contradictory ‘unplanned outcomes’ are the limits of development which governmentality and hegemony make acceptable to the targeted groups. My thesis is the opposite: the contradictions reveal the ultimate success of development interventions- the maturation of the chaotic potentiality of development. Development projects are inherently chaotic, constantly negotiating between order and disorder; reality and imaginary; potentiality and reality which are constantly interchangeable. Adeline Masquelier (2001) calls them ‘regimes of pretence’ in which the

³² From Aihwa Ong’s notion of ‘graduated sovereignty’ which refers to different modes of governing segments of the population who relate or do not relate to global markets; and different mixes of legal compromises and controls tailored to the requirements of special production zones. (Ong, 2000; 2005). I use it here to imply the different modes of employing, including and utilizing labour in the Sony; other segments of the community who are expediently involved and the compromises the agromanufacturing complex as a development project makes to balance its capitalist intentions and the welfarist development narrative. This also brings forth the mechanisms of spreading the panoptic effect through layers and overlaps. Underneath though is the attempt to regulate its own chaos.

façade of development is constantly ruptured by the ‘weight of its dysfunctionality’. The ruptures are quickly integrated into the repertoire of tactics and strategies of development as it renegotiates new regimes thus establishing a form of stabilization.

Anthropology seems to have an aversion to the use of chaos as an analytic concept where development is concerned, preferring it as an adjective for disorder, violence and the uncanny. Even in cases where it is alternatively used, it comes off rather pejoratively as a description for deviant states, a malady rather than the reality of development. Nazpary (2002) uses chaos to analyze the violence and dispossession in Kazakhstan in a rather casual manner to denote created circumstances of plunder; during which agency is reduced to docility. Nazpary however advances the idea that chaos should be viewed as a mode of domination that simultaneously actualizes both order and rule; a situation created as a depoliticized response to crises of the larger context. For him, chaos is not diametrically opposed to order; it is a conceptual frame for the ‘speculative rationality of the arbitrariness resulting from random tensions between and the articulation of myriads of pockets of order’ (p.5). What Nazpary hints at is the order – chaos duality of development. Bousquet (2009) highlights this duality asserting that chaos captures momentous transformations that alter relations and interactions. My findings show the workings of this duality of development; revealing how chaos is both its order and the rule of development.

Development projects’ mission to move from a ‘stationary state’ of being ‘undeveloped’ to a ‘dynamic state’ of being developed often mutates into unplanned states. The process of movement from one state to another is rarely linear and smooth and never actually abandons its antithetical state - poverty. Instead, it integrates the existence and persistence of poverty into its logic and practice. This argument echoes Ferguson’s (1999) assertion that development evolves alongside its double: poverty essentially conceived as a state of stagnation. This view seemingly contradicts the common assumption that development is an apparatus of control

bearing down on a passive population and nudging it forward towards a better state of living. The dissertation findings show that development has generated a fluid mix of ‘creative, destructive and generative capacity which carries potential for progress towards social entropy and disorder’ (McNair, 2006: xii).

The study findings aptly fit the outlines of chaos theory in which outcomes of events and processes are inherently non-linear, complex, turbulent, unpredictable and incorporate disorder in their operations (Bousquet, 2000; Dunn, 2012). The notion of chaos and its conceptualization in chaos theory applies for the South Nyanza case. It enables a nuanced interrogation of the different and contradictory turns of events in people’s lives caused by the sugar project. The concept of chaos can show that the contradictions of development outcomes are not accidental, anomalous nor strange: they are inherently possible and normal outcomes of development. This thesis shows that development as agromanufacturing is full of contradictions, unanswered questions and contextual biases which are related through practices, events and actors (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000). More fundamentally, taking this chaotic perspective allows for development to be seen as a process that continuously produces subjects on whom and in which failures and subversions are accepted, integrated and normalized into its own progression (Faber and Koppelaar, 1994).

This continuous production and integration of two seemingly opposed qualities in development’s subjects- contradictory outcomes and instinctive normalization- echoes Foucault’s argument that power though seeking to produce docile (orderly) bodies, seemingly anticipates and inevitably reproduces itself once in contact with the targeted bodies. There are ample illustrations of this throughout the dissertation. For instance as shown in chapter Four the Sony sugar project’s launch was premised on the need to turn the large swampy desolate open lands in South Nyanza into vibrant productive plantations. But as shown in chapter Five the outcome has not been an exactly orderly and economically productive space. Within the

plantations informal houses have emerged while around them slums are mushrooming. Over time these seeming contradictory outcomes become normal to the process of agromanufacturing because somehow the company manages to establish economic utility out of them. On their part, the labourers find through them a coping strategy that allows them to fit in the new order and keep pursuing the development dream. It is the same case with labour and employment. Thus development is not producing what it promised but other forms of subjectivities that find their coherence in the failures of the agromanufacturing project.

Elizabeth Dunn has also employed the notion of chaos to interrogate the tensions between altruistic entrepreneurship and bureaucratic workings of humanitarian work in Georgia (Dunn, 2012). She argues that the way humanitarian work gets fleshed out in actual work circumstances manifests concurrent care and dominance, both of which utilize a fair degree of violence. Through these, the humanitarian work becomes a totalitarianism which has the power of life and the power of death over individuals it considers the absolute victim' (p.1). But this complex application of care through violence is not bureaucratically smooth, systematic and orderly but ad hoc and fluid. Dunn establishes that novel regimes of power relations emerge and combine established bureaucratic practices to incorporate any emerging situations into its process thus instantly render them normal. 'This ad hoc incorporation of such unpredictable conditions creates what she calls 'adhocracy- a form of managerial process and 'power that creates chaos and vulnerability as much as it creates order' (p.2). Dunn's ethnography and discussions shows how inherent disciplinary power practices of care projects transform the interventions into 'partial projects, foster instability and sharply limit the reach of domination... creating such disorder that...people can not make reasonable plans for their own futures' (p.2). Over time, the created disorder becomes the order of the whole enterprise and its mechanisms.

The juxtaposition of domination and disorder as parts of the adhococracy essentially argues that chaos is an operative principle within humanitarian work. This is also true with development projects such as the Sony sugar factory. In the Sony case, chaos takes the form of the precariousness of work and life generally in South Nyanza especially among the migrant labourers working in the sugar plantations. Rather than creating and establishing secure employment and income generation opportunities, the agromanufacturing project has unleashed a social and material environment defined by dislocation, dispossession and deprivation. The community and migrant labourers are left with 'the burden of repairing the mistakes made by the epistemologies of guessing, imagination, and analogy....' The vulnerable chaotic crumbling employment conditions leave the labourers... 'demoralized, more vulnerable to violence and disaster'...and poorer struggling for survival 'not as a result of calculated action but by limits and barriers to calculation inherent in the system' (p.16).

In a study of population dislocations due to violence in Mozambique, Stephen Lubkemann argues that the anthropology of socially transformative conditions such war, violence, post-war reconstruction, natural disasters or massive development interventions, has always erred in treating them as events which would come to pass. Instead he proposes that they need be seen as social conditions in which social survival strategies and change effects become embedded and the people are socially positioned (Lubkemann, 2008). In other words, the conditions are made as much as they remake the actors involved. I find Lubkemann's argument relevant in advancing my own here. Development scholars often investigate how context-specific social relations, cultural understandings, and economic and political conditions can be configured to structure opportunities and shape conditions for the exercise of agency within a specific period after which sufficient capacity for 'natural reproduction' would have occurred. Development projects are envisioned as events. Instead I propose that they should be viewed as enduring social conditions in which new forms of belonging are necessary,

established and continuously reproduced. These new forms provide the surfaces on which power becomes fleshed out, recasting Foucault's notion of 'power is everywhere' into power gets reproduced everywhere to generate chaos at every point in an ever expanding and intensifying field of power.

What the study finds is that the chaotic character of development comes out over time as the development intervention moves beyond a 'critical point' at which sequences in personal lives emerge and establish as the norm without necessarily implying fate or destiny (Abbott, 2009). For instance the point at which labour precariousness is accepted as norm; poor and debilitated housing for the labourers is integrated as part of established nature of the plantation life or when the factory is privatized and shifts from a state development intervention into a private business exploiting local resources. The question (as discussed in the next section) is how appropriate norms, forms of behaviour and conduct are established and maintained to sustain this chaotic character and legitimate it. In South Nyanza, the project adopted the historical character of the colonial plantation and became a social panopticon exuding power and reproducing disciplinary effects in the region. This panoptic quality is a missing link in anthropological analyses of development and modernity projects generally and plantation archaeology in particular; it is important to facilitate an appreciation of the chaotic nature of development.

1.3.5 Dealing with Chaos: Agromanufacturing Complex as Panopticon

As argued earlier, development seems to be producing deviant subjects which it rapidly incorporates into its orbit at every point. As a form of power, this is in line with Foucault's assertion that power generates power everywhere, transforming every contact into a site of its reproduction. Given that development in Sony is chaotic, then conceiving the factory complex as a panopticon and its networks as relays of its effect further underlines my dissertation's view of development as chaos. This chaotic process is imposed and integrated through disciplinary

mechanisms at the core of which is the panopticon effect. The panopticon effects explains the way the presence of the factory and administrative centre are felt throughout the region and responded to as part of the natural landscape and social normalcy. It makes comprehensible the acceptance of the chaotic character of the agromanufacturing development intervention in which order and chaos are concurrent and constitutive of development in the region.

My findings make a case that the contemporary plantation in Kenya need be explored as a 'place' in which spatial and social landscapes, relations, sentiments and identities are made and distributed. The South Nyanza company case exposes the tensions and sentiments and identities that make the plantation complex (DeSilvey, 2012). It also shows their relation to particular sites within the plantations; and the social relations they have engendered as a chaotic mode of development. But more importantly, it shows that agromanufacturing seems to anticipate or is geared towards chaos as part of its own structure and processes. Its history and organization in Kenya and elsewhere is geared towards establishing authority, dominance and order. This authority relayed both internally and relationally to the surrounding community takes the form of the panopticon - a central feature with diffuse networks (material and symbolic) which weave themselves into various layers of contact to form points and micro-relations of power dispersal. The panopticon creates and disperses effects through a series of graduated points on which encounters between the project's intentions of improvement and the expectations of improvement occur. Based on the findings in South Nyanza, the agromanufacturing complex acts as a 'total institution'³³ which combines the mechanical rigidity of structures and their social malleability as symbols of power.

This view of the plantation as a panopticon which produces effects throughout the host community can be traced to the slave and colonial plantation community structure. Thomas Durant's study of the slave plantation reveals that the organization of the plantation

³³ The concept comes from the postulation of Erving Goffman (1961).

engendered the formation of distinct patterns of social relations and social inequality (Durant, 1999). Since the colonial period, the agromanufacturing complexes in Kenya have tended to operate as a rather loose form of total institutions in which a large number of people are concentrated within or around a relatively enclosed space, live a formally administered life, beholden to a central administrative unit (Knottnerus, Monk and Jones, 1999; Boles, 1984; Perry, 1974; and Elkins, 1968)³⁴. Within these conceptions of the plantation as a structure of social organization or institution (though with a significantly less formal administration) are the two aspects relevant to the exploration of development as chaos. First is the presence of the agromanufacturing complex within the local and national community compelling attention unto itself; and secondly the implicit disciplinary ability of plantation agriculture as an institution capable of imposing order in community and personal lives.

Taking a political economy angle, Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz (1957) split the internal structure of the plantation economy into two. They differentiate between the hacienda as a site of the master/land owner's social reproduction and the plantation as the site of economic production thus mapping out the relations of production within each, from a Marxist materialist perspective. This perspective leads to an analysis of the social systems and their constitutive conditions within a relatively narrow teleological prism which does not account for the complex socio-spatial interfacing. Thus to them, the hacienda and plantations are simply social systems with overlapping states and stages of relations of production with little or no significant spatial implications.

Wolf and Mintz's analysis exhibits some silence regarding the connection of the actual disciplinary and biopolitical power modalities of production and the geography of managing the plantation through distribution of people and demarcations of land. For instance, they

³⁴ This is an extremely rigid view of the plantation based on studies during colonial and slavery periods. However, giving room for advances in managerial and surveillance systems; labour regimes and changes in the structure of plantations into complex all-in-one units: farming, Processing, packaging and even marketing); I argue that this model is quite apt. The social and spatial dimensions of the plantation complex in Kenya retain the institutional structure (see Thompson, 1975).

ignore the calculations of the landlords regarding the number of people within the plantation and their labour contribution. Thus they do not discuss how the monitoring of movements influenced the location and state of housing in the plantation and how the actual disciplining of the slaves depended on specific distribution within the plantation. This distribution was achieved through spatial targeting and fielding of the plantation as a system with a deliberate disciplinary logic at its organizational core (Scott, 1995). Had they done this, they would have shown the way the plantation life is intimately tied and actually effected through to its architecture (Bonner, 1945); and how different structures and sites are associated with and saturate particular practices and sentiments within and around the plantations (Cardwell, 1969).

A few studies nonetheless, mostly based on historical and archaeological excavations, have focused on the spatial dialectics of the plantation, often as subsidiary backdrops and explanations for particular themes such as racial violence and control. Such is Theresa Singleton's study of coffee plantations in Cuba. She establishes that the plantation was strategically organized in a jail-like form to facilitate efficient and effective control of the labourers and slaves through spatially aided manipulation and surveillance by the slaveholder (Singleton, 2001). Singleton further asserts, with ample support from Delle (1998) and Epperson, (1990), that the arrangement and location of the plantations, the residential housing organization and even the internal structures of housing units were deliberately designed to ensure maximum productivity at minimum cost; efficient surveillance and sustained reinforcement of the subordination of the labouring slaves. The plantation was intentionally structured to impose exclusion by location, work routines and rules of mobility within and across the boundaries (Boles, 1984). In effect, the plantation complex was built in a way that it can produce and circulates the panopticon effect. Its system of relations is predicated on a geographical impulse to locate people in relation to its space (Camp, 2002).

During the colonial period, plantations occupied an indispensable place as sites of political, economic and socio-cultural surveillance, control and transformation in material and symbolic terms. The European settlers used them as centres for bringing African lands into cartographic order; for administrative organization of rural communities and establishing law and order (Sabea, 2008). Hanan Sabea examines the colonial sisal plantations in Tanga as spatial-temporal entities. His study captures the complex and often tense social modalities of the plantations with regard to land and labour thus exposing the socio-spatial dimensions³⁵. Plantations in Kenya have received scattered and thematically varied exploration as socio-economic systems (Oucho, 1996; Mosley, 1984) which have not addressed their structural dominance in the local development. Furthermore, they have not linked the organization, architecture and social networks of the agromanufacturing complexes with the goal of civilizing and modernizing communities and people. My ethnography brings out this connection showing the South Nyanza Sugar complex as a structural centre which casts a networked shadow of surveillance unto the communities and migrant labourers.

The authoritative and imposing hand of the colonial plantation master has been expunged from Kenyan agromanufacturing complexes that have been adopted as projects of development and transformation of rural and poor communities. However, the plantation economic model persisted and continues to assert itself as a way to socially and spatially transform communities. My argument is that the plantation unleashes its agency through a panopticon effect throughout the communities to constantly bring under its control the chaos it generates as agromanufacturing as project.. The plantation consolidates and applies the amalgam of control mechanisms based on perpetual observation and subjection of people to a

³⁵ Sabea, *ibid.* p. 412: Note: The study focuses on sisal plantations in Tanga, Tanzania dating back to the colonial Tanganyika under the German rule before the First World War to the 1980s long after independence. The study demonstrates the underlying spatial impact of the plantations which persists long after Tanzania gained independence.

regime of expectations. The plantation as a panopticon structure is not only omnipresent but also omniscient and omnipotent (Foucault, 2000).

As a mechanical structure, the reach of the panopticon is limited to the confines of institutional boundaries. However, its import within the Foucauldian conception of surveillance and power are not simply mechanical but social and discursive in which it works largely through its effect rather than presence. Foucault argues that the meaning of power conceptions and mechanics is relational and multiplies in dynamic and unpredictable ways (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000) and invites an analysis that allows examination of power motions beyond the spatial and temporal limits (Foucault, 1997). As a social and relational feature, the panopticon produces a diffuse effect in which the mechanical and social are fused into a plasticity that reproduces and relays the surveillance throughout the social body (encompassing the subjects themselves)³⁶. As such the plantation and factory get integrated into the larger community, legitimated by the need to organize and order people and their activities towards the workings of the agromanufacturing project. The mechanical surveillance and control concentrated at the core of the panopticon spills out as an institutional effect. It is this effect that nurtures an adherence to the demands and schedules of sugar production (in the case of Sony) and becomes part of the normal conduct of people in the region.

My interpretation of the panopticon this way is informed by a closer reading of Bentham's conception of the institution within which the panopticon works. For Bentham, the economy of an institution is organized on the basis of productive labour skills: the good hands, the capable hands, the promising hands and the drones. The centre of the surveillance is the manager, an actual person who has the powers to anatomically (even bureaucratically too) observe, disclose and publish his accounts of the whole process and details of the surveillance (Bozovic, 1995). I find corresponding similarity between Bentham's structure and that of the

³⁶ Danaher, Schirato and Webb, Ibid.: p.54.

Sony sugar factory. It is organized in a layered way that maximizes the flow of surveillance from the management similar to Jeremy Bentham's structure. In the Sony, this translates to a layered concentric arrangement of people with the management at the centre and surrounded by technical staff, the regular support staff and the migrant labourers as drones.

My proposal to 'socialize' the panopticon can be traced to Foucault's assertion that the panopticon arose from the need for pliable, healthy and sober work force to service the factories of the industrial revolution. Bozovic (1995) highlights Bentham's dual function for the panopticon: safe custody of those inside and economic production of labour. 'Thus he suggests that the function of the structure should be considered as 'applicable to joint function of punishment, reformation and pecuniary economy' (p.50). By adopting the complex interplay between visibility and invisibility of individualized bodies such as migrant labourers in the case of Sony, it serves to solve problems relating to productive and disorderly conduct. The panopticon has a particular ambiguity which enables it to construct and display its subjects as both ends and means of power through its effect. It not only provides the gaze but also a continuous reproductive presence that multiplies and publishes the presence of the administrative centre through effects³⁷.

For Sony, the factory complex plays the dual role of the surveillance and diffusion of disciplinary power. The huge modern buildings, the giant smoky factory chimney and the large dumpsite are visual and olfactory presences which imprint and exude the power of the factory. More specifically, it is the labour and managerial positions that emanate from the workings of the factory that enact out the tactile dimensions of surveillance and disposition of bodies in the region through orders and public statements. The company's daily gong for instance instantiates and dictates the daily schedules of the workers, serving to reproduce everyday roles and spaces on/and through which power is dispersed. What is important is the way the factory

³⁷ Jeremy Bentham's Letter XI in Bozovic, 1995.

complex and the whole plantation acts as the panopticon structure, while the labour, commercial and social connections it has with different groups provide the relaying mechanism of its power, spreading its effect.

1.3.6 Conclusion: Contextualizing the Dissertation Argument and Findings

My dissertation attempts to make two contributions to anthropology of development: to explore rural development in Kenya through a Foucauldian eye and interpret it as chaotic process. Examining the emergent relations and practices around the South Nyanza agromanufacturing project this way provides insights into how development becomes a way of life for people caught in its orbit. At a wider level, it shows how precariousness is produced and entrenched as part of a process of willed and imposed modernization. There is a continuous production of subjective identities such as migrant labourer (individual and group) and labour camp (spatial) in unpredictable ways. This further illustrates how development is chaotic by showing that once it is launched; its disciplinary power spreads everywhere and is continuously subverted as it materializes. In this subversion it produces neither its opposite (which could be interpreted to be resistant) nor its intended result (or make its subjects subservient). Instead it generates conditions for 'excesses'. Such excesses are reflected in the identities that emerge, the survival strategies and the various forms of life in the project which are neither planned nor unexpected. For instance the kind of work employment available for migrant labourers is predictably precarious and informal, manufacturing stigmatic identities: labourers instead of workers; casual work instead of permanent, temporary instead of permanent; disruptive instead of developmental.

The labourers and community respond to the excessive conditions by integrating aspects of the process of being 'willed into improvement' in their everyday lives to craft lifestyles are flexible and highly contextual. They are mobile and lived through deliberate invisibility and amorphousness thus evading any particular formal ordering of space and

bodies. This also renders them defiant and ‘beyond’ effective regulation of conduct and activation of perpetual disciplinary power and practices (Winiecki, 2007). Being beyond regulation provides both the basis and logic of the exclusion and deprivation of migrant labourers and other fringe groups like village women in the Sony.

The deprivation juxtaposed with the affluence of the factory management creates and maintains a malleable and expedient subjectivity- the ambitious, willing and disposable migrant labourer. It also provides a mimetic quality of development. where the labourers not only perform their roles as part of the labour force required by the industry but also through them avails the image of ‘pathologies and unnaturalness- the uncanny qualities of capitalist labour’ (Taussig, 1997). The deprivation as the ultimate feature of chaotic development does not erase and plant old subjectivity over the other but hinges them together in the everyday practices, experiences and discourses. It is this mimetic quality which captures the contradictions of development which I propose as chaos. It generates the development and management of the disposable bodies explored in the study that subverts the ideal logic and development narrative of the sugar manufacturing project.

The outcomes of agromanufacturing development are not the better people, communities or modern economies promised, but abject populations thrown out and down from their imaginary (Ferguson, 1999). It is replete with people who are structurally suspended from fully accessing the possibilities of autonomous livelihood within the social power field framed by the institutions and values in the context (Castells, 1998). The people are kept at the fringes as ‘surplus identities regularly assuming a range of multiple and sometimes contradictory subject positions from where they participate in the economy’s constitution (Kayatekin and Ruccio, 1998). Development as practice focuses on the creation and maintenance of ‘zones of exclusion’ where its promise can be suspended and the suspension normalized into its operations (Agamben, 2005). This is the way development deals with its

chaotic side: allows for continuous normalization and reconnection to the original promises by making subtle shifts in focus to address emerging deviances.

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For decades development has been about the shaping of behaviour and organizational forms from a distance, a ‘conduct of conduct’ and discursive social engineering imaginary constructed to shape the way problems are seen and acted upon. It also advocates for the transfer of responsibility to the self, from the diminishing state to the realm of micropolitics (Joseph, 2010). The approach to power and construction of governable subjects by Foucault is fascinating but has been little applied to the study of the macro-micro analysis of development because of its presumption of excessive disciplinary rigidity reflected by some of its key constructs especially the panopticon. I critique the argument that Foucault’s conception of disciplinary society indeed produces docile, mappable, knowable and identifiable individuals. However, my study argues that disciplinary subjectivity is not only about docility but production and utility. This ingrained duality captures development projects and interventions in Kenya across time and space, giving development the chaotic form which I argue is its reality. My findings show that the microphysics of development are conveniently and structurally manipulated to generate expedient disposability and subjection to intimate forms of deprivation and effect, which in turn make the kind of development rolling out in Nyanza chaotic.

Throughout my investigation as shown in the following chapters, through the lives of migrant labourers, I demonstrate that the subject of any improvement projects are made by the disciplinary gaze of the projects and adapt to its fluidity through strategies which are deviant and defiant to the general flow of power. This process of the improvement subject defying the logic of its formative projects is conceptually in line with Foucault’s dictum that power multiplies itself. Accordingly the resultant forms of subjectivity reveal the different ways

individuals and their spaces constitute themselves through self-mastery, self-care and adaptation to produce themselves as a ‘work of art’. This production of works of art from the effects of development projects are the chaos of development. Throughout the dissertation, I try to highlight incidents and situations in which disciplinary practices, modes and responses generate subjectivities that work with the chaos of development.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Logic and Research Design

My research is an engaged ethnographic attempt- focused on a reflexive description, accounting and elucidation of lives and actions (Graeber, 2009; Van den Ven, 2007), to describe how the Kenyan agromanufacturing plantations generally and mobile labourers in particular are social products and artefacts of t development as chaos. I selected the sugar growing and producing South Nyanza community and the migrant labourers of the Sugar Company because of its history as a region subject to development intervention. My study is based on an assumption that development is chaotic- a series of processes characterized by ‘simple system with complicated behaviour’ where simple inputs lead to complicated outputs (Kellert, 2008). Hence my study attempted to trace the simple and direct actions taken to develop South Nyanza and their transformation of people and landscapes into complex and heterogeneous lives and experiences. I focused mostly on the phenomenon of migrant mobile labour as a defining feature of the effects of agromanufacturing development projects in rural South Nyanza; and on the larger scheme of things, the evident bodies on which the chaos of development have been imprinted- literary and literally.

I spent two years in South Nyanza during which I got involved in the migrant labourers’ everyday lives. This way, it was possible to develop a more granular understanding of the profiles and narrative biographies of the people; and descriptively map the region and

the community life in relation their lives, the factory and plantations to be able to connect the various chaotic dimensions of agromanufacturing as development. The study proceeded inductively, exploring and developing assumptions and speculative concepts such as ‘sweating bodies’ ‘abandonment’, and ‘disposable bodies’ which I sought to explain as Moore (2006) has suggested. Concurrently I exploited insights from other ethnographic works that have employed related conceptual frameworks in exploring modern capitalist subjectivities such as Biehl (2005; 2007) and Wacquant (2008) whose detailed studies of structural abandonment and extreme marginality provided me with exemplary cases.

Throughout my two-year stay in South Nyanza, I had to contend with the ambivalence of positioning as an outsider and as participant. I was always oscillating between the everyday complications of survival and acceptance and the ‘lonely moments of reflection, representation and critique of mobile labourers’ lives. They too at times were caught in the dilemma of identity in our relations: how to ‘present themselves in everyday lives’; or aware that I was studying them, how to craft and present a coherent and positively normative narrative. The analysis I present here is based on selected moments, information, characters and events which reveal some unique, relevant and cross-cutting aspects of their lives. My analysis is a multi-dimensional recounting of mostly, the migrant labourers’ story spiced with continuous reflexivity.

My two-year interaction with the mobile labourers of the sugarbelt was spent seeking to understand them as living subjects and agentic actors immersed and dynamically located in space and time within the South Nyanza sugarbelt. Through them I manage to expose the micro-level experiences and realities of dispossession and marginalized deprivation under the processes and projects of agromanufacturing development chaos. Both my project’s conception and the actual fieldwork make no attempt to camouflage my deliberate intertwining of the political and anthropological into what Carrithers (2005) calls the existential

commitment. This intertwining materializes in an ethnography that is deliberately seeking to contact, learn and expose complexities and dynamism of the others studied; and their contextual world's morality and political economy (Armbruster and Laerke, 2008). Traversing the grey boundaries between historiography and (auto)biography (Fabian, 2008), my findings are a product of the 'science of ethnography', my deliberate engaged positionality, my subject participants' concerns and their world's conditions.

1.4.2 Choices: Ethnographic Site Location of the Study

The selection of the research site was done purposively based on the subject of research, my prior knowledge and evident scarcity of scholarly interest on the target population and thematic subject so far demonstrated in Kenya and Africa as a whole. The scholarly interest on the socio-economic transformation of African rural communities through the rubric of agromanufacturing developmental interventions and the emerging forms of governmentality, socio-economic relations and subjectivities in Kenya has tended to be peripheral. Critical examination on the twin subject of development and its various forms of governmentality has tended to focus on NGOs and corporate contradictions (cf. Weber, 2004; Biccum, 2005) with little being done on the experiences of state-initiated projects on individual lives in rural Kenya. This way, the chaotic side of development has been ignored.

Further, I also wanted to focus on mobile plantation labourers as a social category that has emerged from the development interventions (creations of modernity so to speak in Kenya) whose lives have been either ignored or dealt with in a casual and disembodied manner as a subset of other social inquiry concerns such as health and employment. Given spatially 'panoptic' feature of life in the region, the site was also suitable for an investigation of the possibilities of Foucauldian conceptual frameworks of ethnographic investigations into the

experiences of capitalism and modes of existence at the margins of development governmentality³⁸.

The geographic location of my ethnography is a sugar cane growing enclave in the southern part of Nyanza Province in Kenya located at an intersection of three ethnic communities: the Bantu speaking Abagusii, the Nilotic Luo and Cushitic Maasai. However, the Sony sugar company is designated as officially located in Nyanza Province and Migori County hence ethnically in Luo Nyanza. The dominant language and socio- cultural organization and practices are predominantly Luo including language, consumption habits and religious rituals. The research site is the area covered by the sugarcane plantations and smallholder farms in and around Awendo town in South Nyanza. The area used to be plain grassland, ecologically swampy and infested by mosquitoes and tsetse flies before the introduction of the sugarcane industry in 1978. Since then, the region's politics, economy and social organization have revolved around the on-goings of the sugar factory based in Awendo town.

The Sony sugar factory which was launched as a government development intervention for the region has been in operation for over thirty years with little visible success in transforming the lives of the local community in the scale imagined and projected. It is not alone; many agromanufacturing interventions in the country share the same characteristics. Though not intended as a validation of the study, the choice of site was therefore also unique as it offered a qualitatively representative community for an exploration of the nature and extent of impact agromanufacturing development interventions have had in people's lives with regard to the government objective of transforming rural peasant communities into commercial farming regions producing for the industrial processing and employment.

³⁸ The panopticon is structural symbol of surveillance in usual Foucauldian parlance. However my intention here is to hazard the possibilities of it taking contextual import to link up social and economic dimensions symbolically and materially as feature of a relational power flow- where every act and discourse is referenced to it. As I will show in the next chapter, my fear is that Foucault's use of the panopticon has not been read in a more relational and flexible manner. It has remained too physical and static.

The Sony sugar company traverses a huge area in the region. Deliberately, I chose to focus on its nucleus since there is no data or existing study that has been conducted on any aspect of the lives and changes brought by it in the area. My ethnography was conducted in and around Awendo area where many of the mobile plantation labourers reside. In some cases, for validation and biographical tracking purposes, I followed some leads and subjects out of the area into their home villages as well as tracking archival data in Nairobi and the national library in Kisii town, as well as homes of prominent retired government officers in and from the region. As the research evolved, the focus became more refined in focus and scope finally settled on one labour camp at the heart of the Sony plantations: Manyani. In effect then, Manyani labour camp located on the Southern part of the sugar company's expansive plantations is the central site of the study.

Through the complex networks and relations this labour camp has with the factory, town centre and surrounding villages, I was able to rope in these locations as part of the research site. The roping in of these areas adhered to the general pathways that organize the labourers' lives in their everyday interactions. It provided a way of following them and tracing the different ways they manipulate and adapt the social and physical landscapes; utilizing the different opportunities and challenges characteristic of their lives in the period 1980-2010. This way, I was able to explore the sugarbelt both as a spatial and temporal location in their lives – I elaborate on this in chapter six where I examine the processes of placemaking; showing the spatial chaos heralded by the sugar project. The study captures the chaos of development, ethnographically detailing the rife and connected differences between the villages, plantations and the factory complex; and corresponding lifestyles of multiple dimensions and layered dispossession.

1.4.3. Data Gathering

I spent a total of twenty- eight months in Kenya collecting data primarily from the mobile labourers, villagers, farmers and traders in the Sony region involved in the plantation and sugar industry. My study was a single extended case study since the focus was on elucidation of a located mobile labour world through extended interaction, reflexivity and constant questioning of the possibilities of positivist research and development projects (Burawoy, 1998). As Burawoy attests, the extended case method is better attuned to the exploration of everyday social interactions (p.30); and is suited for attempts to reflect on and reconstruct existing theory. My study deliberately adopts a Foucauldian attitude towards theory as tool boxes from which a researcher picks a specific tool without any obligation to commit to the whole box (Foucault, 2008). Thus I also included some aspects of the grounded theory so that my ethnography was not entirely focused on ascertaining or reconstructing existing theories but generating concepts which may contribute towards new theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I not only framed my ethnography around the concepts of governmentality, discipline and relations of rule; but also went to the field with a significant degree of anticipation for contextual and rather rudimentary but apt notions such as ‘sweating bodies’ and ‘chaos’ that emerged and accurately capture, narrate and link the complexity of everyday lives to the larger condition and relations of the plantation economy.

I gathered most of the data through participant observations, guided interviews and life stories. I also collected a significant amount of archival and secondary data from the Kenya National Archives, libraries in Kisii and Nairobi; and some personal records in homes of some elders. I tried in vain to acquire updated records from the Sony company headquarters. However I was able to collect important data regarding policies, administration and management from individual staff members, the company website and the Kenya National Assembly Hansard records.

I lived in the South Nyanza sugarbelt community for about two years, staying in Manyani labour camp, one of the seven residential compounds hosting about three hundred cane cutters and weeders working in the plantations for three months. Later I rented rooms in one ramshackle hotel and guest house after another in Awendo the main trading centre for fifteen months. The constant changing of residence was due to my occasional discomfort and insecurity on one hand and a deliberate copying of an observed common practice for many of the mobile labourers, especially those who lived off the labour camps. On and off I also spent an estimated two months in the surrounding villages tracing retired mobile labourers and supervisors and contracted farmers. On a couple of occasions I had to travel far into Gusiiland to track down documents relating to earlier land lease agreements. I also had to visit retired civil servants in other parts of Nyanza to confirm anecdotal information about the initial factory mapping process.

As my stay extended, my interactions became more common and integrated with those of the native groups; I joined the labourers in many of their routine activities, leisure (learning to play cards and pool were some of the most enjoyable moments) eventually becoming, to a degree, an extension into their every day lives. On occasions, I could begin an impromptu discussion of an observation or speculation from the data with one or two of the labourers or villagers. Before long we would end up being surrounded by a large boisterous group each confident enough to speak oblivious of my identity as an outsider. Yet, however much I was accepted and involved in many of the labourers' daily activities, I was always the outsider. Sometimes they could make remarks about my 'freedom to come and go'; and sometimes about 'my vulnerability to theft and insecurity as an outsider'. In some other occasions, especially when they were discussing family issues, they would tactfully avoid me or even politely inform me of their unavailability at that moment.

I found these comments and actions to be significant and revealing ethnographic moments. The statements about my freedom and vulnerability recast their own sense of 'claustrophobia' in the camp and the material conception of their lives. The implied vulnerability captures the risky survival strategies and the general precarity of a structurally violent character of the plantation complex. Such meaning become clear as the ethnographer gets more acquainted with the people. The interactions become easier and more comfortable while relations acquire a level of conviviality that allows conversations, discussions and even disagreements to be seen as normal and acceptable. This makes each side (the ethnographer and subjects) socially available, vulnerable and partakers in the social intimacies such as being included in gossip; confidentialities and conspiracies. For instance, I could be updated on thefts, police raids, and even illicit affairs in the labour camp.

It was through these close interactions with the mobile labourers and other members of my study community, that I became aware of the critical and strategic role narratives and anecdotes played in their lives. After a period of observation, reflection and tentative exploration, I adopted the narrative techniques as outlined by Riessman (2008) to capture, record and reflect on the twists and turns of individual histories seemingly contained in the personal narratives. The collecting of the narratives was made possible by deft use of anecdotes and vignettes which I gathered and used as pieces of a larger slate. I could pick pieces of a personal story during a discussion, follow up the person and connect the different episodes in the story to the person's temporal and spatial movements. This way I found that many of the labourers' anecdotes, often through humour or wry descriptions, revealed uncanny details of lived experience. They could locate connecting moments and disruptions in their lives and spaces; practices and meanings; connecting social and spatial landscapes and dislocations in a single stroke (cf. Gallop, 2002).

Employing the anecdote strategy effectively enhanced the capture and development of marginal and often effaced overlapping and multi-layered aspects of agromanufacturing development subjectivity – the chaotic manufactured and disposable consequence of dispossession. This has tended to come out in my dissertation especially chapter three and six as almost romantic or exotic. Yet, to read it so misses the whole point. It is a perfect illustration of the character and appropriateness of the anecdotal technique for this study. Derrida (1997) views the anecdote as an ‘exorbitant’ technique; emphasizing the analytic potential of anecdotal strategies to generate and elaborate a methodical view of exteriority and binaries of subjects- their attempts to get out of the rut. Thus what may appear elaborately exotic but disjointed and episodic is a deliberate strategy I employed in both my analysis and writing to highlight the chaos of development through the migrant labourers’ chaotic existence and survival; itself manifest in the episodes of work, locations and identities connected by the relations of place.

The narrative episodes capture the rhythms of daily personal lives within a shifting social space in which existence is itself unpredictable, episodic, continuously compromised as the everyday chaos become the order of life. The personal statements made in brief and sometimes incoherent vignettes allow piecing together disparate and sensitive sets of information and happenings that have shaped the labourers’ lives. Catherine Mackinnon has similarly applied the anecdotal theory in her study of sexual harassment to gather sensitive information and found it very productive in elucidating the connections and disconnection between private traumas and public appearances (MacKinnon, 1979). In my case, the anecdote provided a strategic opportunity to show the discursive and actual exclusion of the migrant labourers on one hand, and figuratively show how they have developed episodic modes of survival which if looked at in isolation may not present a coherent survival strategy though they are. When put together, connected and read with a granular analysis of place, they reveal

patterns and processes of precarity as well as narrate alternative moral regimes and legitimacy, outside the mainstream sugar factory dominated system.

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter provides an overall introduction to the study outlining the background, the conceptual argument and the research methodology. This chapter makes the case for conceiving development as a disciplinary imposition of modernity; explicating it as chaos and the development projects as panoptical features in context of agromanufacturing development in Kenya. The second chapter backtracks historically to show the emergence of plantation agriculture serving to build the temporal narrative of the experience of development in Kenya. It traces the central motifs of development: discipline, governmentality and social formations; putting agromanufacturing in the context of civilization and disciplinary regimes of the colonial and post-colonial state structures and processes. The chapter highlights the centrality of land, labour and work in the modernization process across all the epochs in Kenyan history, capturing the plantation labourer as the quintessential figure on whom the processes are narrated. It concludes with a summary linkage of the conceptual and hegemonic continuities between the colonial and postcolonial organization of agromanufacturing development projects with regard to labour and land. This chapter essentially seeks to locate the mobile labourers and the plantation within the continuum of the national development framework in Kenya to show how it is part and parcel of the national narrative.

The third chapter returns to a theme introduced through the anecdotal life story of Ouru by shifting focus into more intimate chaos of existence in the sugarbelt- tracing on the lives of mobile labourers as plantation workers; their relations with the factory and their biographies as subjects of the factory's modes of control and production as a system. The

chapter shows the process of labour dispossession and deprivation as a personal lived set of practices, connected to the manufacture of a community of bodies whose membership is based on capacity to produce, disposability and erasure dictated by the exigencies of the local relations of capital accumulation and appropriation. At the centre of the chapter is the sweating body of the mobile labourer as a biopolitical construct and product of plantation capitalism engaged in a series of survival acts. The chapter illustrates development as decomposition or disintegration of lives into episodic bare existence. It highlights the specific ways the labourers are confronting and experiencing deprivation; exploring the contradictory moral terrains mobile labourers have to negotiate both as participants and creations of the agromanufacturing projects.

Chapter four localizes the analysis of agromanufacturing as development to the South Nyanza sugarbelt focusing on the establishment of the South Nyanza Sugar company factory. I use the chapter to show how the colonial project of development became translated into a local project through a select set of disciplinary measures aimed at ordering space (land) and generating labour in postcolonial Kenya. The chapter explores the transformation of community as a spatial organization by examining the ways land was acquired and brought under the sugar plantation. By highlighting the controversies and drama of launching the factory, I show how development projects link their economic interests with local practices to provide the legitimating narrative which act the buffering preface for the dispossession they unleash, thus camouflaging the chaotic character.

The fifth chapter focuses on placemaking, connecting three key sites- the labour plantation, the factory and the village- to examine the sugarbelt as a dispossession mosaic. Recasting anthropological literature on the organization of the colonial and slave plantation as institutions, I use the situated exploration to show how sites within the sugarbelt and different relations and lives built unto coherent heterogeneous spatial ordering. The chapter extensively

explores the landscape to show the dispossession and transformation of land into variegated spatial sites of social and structural subjectivity and agency. The chaos of development reveals an imprinting process at play captured by the notions of abandonment, exclusion and convergence of dispossession. The imprinting has transformed the factory-plantation-village complex into a mosaic, with multiple and overlapping subjectivities. Here the processes of social formation and differentiation are spatially illustrated.

The sixth chapter returns to the intimate aspects of the migrant labourers lives to show how they negotiate the chaos in their lives and find a balance between private limitations and public possibilities. It focuses on how individuals, their households and public space have been intertwined, co-opted and compromised into a series of deprivations and chaotic struggles between subjectivity and agency. In particular, it examines how notions and practice of gender roles have become diffuse sites of self-assertion for the migrant labourers and their families. The seventh chapter presents the conclusions of the study; summarizing the dissertation's main findings and making recommendations for further research. In this chapter I particularly show the unique way agromanufacturing development projects engineer chaos manifest through processes of social formations which are subjected to a mix of disciplinary and governmentality regimes. The chapter emphasizes the need for more ethnographic focus on migrant plantation labourers as an emergent community and identity born of agromanufacturing development with a view of critically appreciating the complexity of modernization schemes in rural Kenya. Further, I make a case that the notion of chaos needs to be more centrally integrated into the anthropology of development and social change not just as a description of otherness but as a concept of analyzing processes of 'de-othering'. This may work quite creatively with a more innovative reading and experimentation of Foucault in 'chaotic' social systems.

CHAPTER TWO

CIVILIZING THE NATIVE, INSTITUTIONALIZING CHAOS:

Dispossession and Development of Agromanufacturing in Kenya

“European brains, capital and energy have not been, and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy”. Frederick Lugard³⁹.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I review the colonial encounter which led to the establishment of development disciplinary society in Kenya whose rationality and mechanics were organized around large scale commercial farming. In particular, I show the roots of agromanufacturing development in Kenya -the British colonial project of rule whose goal was the establishment of a settler economy driven by capitalist dispossession, extraction and appropriation of African lands and labour (Kitching, 1980; Carlsen, 1980). I also discuss how the progress narrative shifted upon independence from civilization and modernization to national and local development. In both cases, the legitimacy is derived from an egalitarian will to improve the lives of rural Africans through elimination of poverty, illiteracy and disease. Lastly I detail the structures of governmentality by showing the centrality of the State in legitimating development; and the forms of subjects agromanufacturing governmentality has left in its wake in Kenya. The overall agenda of this chapter is to reiterate the dynamism of agromanufacturing development as part of the relations of capitalism as rule in Kenya over time and the chaos they institute.

³⁹ Chiriyankandath, J. (2007) Colonialism and Post-Colonial Development. http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199296088/burnell_ch02.pdf.

2.2 ENCOUNTERS OF CIVILIZATION: COLONIZING TO CIVILIZE KENYA

Between November 1884 and February 1885 fourteen states converged in Berlin at the invitation of Otto von Bismarck, the Germany Chancellor. The conference marked the climax of the European scramble for Africa and the partition of the continent as part of the quest for expanded spheres of influence and dominance amongst the European powers (Josephy, 1971). Though Bismarck had intentions of using the partition to set the other European powers against each other, the desire for expanded dominion and resources enthused the process of superimposition of European rule in Africa, and British rule in Kenya - the combination of romantic nationalism and possibility of loot in form of natural resources, markets and labour (Pakenham, 1992).

In 1885, the British launched the East African protectorate with a declared goal of civilizing the communities by opening them up to the western social and economic culture. Yet, the civilizing mission was hardly altruistic in real intent as various communiqués from different advocates of the colonial mission reveal. For instance in a petition to the Royal Courts Justice on December 1899 Richard Webster and Robert Finlay wrote that ‘... in such regions [as Kenya] the right of dealing *with the waste and unoccupied lands...or occupied by savage tribes* (emphasis added)... the Protectorate need assume control ... and make grants to individuals ... for cultivation’ (Mungeam, 1978:319). According to this view, the African lands were presumably chaotic wastelands either inhabited by savage tribes or empty of people hence as the two further put it in the same letter, the crown grants ‘... involved the assumption of entire control over the land ... including disposing power over unoccupied land’, (p.20). Later, in 1901, Sir H. Johnston⁴⁰ was to assert that East Africa and especially Kenya as ‘a white man’s country’ had thousands of square miles ‘admirably well watered with fertile soils, cool and perfectly healthy climate, covered with noble forests and to a large extent, uninhabited by any

⁴⁰ Johnston, Webster, and Finlay are among the first colonial administrators quoted extensively in Mungeam, (1978).

native race', (p.321). He further concludes with conviction that in Kenya, the British have a ...'territory which will be a source of profit to the United Kingdom' suavely connecting the civilizing mission with capitalist expansion.

Such sentiments and convictions as expressed by Webster and Finlay⁴¹ contain the gist of the logic of British conquest and subsequent colonization of Kenya. The civilization persona was a façade for a mission of conquest. In reality it aimed at exploiting resources, extracting and relocating productive capacities from the African to the British. The linkage of land and profit accumulation is intricately interwoven into the policies advocated by the British bureaucrats promoting the rapid settlement in the acquired territory. The presence and the economy of the indigenous people is either ignored or set up as an anomaly that needs normalization, legitimating the inevitable dispossession in advance. The dispossession and eventual occupation fronted as a civilizing mission conceived the people and their habitats as steeped in savagery, unproductive indolence, moral depravity and spatial disorder (Dinesen, 1989). This conception laid the discursive logic for prescribing and rolling out a cocktail of disciplinary measures and strategies against the native communities to expressly transform them into subjects of colonial economic and social order in which conquest, pacification and forced incorporation had a crucial role (Chiriyankandath, 2007). Herein lies the irony of the civilization mission: there is little if any evidence of chaos before the imposition; instead what emerges is a deliberate intention to unleash and establish a new order in which dispossession is a central principle.

Various colony laws, regulations and ordinances like the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902, make explicit the capitalist material logic of the colonial intentions by obligating the European settler community arriving in the country to dispossess, 'improve and develop the resources of the land in a prudent and business-like manner...' (Mungeam, 1978:325). This

⁴¹ See Footnote 41 above.

obligation was loosely framed to allow settlers and the established Protectorate Government a flexible and selective implementation framework. Thus it facilitated and legitimated lopsided development of such improvements in ways that benefited the Europeans and exploited the natives more (High Court sitting in Mombasa, Civil Case No.91 of 1912). From these laws and regulations, a differentiated and stratified pattern of improvement emerged within and across geographical areas depending on the racial composition of the inhabitants.

Because European settlers were predominantly agricultural entrepreneurs and barons, the improvements of infrastructure and service provision tended to follow the agricultural terrain. The more an area was agriculturally productive (or potentially so) the higher the number of European settlers it attracted and the higher the investments made for its improvement. Even within the agriculturally high potential-high settlement regions⁴², the investments of the colonial government on their improvement was segregated and stratified on the basis of race. This racialized and economically stratified manner of improving areas obviates the core aims of the colonial project: establishing a settler-based economy built on large scale farming and infrastructure; maximally appropriating and exploiting African lands and labour; thus integrating the colony into the imperialist world economy as a component of the British Empire (Carlsen, 1980). The indigenous economies and agricultural systems and economy were radically altered and ushered into (and eventually imploded) the orbit of imperial capitalism while being explained in terms of improving the country through increased agricultural productivity and utilization of natural resources (Youe, 1987). The mode of development initiated by the colonial government had an economic and political objective aiming at the spatial and 'biopolitical' conquest and economic imperialism.

Kenya was seen as an expansion of British territory from which tribute could be extracted through alienation and appropriation of land and domination of the local people.

⁴² These are regions which have the appropriate climate for growing crops and conducive for settlement. The colonial settlers identified and appropriated large pieces of land and in many cases displacing Africans to drier and climatically harsher areas.

Thus beneath the stated colonial civilizing mission, lay the dispossessing process of capital penetration to extract surplus from labour and land (Freund, 1984). This was the foundational logic of colony and not civilization which was evidently obvious to many African communities based on the available evidence of responses to the entry and settlement of the European occupation in different regions of the country (Branch, 2009). Colonial interest was motivated by desire to control native economies, politics and social lives in order to control and direct them towards development of production of raw materials and markets for European goods and a home for Europeans (Dilley, 1966).

Bruce Berman reveals that the larger project and logic of the colonial development seems to have been the linking of European capital with indigenous societies giving the former effective control over the latter's production resources thus initiating a radically different type of society (Berman, 1996). This logic seems to have been informed by a hotchpotch of economic models supporting the idea that civilizing the African required increased accumulation. This was aimed at creating a 'trickle-around'⁴³ of modernity through capital articulation processes characterised by concurrent stimulation and repression of production and accumulation. Berman further shows that acquiring and appropriating the resources was not an end in itself but a prelude to utilization and modification of the production apparatus and mechanisms to allow effective dispossession. Acquisition and alienation of land needed native labour to be productively transformed and serve the development goal hence the civilizing mission connected the control of land and people. From Berman's analysis, one detects the first hints at the true nature of the transformations wrought by the civilization projects underway: a distinctive form of concurrent stimulation and repression in which penetration of the 'civilizing mission' undermined indigenous production and livelihood

⁴³ The classical Keynesian economic assumption of capitalist development is the trickle down effect. Here I use 'trickle-around' to emphasize the fact that accumulation was being consolidated around the European settlers who were quite modest themselves. Thus the idea was that production and prosperity among the European core would trickle and circulate to the Africans.

systems (pp: 35-39). The aim was to generate need and deprivation which characterize the chaotic potential of the mission and thus ensure the technical necessity of intervention albeit through capitalist entrepreneurship.

The colonial government and settlers needed the entwining of the 'development of Africa' as agricultural land with the development of Africans as labourers. This reveals the more granular logic of colonial development: engineering the transformation of the African tribesmen and their world into working and entrepreneurial actors in a capitalist economy in which territorial conquest secured tribute for administrative purposes while it also compelled African participation in the new economic order (Stitcher, 1982). But it also reveals a type of encounter loaded with ambivalence: both paternalistically egalitarian and utilitarian presumably for the good of the natives and growth of empire (Maxon, 1993). However, assuming indeed the whole British colonial project was meant to develop the African communities and if such development is viewed in terms of per capita income, investment, provision of basic needs, infrastructure, or social survival indicators within particular location or communities, then the whole project becomes progressively contestable as development. As Inez Sutton shows in the analysis of colonial 'development' in Gold Coast (Ghana), 'the growth of one sector of the colony cannot be seen in isolation from the slower growth or lack of growth in other parts', (Sutton, 1989: 637). Similarly the development of one section of that community at the expense of another can hardly qualify to be development for the whole.

The mission contains contradictory processes leading to different outcomes for the respective races. This incoherent and nonlinear but deterministic aspect of the colonial settler-native encounter provides evidence of the complex and chaotic nature of the colonial civilizing project. The implosion of the natives' economy was achieved by the appropriation and dispossession of the African labour which disorganized and effectively destroyed the political organization and potential for resistance. Concurrently it provided the means of launching the

production infrastructure while simultaneously debilitating indigenous economies and social organization systems. The subsequent settler economy adeptly adopted and exploited the social and organizational structures of the native communities as it superimposed the capitalist development structures of government over them. The imposition paired the geographical appropriation of space with the 'biopolitical' transformation of communities into labour reservoirs in which native populations were thrust into a new form of compelled and controlled temporal belonging (Clayton and Savage, 1974).

This colonial settlers' ordering orientation to the land anchored itself on a number of strategic framings: First it, from the onset, emphasized the centrality of land as both as the blank topos on which the new imaginary could be mapped to facilitate organization and establishment of production relations. Secondly there was an assertion that most of the land was unoccupied or unused thus providing the necessary grounds and justification for a free hand in annexing, appropriating and distributing it to the settlers. This was befitting for the twin tropes of development and progress that framed the civilization mission. This also highlighted the vastness of the task of ordering and managing the empty lands; hence the reason of bringing in more settlers especially discharged and serving soldiers of the Empire. The third frame was mapping and apportioning the vast lands into identifiable and manageable sizes- in effect, rendering the lands knowable as property as opposed to the traditional communal ownership based on communal memory and unwritten agreements. What followed were vacuous partisan lease agreements which were based on 'explorer-discoverer-conqueror-mentality'- the settlers discovered lands and the Crown simply allocated them the leaseholds. In places where the natives were present they were coerced to sign over the lands and move to the designated African areas⁴⁴ (Zezeza, 1974). Overall, land alienation was effected through the 1897 Land Regulations and the 1902 and 1915 Crown Lands Ordinances. The Ordinances

⁴⁴ The Official Gazette, 4th -7th May 1929: Government Notices by J.E.S. Merrick, the Acting Colonial Secretary on the designation of Nairobi and surrounding areas and the arbitrary magisterial allocation of land to British settlers through Ordinances.

were ‘comprehensive measure(s) dealing not only with methods of alienation of land and the conditions of grants but with the survey of land and registration of titles’ (p. 367). In effect, the African lands were presumed empty or chaotic; they were subsequently surveyed, parcelled and allocated to Europeans with concurrent displacements and dislocations of Africans to ethnic enclosures. This ensured that spatial and social reorganization went hand in hand.

The process of dispossession of land from Africans to British settlers facilitated by the Crown was enacted with the assumption that native labour was available.⁴⁵ In the Report on Labour in the British East Africa Protectorate (April 1903), W.J. Monson wrote that the ‘labour question is one of the most important and interesting problems which engage the attention of the Administration of East Africa in connection with the development of the country...’ Compulsion was the key options identified to induce the natives into waged labour to meet the labour demands and forcibly acculturate Africans ‘to understand Europeans and their methods better and better’ (Mungeam, 1978). Yet, this also appreciates the imposed conception of labour under the colonial agricultural enterprise which entailed transforming work into a site of controlling Africans and directing them towards the machinery of settler and corporate production (Zezeza, 1974). Labour in the African communities was viewed more as a natural activity of sustaining oneself and community by interacting with nature in pursuit of the human condition to both produce and reproduce. Under the colonial regime, it became a framework which could be deployed in temporal and spatial dimensions to facilitate dispossession, appropriation and accumulation of capital (Gudeman, 1978/2004).

Starting from forceful dispossession and incorporation into the economy, under the colonial encounter, traditional modes of production were reconstructed and integrated into the daily routines and live trajectories as the normal course of growth. Colonial agricultural and labour policies systematically created conditions for the emergence of ‘footloose labour’

⁴⁵ The Soldier Settlers Scheme: Memorandum of Conditions with Press Notice, 1919.

(Bremar, 1996) - a homeless and mobile male population – surviving on the expediency of the plantation economy. This labour situation emerged as result of the incremental compulsion and enforcement of labour and other ordinances which compelled African males to seek wage employment in white settler farms to pay taxes as well as supplement their livelihoods given that their use of land was either restricted or prohibited. Both prohibition and restriction were effected by direct force or/and coercion based on the various legislations, some of which have been traced above. These legislations and ordinances made it possible four developments regarding the political economy of the Colony Government.

First, it alienated and appropriated most of the arable lands from Africans to European settlers rendering them either squatters and landless or confined to special areas reserved for Africans- the African Reserves. In areas where the land alienation was not absolute so as to render them landless, the populations were high due to being rounded and concentrated in designated locations hence available land could not sufficiently support families and the taxes imposed. Land acquisitions were often enacted through the actual physical displacement of whole communities into small confined areas- native reserves. Secondly it adopted widespread use of indirect administrative coercion through African collaborators and village leadership who also doubled as labour agents. Such agents were used alongside colonial government forces to forcefully recruit people where the market forces failed to meet targets.⁴⁶ Thirdly, it made every able African male a taxpayer. The taxes could only be paid in cash which the African could only be earned made-up by working for a settler farmer at very low wages. Taxation served as both an end for raising finances for the administration, and as a means for drafting and confining African males to the settler farms as cheap labour. The extremely low wages paid for farm labour provided to the European settlers became the only way for most Africans to raise income to pay for the poll and hut taxes (Sandbrook, 1975:4). Finally, it

⁴⁶ See, 1914 Report of the Native Labour Commission 1912-1913 by J.W. Barth and others submitted to the Governor. Also see, Mungeam (1978) *ibid.* pp. 380-385).

designed and implemented compulsory labour systems which were essentially contradictory to the principles of the market economy which was supposedly the basis of the civilizing projects. This eliminated competition for labourers amongst the settlers whether there were variations in working terms and wages or not (Stitcher, 1982; Carlsen, 1980; Kitching, 1980).

Within the emerging capitalist development framework, the valve-mechanism alluded to above served to regulate the dispossession; dislocation and appropriation of African labour in response to the dynamics of capitalism within and beyond the country- the global flows such as the global depression of the 1930s. Structurally, the conditions for channelling people towards the plantations got established- a systematic materialization of the compelling but invisible hand of the agromanufacturing capitalism. Through a variety of disciplinary measures and diffuse networks of control capillaries, plantation agriculture established itself as a mode of governing creating and sustaining a hegemonic hold over communities, families and individuals controlled and regimented according to the demands and routines of the dominant agricultural activity (Chambers, 1969). It inveigled itself into the daily lives, relations and traditional practices of the host community to establish and reinforce exploitative and dispossessing dominance (Billings, 1982). Agromanufacturing then as a civilizing encounter created and established social relations based on exploitation and a systemic application of disciplinary measures which contradicted the idea of improvement with regard to African lifestyles. This is what I propose as the origins of the chaotic development in Kenya.

2.3 RULE AS DISLOCATION: DISPOSSESSING AND DISPOSING LABOUR

Acquiring African labour inherently entailed reconfiguring work in a singular and capitalist way- as a productive input in the agricultural enterprise whose value was measured on the basis of time and skill invested in the activity. This conception allowed for expedient and convenient construing of African as unskilled to be engaged for the duration of whatever task

needed to be accomplished. This is the logical basis of mobile unskilled wage labour in the agricultural sector in Kenya. Ironically, this also provided fissures through which Africans could evade the labour recruitment process justifiably but often unsuccessfully (Zezeza, 1974; Maxon, 2003). Most of the Africans were reluctant to work in the settler plantations. This culminated in regular labour shortages and competition among the settlers by 1908 across the country. The severity of the shortages varied from region to region depending on plantation proximity to particular ethnic groups, especially the Kikuyu, Luo and Luyha.

The common characteristic of the ethnic groups with propensity towards waged labour was the existence of internal stratification in political economy. Most of the plantation labourers came from communities that had central administrative structures through a chief system with significant internal economic stratification. Many of these communities had embraced Christianity fervently with many mission stations amongst them. Majority of them came from relatively poor families as well as threatened minority clans (Maxon, 1989). The combination of administrative force through the chiefs and moralistic persuasion by the Christian missionaries attempted to alleviate the labour shortage by compelling Africans to work in the plantations.

Transforming Africans into labourers and getting them to work was not a smooth process. Many were reluctant and devised various ways of avoiding recruitment making labour inadequacy a regular challenge to the colonial plantation economy (Allen, 2008). The difficulties faced by the settlers were exacerbated by the government regulatory demands that African labourers be protected from force and slave-like working conditions. Inherent in this was the assumption that market conditions should prevail and compel Africans to work for Europeans on the willing worker–willing employer basis. This failed to work because as the Native Labour Commission of 1912-13 noted the Africans developed and showed ‘distaste’ for manual labour and conditions of work on settler farms. As a response the Commission

proposed that Africans pay land rents to the Crown and other taxes be levied on them thus compel them to take up waged labour. These ordinances and various regulations in effect compelled them to seek wage labour work in the plantations, in the process achieving the civilization objective of transforming slave and master relationships into employee and employer without altering the actual operating exploitative logic of dispossession (Bales, 1999).

Contrary to the market logic of individual freedom and agency, the option of choosing to work in the settler farms was curtailed: avoiding labour work on a settler farm became criminalized⁴⁷. Through the taxes and regulations the control of Africans' movements, residences and living conditions was complete. Later, the Kenya Land Commission of 1932-3 was to propose that Africans had no right to land in the 'Whitelands', a notion solidified by the Resident Labour Ordinance of 1937 which redefined African squatters as labourers (Furedi, 1989; Kanogo, 1987 and Oucho, 2002). The commission also recommended that squatting- settling on farms by Africans- be encouraged 'in every possible way provided that the squatter goes on to the farm for the purpose of labour'. In other words, the dispossessed Africans were now being encouraged to resettle as landless guests on the settler farms at the cost of free labour. The colonial process of modernizing the Africans seems to have come full circle- erasing the presence of the Africans from their lands and reinserting them back but under a framework which allowed for convenient disposal and erasure. What makes this a chaotic turn is the ambiguous stigmatized identity and spatial possibilities that got established for Africans. As squatters they were deprived of land tenure and security and forced to oscillate between being criminals trespassing private property or deodorized as free mobile labourers looking for work. In the process, its claim to improving the welfare of the Africans and anti-slavery rhetoric became vacuous and subordinated to the dynamics of capitalism leading to contradictions and chaos.

⁴⁷ These included the Veterinary Quarantine Regulations which prohibited the movements of natives and their animals; the Vagrancy Rules which restricted movement of Africans from one area/plantation to the another and the Master and Servants Ordinance of 1910.

These compulsion mechanisms, particularly taxation, acted both as stimuli for a cash economy through circulation of wages and as a resource base for infrastructural development in support of the settler economy. The demand for cheap native labour was an economic response aimed at sustaining the nascent settler economy and administration which took on a racial social dynamic (p.34). Metaphorically as was common then, the Africans were the labour mules on whose backs the settler economy rode. The tempo and tenor of extracting labour from the Africans after the First World War increased leading to increased recruitment into the labour industry. A combination of the new land and settlement structures created conditions in which the African male had little land to grow crops and keep animals, especially in Nyanza, Central Kenya (generally known as Kikuyuland) and Coast while concurrently expecting them to pay taxes for their existence. The establishment of the new land ownership and labour organization system in Kenya by 1920s therefore set in motion policies and practices that resulted in two concurrent outcomes: implosion of the indigenous economic, political and social systems, especially the peasant political economy; and transformation and compulsion of indigenous economies into the global capitalist development. Meanwhile they reconfigured what it was to be an African male as plantation labour became a feature of life in the colony, - an institution in the national economy linking the settlers and Africans (Oucho, 1996).

Between 1920 and 1938 wages for labour dwindled between 30% to about 10% of the farm expenditures across the country. In addition, the little available records show that over 75% of the labour employed in the plantations served for less than four months each year due to low wages and varying conditions (van Zwanzenberg, 1975). Between 1920 and 1930s the 'wages could barely support a man let alone a family'; it was barely enough for subsistence (Elkan, 1965). An article in the *East African Standard* series, 'Straight Talks on Labour' in 1926 pointed out that many Africans only worked in the plantations when on the verge of starvation as a last resort for survival. Yet even in the plantations, the conditions were no better as

attention focused more on the short term interests of increased productivity by the employers. The employers had vague and indefinite obligations to the labourers and worked hand in hand with the Labour Inspectorate to ensure that nothing happened or got done to ameliorate the harshness of the work conditions. Van Zwaneberg established that nutrition-related ailments such as beriberi, scurvy and rickets became common among Africans. In some cases, death rates for workers were quite high- up to 220 per a 1000 labourers employed (p.62).

The Protectorate Government strove to deal with the crisis of the depression by promoting expansion of commercial large scale farming – cash cropping and stock-raising- by devoting resources and efforts to boost the settler farmers while negating and even hindering African agriculture (Talbot, 1990). At the start of the Depression, Governor Edward Grigg advocated for subsidies for the settler farmers with little regard for African farming as they were strategically being positioned to facilitate cheap labour. Later as the demand for African labour got outstripped by the supply, it became apparent that strengthening African agriculture would be ultimately beneficial to the European economy as well- it could absorb the excess labour. Talbot, (1990) however adds that such activities aimed at promoting some sort of African agriculture were closely supervised; ‘production could be reduced if necessary to ensure labour supply to European farms and to curtail African farm income’ (P.164). He concludes that as a result during and after the 1930s, the colonial government had founded conceptually and practically contradicting agricultural development policies that could be manipulated at will to expand and contract African productivity while constantly reinforcing the settler economy by restricting the scope of African farming and ensuring constant labour supply.

In effect, there had been assembled a valve-mechanism which could at will starve African agriculture at the behest of the settlers’ plantations labour demands. Just as Geertz (1963)’s study in Indonesia established, the colonial policies and their successors encouraged

and maintained a contradictory and chaotic mode of social transformation. The transformations engineered were based on a partial cash economy in which the peasantry supports plantation agriculture in order to sustain export production for the settlers and other foreign-owned commercial farms.

2.4 MANUFACTURING SUBJECTS: CAPTURED AND CONTROLLED

LABOURERS

The development envisioned and pursued through agromanufacturing in Kenya during the colonial period engendered a reorganization, coordination and application of human and non-human energies and distribution of resources through a bureaucratic rationality which subordinated individuals into functional identities (Bunker, 1985). Mapping, adjudicating and provision of transferrable title deeds completed the process of bringing land under the regime of the new economy- bringing the spatial environment into productive, harvestable and transferrable relations (Geertz, 1963). Labour on the other hand was a little more complex as it involved first bringing into existence the social category of labourers and then launching a series of apparatuses- rules and regulations- to bear on the labourers. The cumulative impact of these apparatuses was a systematic transformation of healthy and able-bodied African males into a socially distinct, profiled and targeted part of the colonial economy. The labourers became the socially visible subjectivity of the colonial encounters and its civilization project.

An elaborate but diffuse system linked the colonial civil service with the African reserves which had been created to hold the Africans dislocated from the alienated lands. African chiefs and reserve leaders collaborated with colonial bureaucrats to keep a record of all the men and at any time explain their absence or presence in the village in reference to working for the settlers. The mobility of the labourers was rigidly controlled using the kipande- a special identification card giving the identity of the labourers and the geographical area of legal abode

and movement of African especially the labourers. This kipande, later to become the official identity card for citizens, emerged as a system of identifying deserters of forced labour-enacted under the Native Registration Ordinance of 1918⁴⁸ to supplement and make the operations of the Master and Servant Ordinance more effective.

The law required that every African ‘over the apparent age’⁴⁹ of sixteen was supposed...to carry a registration card in a small metal container. The card gave the man’s finger prints, the name and address of his last employer, the date at which he began work and the date when he left it, with the rate of wages paid⁵⁰. For effect the kipande was worn around the neck in full and permanent display like a dog collar (Zezeza, 1992). This certificate was to be carried all the time and Government agents and settlers were at liberty to ‘at any time to demand from the native the production of the card...’ failure of which constituted a crime. This effectively ensured that once the labourer was in the service of one estate it was almost impossible to move or work elsewhere without authorization from the ‘owner’. There are cases of workers being publicly flogged by their ‘owners’ when caught violating the movement regulations as well as midnight raids on the labourers quarters by the European settlers to check for any hidden deserters from neighbouring farms. The identification card transferred the identity of the African from them to itself- without the card one did not exist or belong to a particular geographical space⁵¹.

Essentially then, the mobility of the labourers from the villages/reserves resulted in confinement and immobility once they became labourers of a particular settler. Within a short span, the kipande got popularly adopted for profiling and monitoring the natives. In simple terms, the profile of the African had changed from a mass of natives indistinguishable from

⁴⁸ *Official Gazette*, Supplement No. 8, Vol. XX 4th September, 1918.

⁴⁹ Estimation of the ages of Africans was arbitrary since few (if any) had birth documents to ascertain their ages. This arbitrariness allowed for physique of Africans to be the basis of their official recognition.

⁵⁰ Mungeam, p.186.

⁵¹ This transfer of identity to the card is common in many of the mass labourer colonial exploitative working conditions. For instance, South African playwright Athol Fugard captures its dehumanizing subjectivation in the play *Sizwe Bansi in Death*.

each other in the European eye to an anatomically individualized labourer, amenable to the economic regime: made, marked, mapped and monitored- a disciplinary project in all ways possible⁵². As a disciplinary project it allowed the settlers in their formal capacity as employers to determine and categorize Africans as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ employees, sometime even whole communities⁵³. The police and administrators also used the system to harass and intimidate African men found outside the plantation territories. The effectiveness of this system however relied on illiteracy of both the labourers and the African enforcers who could not decipher the actual contours and boundaries of legality and extent of its possible application. Its legal ambivalence operated in some sort grey area- juridical exception zone so to speak (Agamben, 1998) - where one party coerced and the other cowed to the extents possible or necessary to sustain existence.

2.5 EXPECTATIONS AND DYSTOPIA: TRANSFORMING PLANTATION

LABOUR

By 1960s the number of squatters and resident labourers in the plantations and settler farms had fallen by over 600% speeded up by the increasing mechanized farming and capitalization. A final chapter to the widespread use of squatting and mobile resident labour in favour of migrant and often casual labour came in 1962 when the Resident Labourers Ordinance was repealed. By 1963, squatter labour had been replaced by ‘free’ wage labour.

⁵²See several articles in the *East African Standard*, between 1924 and 1925; especially those on 22nd November, 1924 and 1st August 1925

⁵³ Such as the special ‘Lumbwa passes’ a special set of certificates which Kipsigis men had to carry when travelling outside there territory on account of their long resistance and appropriation of European livestock. (see Kenya National Archives, PC. DC.KER.2.1 HOR 1919, 12th April, 1919.

While this was officially attributed to the global changes in labour regulations under the International Labour Organization and the new spirit of independence, the truth was that squatter labour had lost its economic advantages hence need to be discarded (Zeleza, 1992). It was more costly to keep a permanent labour force of squatters than a temporary one made of migrants which would be recruited on demand without any particular form of obligation.

The post-independence agromanufacturing sector adopted many of the practices of the settler economy: the big European settler farm was transferred to African owners and in many cases, multinational companies and corporate entities such as cooperatives. The Kenyan Government committed to Africanization of agriculture through land transfer, reorganization and development of the land previously owned by European settlers. This was ‘... to ensure that areas formerly closed to Africans were opened to them....Settlement policy was to be driven by economic considerations...’ (Republic of Kenya, 1965: 28)⁵⁴. Efforts were made to resettle the squatters by allocating them small pieces of land in designated settlements and villages on which they practiced mixed farming. Most of these farms were not adequate to support families hence casual plantation labour persisted as an alternative and supplementary source of income. By 1970, farm labour work provided significant employment opportunities to young people especially those from poor families in Western, Nyanza and Central Kenya. Seasonal migration of labourers was (and still persists so) mostly rural-rural condition in Kenya where movements are often from one village to another agromanufacturing village or emerging urban centre. The agromanufacturing industry characterizes the shifts from traditional economies and demographic patterns from rural areas to the ‘mobilized peripheries or economic islands’ (Oucho, 1984).

In the region covered by the South Nyanza sugar company, mobile labour has historically been viewed as work for those men who were unable to sufficiently provide for

⁵⁴ Republic of Kenya, 1965. *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer

their families- those incapable of being ‘men enough to feed and protect their families and kin’ and had to run to the settlements. As such, it attracted or was a survival option for young men born of poor homes, orphans and those excommunicated from their villages due to crime or certain taboo transgressions. All the respondents and descriptions I have gathered reveal that young men from wealthy and respectable families, and considered of good standing hardly joined the migrant plantation labour industry because it was demeaning. The fascinating thing here is the fact that the intention to improve became subverted to become a marker of stigma and recourse for those either excluded or on the process of exclusion.

Evidently, the way migrant labour became an option for young men in villages and over time a pathway to socio-economic survival followed the selective crevices of stratification and inequalities in existence before and during the early colonial period among the African communities in Nyanza. ‘Amasamba’- large settler farms- as they became commonly known, acquired a particularly negative connotation: they represented the force that sucked off young men and labour from the community forcefully; they were also seen as a degenerate place where the lazy, criminals and the poor/shameless could go to work ‘for unga- maize meal’. This perception remains a persistent frame generating a pejorative identity for migrant plantation labourers- ‘those who work for maize meal or the stomach’⁵⁵. This encapsulates the subtle but critical reading of the relationship between the structural dispossession which the plantation represents, the disposability of people which casual labour means, and the dead-end nature of the work available for those it attracts.

Despite the many efforts directed at improving the working conditions in the plantation work sector, plantation labourers have persistently been characterized by pervasive

⁵⁵ This traces its reference to the practices of paying people per piece of work completed. Sometimes labourers were unable to complete the minimum daily chores and for such days they were not paid/ counted as having worked. Instead, to ensure that they survived to work the next day, the farm owner gave them a day’s food ration of maize flour and beans. Hence such a day was referred to as a ‘flour day’ essentially a no pay day.

impoverishment, poor health, un/underemployment, poor housing and poor access to health services (Rene, 1989)⁵⁶. Foeken and Tellegen (1997) established typology of plantation labourers in Kenya which emerged after independence: 'labourers resident on large farms (resident casuals) and labourers living outside farms (non-resident casuals)' (p.305). Non-resident casuals are often from the surrounding smallholder farmers living in the vicinity of the plantation. Resident casuals on the other hand are from distant communities and reside within the farm or centres in the vicinity from where they report to duty on a relatively regular basis. However, they are not considered permanent employees of the firms though they offer their labour on seasonal but regular basis.

From the mid-1980s, there has been an intense shift towards use of 'permanently casual labourers'⁵⁷ replacing formerly employed farm workers in many of the large plantations as part of cost-cutting strategies (Lugogo, 1986). This has gone hand in hand with lower wages in relation to the costs of living. The wages earned from the casual labour range between fifty Kenya Shilling (Kshs.) and one hundred and forty depending on where and when. As will be shown in later chapters, the work is exhausting and poorly remunerated as they fall outside the labour protections of formal temporary workers (Manundu, 1997). What is notable from the foregoing is the way the structural contradictions become extremely effective in defining individual life trajectories away from the expectations of better lives and improvement. In effect the improvement project produces its mimetic otherness- deprivation, uncertainty, and chaos in personal lives and social reproduction in a way that ensures permanent status as deprived.

⁵⁶ Rene, Loewenson, 1989. Challenges to Health in Plantation economies: recent Trends. *Health Policy and Planning*, Vol. 4 No. 4. pp. 334-342.

⁵⁷ This is an oxymoron term used as contradictory reference for people who work as casual labourers on temporary terms for years – up to twenty years.

2.6 AFRICANIZATION AND AGRICULTURE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN KENYA

Promoting agromanufacturing by the post-independence Kenya government provided the policy connection between private investment and provision of employment largely through settlement schemes and large scale farms, and partly on small-holder production in adjoining land units (Republic of Kenya, 1964:52). This brought into effect a continuation of the colonial dispossessive process: proxy annexation of land in which families and communities own the land but produce for the marketing authorities such as the Kenya Coffee Board⁵⁸. These are government marketing agencies which control the production and selling of particular globally traded cash crops such as coffee but also serve as policy lobbying forum for large scale farmers and agromanufacturing companies. In effect, the State was co-opted into an alliance with private capital to maintain agricultural production, recalibrating colonial relations under new systems of dispossession. What both the Sessional Paper and the earlier Development Plans (1960s-70s) underline is the tenuous line between the economic development and the political economy defining the new dispensation. They link the solidarities (social structures) and rationalities of government and rule; and legitimate the application of power to dispossess and deprive as a mechanism for improvement.

The large plantations previously owned by settlers were transferred to wealthy Africans most of whom had been collaborators and partners to colonial settlers and a newly emerging political elite class made of the leading personalities in the independence government and their supporters. Included also were African civil servants, many of them educated in Europe before and immediately after independence; private companies or cooperatives; naturalized-renounced European Kenyans (Leys, 1975). To many Kenyan villages and rural areas targeted

⁵⁸ See www.coffeeboardkenya.co.ke. Founded in 1933 by settlers to regulate coffee growing and took the marketing role in 1946. In 1971, it was reinstated as the state regulator. Under the Coffee Act of 2001, No. 9.

for agricultural development after independence, the process ‘embodied continuity from the colonial regimes’ without much structural policy changes (Cooper, 2002); a reversal in which Africanization superimposed itself unto the colonial framework (Padayachee, 2010). The process of dispossession got replayed anew: where the colonial settler annexed African lands through displacing communities for plantation agriculture, the post-colonial government displaced communities through repossessing lands ostensibly on their behalf for their own development and employment or controlled the use of the small farmlands through the marketing boards and other laws⁵⁹. Tea, coffee, pyrethrum and sugar agroenterprises and manufacturing were characterized by this dual trope of dispossession and displacement in various guises. The structural explanation for this continuity is made succinct by Leys analysis of the Africanization of corporate management in Kenya in which senior management was transferred from Europeans to Africans who remained ‘conscious that external control was less significant than the socialization of the new African executives’ (p.124). Yet, the process also enacted a rendition of the civilizing mission of the colonial era this time led by Africans imposing ‘development’ on the rural areas across the country.

Locally and nationally, there was integration of disparate community production units and practices into a network of market relations in which mere subsistence and self-sufficiency were not the ultimate goal (Cooper, 1993). The African leadership sought to demonstrate to the world that they could run the development project all over the country while also using the opportunity to ensure that productivity was increased despite the transfer of land ownership. Beyond the formal policy dictums and evolving Africanization relations, families were also beginning to be burdened by increasing costs of living; demographic changes and increasing urbanization which made cash crop production the logical option. For instance the national Development Plan of 1970 to 1974 elaborates with specificity the opening up of rural areas for

⁵⁹ In many places, once a cash crop was planted, it was and still remains illegal to uproot without the approval of relevant marketing Board. This is the case especially with coffee. So the land can belong to the farmer but the control of its use resides with the relevant regulatory board.

‘the necessary growth of employment opportunities... people as a whole can participate in the development processes’, (Republic of Kenya, 1970:2). Rural communities were in effect not enjoying the fruits of independence but rather becoming sites of its enactment and the contestation of the relations of dispossession and disposal dispersed throughout society (Mills, 2003).

The Integrated Rural Survey of 1977 and the 1974-1978 Development Plan acknowledge the deficiency of the Kenyanization programme to equitably transfer economic and social ownership to Africans. Rural areas bore the brunt of the growing disparities. The programme had progressed more slowly than anticipated hence the need to promote more local enterprises, especially in rural agriculture⁶⁰. The urban areas seemed to accumulate more capital at the expense of rural areas (Murray, 1981). Political discontent against the political elite began with ethnic overtones especially against with the President’s ethnic community being perceived as inordinately advantaged compared to the rest of the country. Fallouts among the political leaders often led to economic marginalization under Kenyatta’s presidency.

One such marginalized region was Luo Nyanza following the political and ideological fallout between Kenyatta and his hitherto vice president Oginga Odinga who was seen as socialist in favour of more state welfare and less privatization, an ideology many of Kenyatta’s friends and business partners abhorred. Within the national official apparatus of development, emphasis was on the technical and apolitical (Ferguson, 1994) while the actual practice everything was extremely ethnic and political. The death of founding President Jomo Kenyatta and the ascendancy of Daniel arap Moi to the presidency in 1978 was significant as the regions marginalized under the Kenyatta regime felt that he would be different and presented the

⁶⁰ Republic of Kenya, 1974. *Development Plan, for the Period 1974-1979*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

possibility of their inclusion in the development programmes⁶¹. Daniel arap Moi had suffered the ethnic isolation and Kikuyu elite condescension despite being Kenyatta's vice president hence the expectation that he would correct the development imbalances once in power⁶².

The Moi Government in its 1979-1983 Development Plan mooted a three-tier strategy to address the challenges the previous development plans had faced. First, it proposed to focus on capacity and resource exploitation- in other words exploitation of available and built labour and resources to increase productive participation in the development process by rural Kenyans. Secondly, it proposed to create employment beyond the urban based 'modern sector' through opening up of rural-based employment opportunities; and lastly, it committed to rural development- infrastructure and improved agriculture- with recommendation for agriculture oriented industrial decentralization (Republic of Kenya, 1978: 10-15). Kenyatta's economic policies had been heavily centred on elitism and ethnic accumulation and dispossession of peripheries. Though somewhat adhering to his predecessor's policies, Moi sought to divest economic power to regions and communities hitherto marginalized such as the Luo through an ambitious ambiguous policy of regional development later to be concretized under the 1983 District Focus for Rural Development policy (Republic of Kenya, 1983). Under this policy, local communities were to initiate development projects which would create employment and wealth at the local levels. The policy presented discursive transfer of the process of development from the city to the village. This made a hitherto invisible inseparability of the

⁶¹ Oginga Odinga, Kenya's first vice President was friendly to the USSR and was seen to have socialist inclinations as opposed to Kenyatta who was patently capitalist. Oginga was forced to resign and form his own political party which was later proscribed after his supporters stoned the Presidential motorcade in 1969 in Kisumu. Kenyatta never visited Luo Nyanza again hence the marginalization of Luo Nyanza as an opposition zone.

⁶² Kenyatta's health had been deteriorating for a long time and his succession had been of great concern to the Kikuyu political elite. Constitutionally Moi stood to ascend to the presidency automatically should Kenyatta die in office. The Kenyatta political elite preferred to have one of their own succeed him. It is claimed that junior politician often abused and even slapped the vice president. When he succeeded Kenyatta, many viewed him as 'a passing cloud'.

material conditions, politics and symbolic capital (Moore and Vaughan, 1994) obvious and the underlying logic of action. In the words of the policy, it was a ‘multi-pronged strategy for mobilizing domestic resources ... bringing local people into the forefront in their own provision of things for their own welfare’ [sic] (Republic of Kenya, 1984: p. ix).

In many ways, this was a devolved form of Kenyanization- a creative adjustment in modalities of ruling, devising a new system of engagement and narrative for an old problem and old solution under a new leader. This revealed the nature of development as a construct of constellating relations being articulated at changing places where capital interest and political order converged. The divestment of development from the centre was, for Moi, an opportunity to systematically and radically alter the political and economic regime in relation with his predecessor without really transforming the underlying logic. He sought to dilute the influence and power held by the central government then dominated by bureaucrats of the former regime by scattering development centres to the districts. Concurrently, Moi used this politically to consolidate power by building a new network of powerful district and provincial administrators and operatives royal to him. Subsequently, development projects were intricately linked to Moi’s power consolidation project (Barkan and Chege, 1989). Under Kenyatta’s presidency, the State had appeared rather exotic in the villages or as a distant and antagonistic force in the marginalized regions. Through the district focus for development policy, this relationship was restated and became instantiated in local routines and events such as elders’ meetings. The state became the development trustee capable of transcending the political biases and intrigues for the public good (Li, 1999).

The core strategy for development was still anchored on agriculture framed in the twin trope of employment creation and market satisfaction. It is also critical that the productivity of the sector emphasized in all the development plans and policies was predominantly geared

towards meeting demand of the market with little emphasis on food production or the quality of employment being generated.

In the course of the sixties, seventies and early eighties public discourses of urban to rural migration gained tract and got popularized by the political class. In essence, the urban centres had attracted more than their carrying capacity and generated a population of jobless migrants who lived in informal and haphazardly established shanty settlements replicating the colonial squatter situation. Rural development provided a strategic way of encouraging the unemployed 'urban squatters' back to their home villages. To make the rural areas attractive, small centres were set in motion in most cases through establishment of agricultural manufacturing and processing plants. In Kisii, many tea and coffee buying and processing centres emerged around factories. In South Nyanza, the Sony sugar factory was set up as did the tobacco leaf buying centres at Rongo and Oyani.

It is within this mindset that the political economy of the Sony sugar can be examined and narrated towards elucidating the central thesis of this study: that agromanufacturing as a development strategy has manufactured subjectivities that are ambivalently located between the active identity of being workers and producers, to an extent agents (at least in the politics of the country) and disposable bodies (seen as raw materials)- in a way subjects- for the industry. More fundamental, is the shift in the framing of development from the imposition of improvement to being a technical response to the chaos of development. Much of the development thinking had been about conceiving people and communities as missing something hence in need of egalitarian improvement and as problems in need of specific technical applications. The rural development programme was such a technical intervention.

2.7 TRANSFORMATION: INDEPENDENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND

AGRICULTURE

The logic and imaginary of development in post-independent Kenya is encapsulated in the 1965 *Sessional Paper No. 10 - African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. As the founding political, social and economic policy document, it details the philosophy and ideology of development adopted by the independent state. According to the Sessional Paper, development is framed by the tenets of Democratic African Socialism as a philosophy and practical framework for planning and implementing development in Kenya. The Paper emphasizes the Africanization and nationalization of development in the independent country with particular focus on land transfer to Africans from colonial control and African controlled commercial agriculture.

According to the development strategy outlined in the Sessional Paper, the focus is on revolutionizing agriculture in Kenya by developing unused and under-utilized land. This was pursued through consolidation, development credit, extension services and training; and the introduction of modern methods of farming and marketing. First, agriculture is placed at the core of the development strategy of the nascent country. However the way agriculture is conceived is market oriented, aimed at the generation and provision of both the raw materials for processing industries and the market for goods and supplies. Secondly, the Paper highlights the linkage of agriculture and development to foreign and corporate financial investments: their dispossessive and capitalist orientation to land ownership and production. Thirdly, the Paper underlines the peripheral positioning of peasant farming by its absence from the envisioned priority schema: 'national farms, cooperatives, companies, partnerships and individual farmers' (p.36). Peasant farming, it seems, is conceived as part of the development problem that needs to be solved through agromanufacturing and modernized farming.

Development as Africanization replaced the colonial civilization framework while the British colonial government is replaced by an independent nationalist Kenyan government. The new government pursued the transfer of land ownership to Africans on one hand, and establish an entrepreneurial class to transform and Africanize the entire agricultural enterprise. The Government prioritized the improvement of agriculture in both the former European settlements and African (non-scheduled) reserve areas of Kenya (Government of Kenya, 1963). The general development strategy and agromanufacturing specifically adopted the colonial structure 'as a new pattern of occupation superimposed upon' communities, 'dislodging, and to an extent incorporating local economies into the logic of capitalist agromanufacturing (Chambers, 1969). The difference lies in the rhetorical framing and narrative that replaced civilization with Africanization and empire building with national development. The endeavour to improve became an assertion of African and national sovereignty.

From the onset, agriculture is established as a critical sector and agency for development. The effecting of this agency is capitalist in imaginary and practice despite being couched in 'African socialism'. The idea of Africanness- a totality of traditional virtues and ethics- is here attached to the capitalist ethic and essentially reconfigured to cleanse and sustain the moral discourses of improvement in which native is replaced by rural, labourer with unemployed, settlers with investors; and colonialism with development. Agriculture got re-established as the site of modernization under the new dispensation, this time nationally dispersed beyond the established regional large plantation enclaves preferred by colonial predecessor. It was to be pursued as development, not merely by land transfer and improvement but also through transformation and domination of the social landscape; all aimed at expanding employment rather than settlement thus bring more land into productive use (and attract more foreign capital investment).

The logic of development articulated by both the colonial state and the independence government exemplified by the singular focus on agricultural production is similar. Development after independence became the legitimating endeavour of the new state (McMichael, 2008); its focus remaining on the combined transformation of land and land use relations. Social identities based on the shift from communal ownership, peasant subsistence farms and everyday production routines to commercial properties for growing cash crops and animals for sale. Both make deliberate though often implicit distinctions between the traditional modes of agricultural production which emphasized food production and subsistence with modernized farming. For instance, in the development plan for 1964-1970, the Government asserts that 'agricultural development will be the principal means of changing communities through creation of employment opportunities (Republic of Kenya, 1964). The plan makes it explicit that production targets export and supplying demands of the growing number of processing and manufacturing industries' (p.33). The pairing of agriculture with 'modern' relations of production and improved livelihood systems through waged employment, provided a persuasive narrative for the legitimating the establishment of government-initiated development. It also explained the need to retain the colonial system of production and its practices albeit without European domination.

2.8 CONCLUSION: MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENTS

This chapter relies on secondary data and review of available literature to trace the process of establishing agromanufacturing and the plantation economy in Kenya. It also explores the dynamic incorporation of colonial agromanufacturing systems and practices into the economic planning and development agenda of the post-colonial independent government of Kenya, particularly in the South Nyanza region. The central point of the chapter is that

under the colonial regime, the annexation of African lands and appropriation of African labour into the plantation agriculture was explained as part of the civilizing mission: creating and nurturing a capitalist work ethic in the indolent Africans (Carlsen, 1980). As shown, coercion through imposition of taxes and actual force, and manipulation of socio-economic conditions to compel Africans to opt for waged labour were the strategic tools of the colonial labour system. However, towards the end, after the Second World War, these strategies had evidently overshot their target by generating too much labour due to excess dispossession of African from the production means (land). The emergence of the squatters and excessive migrant labour phenomenon threatened the orderly conduct of the political economy. In part, this was the contributing factor to the fall of the colonial regime as many of the freedom fighters (the Mau Mau) were landless and work deprived African males (Hays, 1972; Sandbrook, 1975). It also provides the first strong evidence of the chaotic reality of agromanufacturing as a development strategy producing 'excesses'.

Upon attaining independence, the government sought to reverse this twin problem of landlessness and lack of work, under a new conceptual regime- national development. The new regime aimed at tackling multiple deprivations facing the Africans- land, health, education and work. As a priority, the squatter problem was addressed through resettlement policies in which former African reserves and European settler farms were adjudicated and allocated to Africans in many parts of the country. In other areas, communal lands were mapped and allocated to families. In many cases however, the large white settler farms were kept intact to maintain the plantation economy either as state farms or sold to wealthy individuals or corporations, a number of which were foreign owned. The logic for doing this, it was argued, was to maintain the productivity of these farms in order to sustain the country's economy. Partly this was a pragmatic decision on the part of the government, and partly it was tribute to the colonial orientalist view that Africans were not yet capable of managing complex development sectors.

The problem of increased labour, now viewed as unemployment, presented a different challenge: how to create employment opportunities. It is in search of the solution that agromanufacturing was identified as an elixir. Labour, especially unskilled and semi-skilled was rising across the country and moving in massive scale into the nascent urban areas creating congestion and straining the few amenities existing (Oucho, 1996). Agromanufacturing in the post-independence period was one of the key options for tackling the labour and migration problems by creating employment in the rural areas (Leitner, 1977). In most areas, free family farm labour and plantation-based waged labour was retained and in many cases increased to absorb the mass of unskilled manual labour across the country.

The first Policy on National Development, the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, outlined what was clearly a capitalist mode of development not any different from its predecessor. The African leadership which replaced the European settlers promoted policies encouraging private property and wealth accumulation for individuals (Sandbrook, 1975; Republic of Kenya, 1965). In brief, the postcolonial government of Kenya adopted the colonial economy and the social-political mode of government structured to nurture a capitalist work ethic. This inevitably generated social differentiation between individuals, communities and economic status explained off as indicators of personal entrepreneurship, hard-work and parsimony.

Rural communities were conceived both as the source of problems –masses of manual labour migrating into urban centres; and as possible solutions- if only industries could be located there which required unskilled labour. The rural-urban migration became emblematic of the development challenge facing the new government in two ways: it affected economic growth and worsened unemployment (Barnum and Babbot, 1976). In the polarity of the modernization narrative in Kenya, rural areas replaced the colonial native reserves as the cesspools of retrogressive native practices and traditions holding back the transformation of

the metropolis (Chilivumbo, 1985); and always ‘threatening to become excessive, dangerous, and uncontrolled’ (Ferguson, 1999:39). The setting up of agricultural enterprises, especially agromanufacturing industries in rural centres was aimed at opening them up as well as setting them to solve the emerging crises in urban areas caused by massive migration of unskilled labourers. Development had generated a chaotic set of challenges which needed massive interventions to on one hand transfer the responsibility of solving them to the rural areas and on the other transform them into modern and technically coherent sites of development intervention.

CHAPTER THREE

SWEATING BODIES: LABOURERS' LIVES AND EMPLOYMENT

CHAOS IN THE SUGARBELT

Figure 1: A house wall with writings in Manyani labour camp



Inscriptions on the wall: Boss, mad, college/university, suffering, motor

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The emergence of plantation agriculture as a mode of developing the country under colonialism went hand in hand with the civilizing narrative- cultivation of land with cultivation of capitalist virtue in people. The transformation also targeted traditional production relations to cultivate a modern capitalist work regime and its work ethic (Pandian, 2009). It cultivated a production relation in which African became reconstituted as a mass of mobile labour. It is a

production relation build on four pillars: a new form of agriculture (economy), a new form of belonging (land ownership), a new form of productive identity (labourer) and a new form of politics (labour and production). It is conceptually based on unequal relations characterized by exploitation and expropriation, imbued with coercion and displacement. It is a relationship that altered both social structures and identities of members. This captures the political economy of plantation agriculture and its logic of improvement in Kenya. The will to improve communities and social welfare is gradually replaced by the need to establish economic viability and improve efficiency in production. This shift, though inherently deterministic but is unpredictably nonlinear, illustrates the reality of development- manufacturing chaotic identities and lives lived expediently and disposable.

Modernization projects in Kenya- colonization and postcolonial development interventions- seem intent on promoting a particular character and comportment whose main attribute is a healthy respect for the sanctity of work and private property. Employment ensures that these two attributes are acquired and valued. In this regard, the establishment of the factory led to the process of transforming the community members, especially males, into wage labourers and track the changes in the wage-labour relationship between the company (factory) and the labourers over time. This chapter examines the migrant plantation labour experiences and practices in the South Nyanza sugar factory to show how the sugar manufacturing project transformed labour relations and generated new social identities. It shows the entry of the sugar project as an encounter that generated expectations of employment and the chaos of the failure to meet them. It examines the recruitment of migrant labourers from distant communities as well as the conditions that emerged to compel more men into the labour system. The chapter captures the continuities from colonial to postcolonial rural Nyanza and the way they rupture the standard narrative of development as a

smooth process of improvement. Instead it reveals the diverse and chaotic trajectories and subjectivities that emerge and become not only its appearance but its reality.

The life and living conditions of the agricultural settlements' labourers were and remained inadequate. Most of the labour was recruited periodically hence poor labourers became squatters in farms in and out of work seasonally (Kitching, 1980). Temporality and seasonal disposability became the defining features of the labourers' lives manifestly and covertly supported by the settler economy structure which had a policy of no spouse, especially women, allowed in labourer compounds- labourers were designated single, at least during their stay in the farm. They were boys (hence they were pejoratively referred to as the settler's *boi*- interpreted to mean servant/slave) belonging to the farm owner irrespective of their ages or marital status. The result was a huge number of single men concentrated in the camps, and a high concentration of single women in the reserves.

The African labourers' quarters were built of small semi-permanent structures suitable for periodic habitation where tenancy depended on the duration of labour engagement. This ensured that hardly could any labourer contemplate raising a family in those structures. Still to guarantee that no such contemplation happened, these 9 x 9 rooms were shared by the men. In many cases, payment was made in form of foodstuffs- *kufanyia unga*- working for flour- is a popular descriptor of such work even among the Sony labourers. This ensured that little, if any, money could be accumulated for transmission home and also that the men had little to show back home of their stay in the farms.

There were no essential amenities and facilities to make the African labourers' settlement a community as such- no schools, hospitals, or recreation facilities for labourers and their families. Small urban/trading centres emerged near or within the large settlements which stocked some sort of leisure joints including bars, pawn shops, brothels, churches as well as illicit brewers and commercial sex houses- often self-supporting single women. Anecdotal

evidence from old migrant labourers shows some covert indulgence by European settlers for the latter for their male workers. European settlers could hire women from the trading centres and African reserves for their favourite boys, sneak them in during the night with instructions that they be off the premises before dawn the next morning. Such stories of hired women sometimes being shared by male colleagues- a taboo act- among the Abagusii and Luo communities- cemented the already negative view of migrant plantation labour work as degenerate. My argument in this chapter is that the factory created a wage-dependent community with income differentials which over time have generated severe inequalities. Within a fast changing capitalist economy determined by forces beyond the local, wage labour has become informalized and casualized (Bremner, 1996). The labourers became the expendable component of plantation economy, dispossessed, deprived and easily disposed. To explore this process in detail, I use the biography of Roy, an on-and-off labourer working in the plantations and along the factory's edges.

3.2. LABOUR ENCOUNTERS: MAKING THE MIGRANT PLANTATION WORKERS IN SOUTH NYANZA

Roy Omondi was born in Rapogi between 1974 and 1975 (he is not very certain and attempts to obtain any documentary evidence were in vain). His national identification card records 1974 (a date he doubts) as a second born in a family of eight. The father was a herder and the mother grew vegetables in their backyard and sorghum in a plot not far from the house. The sugar company, Sony was launched in 1978 and his father was among the first ones to be 'hooked' as Roy often describes how the locals were recruited into supporting the sugar planting project through the collaboration between the private company managers, the local chiefs and other government officers such as the agricultural officers, district administrators. Through meetings and discussions with village elders, the government officers disseminated

information about the sugar project. According to Roy's accounts, they advocated for the project in the name of development '*maendeleo*' for the region. The factory they said would open the area by helping build roads and schools and better houses; but more importantly, it would create jobs for the local young people.

The local politicians also promoted the notion that bringing and establishing the factory was meant to keep the local youth employed at home, working 'modern jobs' from home, just like the government workers⁶³. However, some local elders were sceptical arguing that the establishment of the factory will make their children slaves '*kama wabeberu*- like the settlers'⁶⁴. According to Mzee Okello, his own experiences of working in large tea plantations in Kericho made him doubtful of the sugar project's promise of employment. He had witnessed first hand how the system worked for the majority of the host community in terms of working opportunities- the jobs it created were always manual and poorly paying according to him. There was also another reason others, especially those with huge herds of cattle, were opposed to the project: they were afraid that it would reduce the labour available in the village for looking after their animals. Fearing the competition, they tried clandestinely to spread word that the project was a scheme by the employed elite who lived in urban areas to take away their land and make their children plantation slaves in collusion with foreigners- the Asian investors. Under the concerted promotion by the political leadership at the local and national level, by 1979, the project opposition had failed and the community was set for the factory. After successfully gaining entry into South Nyanza, the sugar company was confronted with the twin

⁶³ The Government employees at the time enjoyed several benefits including house allowance which involved workers being paid a higher rate for building and occupying their own homes. Many, especially teachers and local administrators were the envy of private company workers since they counted to work from their village homes while being paid an allowance for this. The local politicians and elite used this scheme as bait to make their case for the company's establishment. For instance see Motion on soft Loans for Dagoretti Land Owners for rental Houses by Hon. Clement Gachanja, 10th October 1984).

⁶⁴ Interview with Mzee Okello Manyi at Mariwa market 20th May 2009.

challenge of creating employment and at the same time nurturing a sufficient and reliable flow of labour for its manual sector.

Although the narrative of creating employment opportunities in the region was dominant, the encounter was contested by different groups based on the threats and opportunities they associated with it. Those who attempted to highlight the threat aspect of the project were quickly dismissed, labelled retrogressive by the local leaders and silenced through various means including exclusion from social gatherings and physical violence. Reflecting on the discussions I held with the sceptics and advocates of the sugar project, I find a clash of orientations and a dichotomy between traditionalist and modernization and a characteristically capitalist view labour. The traditionalists viewed labour as a communal resource which was shared in a system of reciprocity and exchange '*kusaidiana*-mutual assistance' between the poor and wealthy, between the old and the young or strong and weak households. Herding animals, working on food farms and helping with other chores was exchanged for food, familial support, protection and in some cases seed animals for the young men from poor families to start their own herds. The capitalists took the community labour as a resource to be utilized and exploited (*kujizaidia* - assist oneself) for personal monetary returns- being employed and earning wages by the young men.

Despite the appearance of the stereotypical binary in anthropology of traditional versus modern/market relations in African communities (Shipton, 1989; Geschiere, 1992; and Parry and Bloch, 1989); this clash gives insights into the pre-existing labour relations in the region and the tensions of social organization. In reality it was a clash between the strategic interests of those who were relatively wealthy over the labour of those relatively poor. The development encounter in this case then was not a radical imposition of labour relations and social stratification, but a recasting in terms of its logic and purpose. What planted its contradictory potential was the exclusion from its conception and design of those it would depend on: the

labourers themselves. The scepticism, doubt and debate over the potential and threats of the sugar project did not involve those who were to be at its centre- the men from poor families. Instead, each side claimed to speak for their (poor men) interests as well as those of the community. In effect then, the entry of the factory was not seeking to introduce novel relations of labour exchange in the region but rather induce a shift in orientation in the existing relations. The clash between the traditionalists and the ‘modernists’ was over the way the sugar factory would take-over the reciprocity-structured exploitation of the labour of the poor by their wealthy neighbours and kin, or how the kinship and social ties would complicate the setting loose of young men from the villages for the factory’s labour demands. The irony and thus its vulnerability is exclusion of those on whose behalf it makes its legitimating claims.

The competing orientations play out in Roy’s life story. He joined school in 1982 but also looked after the family herd which increasingly demanded more time as he grew: ‘A man must have his herd and learn to look after them well’, his father had regularly admonished him. The same year, his father sold their land to Sony and they moved to Opoya, some twenty kilometres away. As the money from the land sale ebbed out, the father turned to the herd, selling one animal after the other. The father justified the sale of animals as forced by the lack of grazing lands but Roy thinks otherwise: *‘Mzee alikuwa ameonja pesa-* the old man had tasted money’. Roy told me that his father had developed an appetite and schemes for cash money and a new persona. For days he would vanish from home and could turn up late at night, drunk and carrying something new. In school where he irregularly attended, Roy became the boy with cash; quoting his father oft-retort: Roy begun *‘kukula vitu vyake-* eating his own sweat/property’.

The changes in Roy’s life and his father’s would appear to be the classic illustration of the oft stated corruption of rural communities by money as Karl Marx predicted (Bloch, 1989; Furnivall, 1948). Such a reading presupposes an absence of dynamism in the community lives

in the absence of money. It ignores the fact that though Roy's father may not have been adequately prepared for the complexities that came with easy money, dispossession and disrupted lives but was neither resistant nor dormant. Roy and his father adapted themselves into the mode of life generated by the regime of production and exchange and became active participants. But their becoming is indeterminate, incomplete, partial and fluid- confronting, contesting but not searching an escape from the corrosive gaze of capitalism (Sennet, 1998). This captures how the indeterminacy and unpredictability of the pathways of the development project' affected personal and family lives. On one hand it freed male labour- they had little to do at home and had a wider range of options for recreation given the amount of money they had. On the other, it limited the range of options for women in meeting their household food requirements. For children like Roy, these contradictory developments were confusing- 'one didn't know what to do: the fathers did not care, they were too busy... as for school; there was no need'; he told me. What is certain however amid this confusion is the transformation of the traditional way of life for the family unit - mothers were taking up more responsibilities as father abdicated. Though they remained heads of the families, they abdicated the traditional responsibilities of securing family livelihoods.

The change also brought a form of social equivalence across the families that had sold or leased their lands and relocated to Opoya. In less than five years- by 1983, many of those families which had previously been considered well-to-do had joined the ranks of the poor after relocation. Few families were producing more than the other hence there was neither the impetus nor the capacity to continue the reciprocal labour exchanges. Everybody focused on 'eating their sweat', reciprocity and mutual responsibility that organized them previously ceased to matter. The point here is not to romanticize the purity of traditional reciprocity or the destruction of the communal mutual dependence. It is rather to foreground the fact that traditional reciprocity was located in social space and time; organized and maintained by

contextual utility in real relations of production in which both family and communal open lands, especially the large swampy marshland annexed by the company's nucleus estate were critical ingredients. Once land as critical ingredient had been taken over by the company, the value of reciprocal relations among the villagers waned and vanished as it was known. The practice of *kusaidiana*- helping each other as far as labour and work were concerned became obsolete by default- there was no work to be done though there were many ready and healthy hands... As Roy put it, 'with the lands gone, the cows sold... there was nothing to be done in the village'.

Several things stand out from Roy's story which interviews and discussions with many elders in the region confirmed. Many fathers sold or leased out their lands for a long period of time forcing their families to relocate. The relocation changed the family work regimes- in almost all the cases reduced the men's work while increasing the burden of feeding households on women. The land for growing food crops was drastically reduced and some cases nonexistent as most of it was taken up by sugarcane. Family sources of wealth and status- cows, goats and sheep- were decimated because the grazing land had been taken up by sugarcane plantations. Subsequently men had little to do in the village and had to re-locate back to Sony for employment and survival.

Dispossession of land generated dislocated families and social structures of working and the deprived the structures the motivating logic (reciprocity) to make them work. Thus 'modern' pool of labourers was born- a mass of unemployed and socially suspended men. Robert Brenner has makes such a proposition by pointing out that different property structures and power relations generate different social and economic relations though within the same demographic or geographical location (Brenner, 1985). The emerging relations of production- land and labour on one hand and between different wealth groups- are confirmed as constitutively critical to the social relations and practices including those considerably

intimate. It is this intimacy that illustrates the reality of the encounter between the modern agromanufacturing project and the traditional modes of livelihoods. This generates relations which manifest the contradictions of development. Instead of producing order and predictable social relations of production, they produce dislocation and deprivation. This transcends the imagined possibilities of the development encounter, exposes the complexities of development subject formation. In a nutshell, this bares the chaos of development.

3.3 PRECARIETY AND DISPOSABILITY: FROM EMPLOYMENT TO CASUAL

LABOUR

Around 1983 with the money and the cows to be sold were completely finished; Roy's father and many other adult men got recruited to work for the company as cane cutters. Many had shunned the job in the first years of the company, forcing it (the company) to hire 'foreigners'- migrants from far places- Siaya, Kano, Kakamega, Kisii, Kuria among others. To forestall problems of labour and ensure they can keep them around, the company paid wages well- above the 1983 national minimum wage of two hundred and fifty five shillings. According to one retired cane cutter I traced in Siaya, they were being paid between four hundred and fifty shillings to six hundred shilling per a month⁶⁵. He also told me that the wages had been negotiated between the newly registered branch of the Kenya Union of Sugar and Plantation Workers⁶⁶ and the sugar industry group of the Federation of Kenya Employers. The claim of decent employment opportunities in the sugar factory seemed possible and begun attracting the local men.

⁶⁵ I found that these wages were relatively consistent with nationally stipulated minimum wage levels. I was not able to obtain any records from the company to ascertain this. I was told that due to frequent changes in the company's administration these records were either lost or destroyed. However, I was able to confirm the veracity of these estimates from the official record of Kenya National Assembly Proceedings in which the Minister for Agriculture specifically answered a question relating to the salaries of cane cutters and weeders in the sugar company.

⁶⁶ The Awendo (Sony) branch of the Union was registered on August, 11th 1978; Kenya Gazette Notice, p. 907.

But another factor was also at play because 1983 was an election year during which local politicians wanted to showcase the factory as a viable project for the locals. Hence they pressured the company to increase wages and concurrently hire more locals. Meanwhile they were canvassing the government to reduce the company's involvement in the actual growing of cane and instead let local farmers supply the cane. The double positioning of the local elite is evident here again: by pushing the company to employ more locals, they stood to gain politically by being seen as promoting the welfare of the common folks who had been relocated to create space for the company. Simultaneously, by campaigning to curtail the direct involvement of the company in the growing of cane, they were seeking to strengthen their hand in controlling the company since most of them were the large scale farmers. According to local politicians

‘...the locals wanted to buy the company's nucleus estates presently owned and managed by the factory's in order to relieve the factories of the burden of cane production and transportation so as to concentrate on manufacturing sugar and crushing cane delivered to them... locals should buy shares in this companies so that they can have a sense of belonging...be enabled to grow sugar cane without difficult (sic)’ (Hon. Oluoch Kanindo Member of Parliament, 1978-1983)⁶⁷.

Such arguments were made in Parliament to support the wealthy farmers' claims. In the villages among the locals, the message was modified to emphasize on employment and inclusion of the locals. The Asian management company in charge of the factory was singled out for vilification over the importation of the ‘coolie’⁶⁸ habits of exploiting people and the

⁶⁷ Kenya National Assembly proceedings –the Hansard, 1983 (21st June 1983)

⁶⁸ Coolie is a pejorative reference to the original Asian migrants to Kenya who were brought by the British to build the Kenya-Uganda railway from Mombasa to Kampala. Put in context, it also referred to their dominant ownership of the sugar industry in Kenya and the tendency to bring in experienced workers from other communities to manage new factories. In the case of Sony, they

migrant labourers they had brought to meet the demand in the earlier years. The employment of the landless and displaced poor now seeking means of survival, became intricately intertwined with local elites' drive for control through appropriation of the lands (now under the nucleus plantations), interests in sugarcane supply management and administrative influence in the factory. On the surface, the convergence of interests may have presented a similarity of intentions, but underneath the social difference never dissipated. The company eventually capitulated: increased locals' employment and reduced its involvement in direct procurement of farmers' sugarcane but kept its nucleus plantations. In 1984, the farmers founded the Sony Outgrowers Company Limited which became the major supplier of cane to the factory.

The local elite viewed and appropriated the deprivation arising from the dislocation of the villagers by the factory as an opportunity for politically legitimate their position as trustees of the community's welfare against foreign exploitation while strategically using them to fight and replace the foreign managers of the company. This way, they were able to reproduce or perpetuate the unequal relations and conditions the factory as a development project had been designed to change. At first, the terms of work were good, strictly adhering to the Ministry of Labour regulations. Many locals including a number of former land owners who had exhausted the money heeded their politicians' call and were recruited as cutters, cleaners and weeders. The company continued to supply labour, farm inputs and other services to farmers including those who were members of the outgrowers company.

The farmers became disgruntled with the deductions the company made from the cane payments for the services, especially labour and begun demanding higher prices for the cane delivered. The farmers under the Outgrowers Company co-opted the labourers and coordinated strikes during which they suspended harvesting and supplying of cane to the

brought many of them from western Kenya where the Mehta and Madhvani group of companies owned sugar manufacturing companies. See next chapter.

factory. They persuaded the labourers that the company had enough money to increase the price of cane, hire more of them at better wages of the workers. Local politicians mobilized their respective clans leading to a series of violent confrontations. A number of sugarcane farms were set ablaze forcing the company to call in contingents of anti-riot police to quell them. Afterwards, the company, farmers and union officials held protracted negotiations over several days.

What most of the local community men seem not to have realized at that time is the way the politician and the wealthy farmers used the situation to show the government that the management of the company had problems with both farmers and workers hence needed to be changed, while also showing their solidarity with the workers and unemployed local males. Eventually an agreement was reached. The price of cane was increased from about six hundred shillings per tonne to over seven hundred while different workers in the factory got varying percentage increments. As part of the closed-door bargaining, cane cutters and weeders were excluded from union membership, the explanation being that the neither had the skills nor the professional category to belong to (Hansard, 1983)⁶⁹. The company, the story went, did not consider them workers anymore and would instead contract for labour when needed.

Interviews with the wealthy farmers reveal that after forming the Outgrowers Company, the farmers realized that it was expensive to engage labourers on their own because the Sony company was paying higher wages. This made them reluctant to work for the farmers preferring to work for the company instead. Many of the farmers treated them badly, paid them less and were unreliable. On their part, many of the wealthy farmers were nostalgic and wished for the return of the traditional mutual and informal reciprocity system before the wage system. The exclusion of the labourers from the company's formal employment was a product of competition for labour and local elite interests. By being declared ineligible to formal

⁶⁹ Kenya National Assembly Official Parliamentary proceedings record – the Hansard, June, 21st 1983.

company employment, the labourers- cutters and weeders- became available for the farmers to hire at far lower wages. The company reduced its payroll expenses while being assured that if need arose the labourers were available and at lower rates. The farmers were pleased that henceforth they would not compete with the company for labour and were not faced with minimum wage obligations since they hired them as casuals.

It is worthy noting that formal casual labour is a standard and legally acknowledged temporary measure meant to meet deficits during interruptions of regular labour (Borat and Hicks, 2006). But the form adopted by farmers and by proxy, the Sony company does not meet the minimum standards. For instance, while common labour regulations require that casual labour be formally contracted specifying duration, terms of work and remuneration, these ones did not establish such written contracts. This way the farmers and the company got a cheap disguised form of employment without the reciprocal responsibilities of the employer. Instead they relied on direct or indirect, temporary and loosely defined informal contracts with labourers which varied from day to day and farmer to farmer (Theron, 2005)⁷⁰. Thus they employed or dismissed as many as they would at a whim or convenience. This befell Roy's father and others in late 1984.

After the change in labour systems, the company retained a few and promoted them to supervise the casual workers hired by both the company and the farmers to harvest or weed the cane. Casual workers became transferable from one farmer to the next by brokers from relatives and friends of the farmers as well as among the newly recruited supervisors and other informal networks within the company. To the elderly men like Roy's father who attempted to work in the new system for a few months, it was tedious, uncertain and humiliating. They gave up, collected their few belongings and left to their home villages. The father returned to Opoya where 'he lost his heart' as Roy put it, became bitter and eventually died of pneumonia in 1985.

⁷⁰ Theron, (2005) gives a detailed analysis of the ILO discussions and definitions of casualization.

The youthful ones persisted, each imagining that the good days would come back eventually with a change of management and local politics.

In one swoop, the farmers comprised of wealthy businessmen, civil servants and professionals from the region with large farms tactfully restored the pre-factory relations and silent hierarchies but without the social obligations of reciprocity. The significant outcome here is the way dispossession of land had translated into dispossession of labour and eventually how that labour was dispossessed its value and thus becoming a commodity with least value to its holders. It is also revealing how the labour appropriation relations existing before the factory were re-enacted but configured to work for development through a process of dismantling. The chaos of development became imprinted on the experiences and transformations of the working lives of the plantations workers.

3.4 FROM MEN TO BULLS: BECOMING INVISIBLE LABOURERS

After Roy dropped out of school, there being no herds or land, the Sony company labour yard was the logical destination. At the age of fifteen in 1989, he arrived at the gates of Sony. He was directed to the labour camp to see the supervisor who allocated him work – checking after the weeders and seeing how they had done the work. At the end of the month he received five hundred shillings. He bought his first pair of rubber shoes from the Indian shop at the town centre. He did not have an identification card yet, so he could neither open a bank account nor be officially included in the company payroll. Between 1984 and 1989 this had changed- the Mehta Company was replaced by the Booker Tate International under new government initiatives to divest or privatize state interests in parastatals. Booker Tate resorted to short contractual employment of cane cutters and weeders. But collusion between the labour supervisors and farmers ensured that many of the young workers were unaware of their ‘illegal’ presence. For over a year, he worked for the supervisor who paid him part of the

money he made. I was not able to trace Roy's working record from the company documents I accessed; his working in those days is formally nonexistent as are many underage teenagers working in the plantations under names of real employees of the company.

Though unrecorded, anecdotal evidence gathered from older and retired workers testify that many of the field supervisors had three to five such young boys working for them in different farms in such a manner who were referred to as '*ndume xao*- their bulls'. Even when boys learnt the truth there was little they could do:

'Yes, we came to know about it. But what could you do? We did not have IDs and even after one got an ID, three years later for me; you had to depend on the supervisor for work and hope that one day you are taken permanent. As long as you remained a casual, you depended on being in good books with the supervisors', (Roy, January, 12th 2010).

The way the company employs the services of the labourers through a layer of different positions- there are contractors, farmers and supervisors as well as brokers. These ambiguous layers of 'officials' help to divest the bureaucratic touch of the company into and through a mesh of nebulous dependency relations, which in turn, create and maintain an informal bureaucracy. This is dominated by the supervisors and labour brokers who use it to extract bribes and illegal tribute from the labourers especially those who are under-age like Roy was in 1989. Hundreds of the young labourers like Roy work under these supervisors in a system which seems to bear some remote semblance of labour binding (Bales, 2005). The supervisors and contractors use the available opportunities for work to control and keep them in line. If one 'behaved' he was assigned nice work- meaning lighter work in accessible places and even kept working during the low seasons when others were laid off. 'The supervisors were like small gods to the labourers... some could even cane or slap you if they deemed you troublesome'. In the early days Roy was a good bull- he kept his cool and kept his job.

The construction of the young labourers as ‘bulls’, young virile unrestrained male cattle is not accidental. It is metaphorical and, diabolically predictive: in the economy of the communities in the sugarbelt, young bulls are good for two things- meat and ploughing despite their rampant virility. For meat, they got fattened. For ploughing they are taken through brutal disciplinary regimes which involve a monotonous set of routines like going round one spot and then getting yoked and hooked unto the plough while being whipped. It is a perfect imagery for illustrating the process of dominating and extracting value from the labourers. It also renders them as objects whose function is simply to be drained dry and then erased.

The process of manufacturing labourer subjects is revealed as processual and manipulated to ensure that at every step there is a form of directed application of disciplinary power which not only targets the social and work life but also the individual as a body to be trained. Ultimately, the aim is to make labourers who can adhere to the unpredictable routine as dictated by the labour supervisors. Roy and the other boys were hooked unto supervisors who oversaw their recruitment and mentorship into perfect labour tools within the larger machinery of the factory. The supervisors worked them from morning to noon. During that time, all they could think of, Roy intimated, was how not to be in the bad books of the supervisors. At the end of the month, when they got paid, they let loose their youthful virility: ‘we went into town and got some nice girl and passed the time’, he put it simply.

Before he was eighteen, Roy was a tuned labourer: he woke up, went to the pick-up point, got drafted, went to the plantation, cut cane and got back to the camp... on pay day he queued for his share. This was his routine in which as he put it, he sweated, ate, slept, earned, visited the town centre and sweated again. Put in context of the emerging social differentiation, this routinization of the young labourers’ lives shows the way social transformation processes are intricately constructed by the disciplinary application of power. This generates a mode of disciplining communities and establishes malleable subjectivities that in essence reveal the

chaos of development. In this case, differentiation as shown earlier needed the existence of disposable mass of labourers. Once formed the labourers need to be conceptually transformed into part of the factory machinery, what in their language, is better viewed as bodies.

3.5 DISTANCING, MAXIMIZING LABOUR AND EASING DISPOSABILITY

In its effort to maximize the extraction of labour from the cane cutters, the company introduced the excess tonnage system where people get paid as per their output. The established daily standard measure was five tonnes per a team.

‘It was struggle for the fittest; if you did above the standard tonnage, whatever you did above that was considered overtime and you got paid a bonus. That was good, it meant you could double your earnings... it was the best incentive for the labourers. You see we live to work here... *haribu mwili jenga mfuko*- wreck the body fill your pocket’, (Jolist,).

The new system was highly efficient in ensuring that labourers really worked as machines by inculcating the view that their body was a tool for making money. Labourers understood that a useful person is one who maximized his output. In case one’s body proved inadequate, ingenious ways of making extra tonnes were invented such as using their whole families including underage children to cut cane. Some worked from dawn to dusk instead of the standard half day. Soon, cane output was straining the factory crushing capacity. It was a good thing for the company but it also came with an inherent threat to its bottom line.

Within the one year that the system was in place, the number of accidents tripled leading to many compensation suits against the company. Most of these accidents are linked to the exhaustion and competitive practices among the labourers and the contractors respectively. According to Jolist, harvesters began to take the company to court due to accidents. They made the company change and bring in contractors. The company did not want to deal with them directly to avoid being sued.

‘The contractors were to come between us and the company; we were no longer working for the Sony but a contractor who paid you to work. We questioned the plan a lot. But they (contractors) were clever. At first they came with all these nice things- gumboots, tools and talked nicely, paid promptly and paid attention to us... we left Sony like that’, (Jolist).

The successful entry of the contractors into the relationship between the company and the labourers was cleverly executed. The labourers were to be deducted seven shillings per tonne as the fee for the contractor disguised as welfare. This was negligible at the time. After all the harvesters had been completely dissociated from the company, the deduction rose by over three hundred percent (to twenty six shillings per a tonne). The company entered into formal contracts with them in which they provided guarantees of supplying sustainable labour at all times under whatever circumstances and the company had no relationship/contact whatsoever with the actual labourers. This opened up the labourers to perpetual and expedient disposability since contractors were not bound to work with any particular labourer but anybody who was available whenever labour was required. The company required a security bond of half a million shilling for one to become a contractor. In effect, labour contracting opportunities were limited to the rich, many of whom were not around. What happened then was the emergence of another layer: sub-contractors who worked for the contractors who had gotten the contracts from the company.

The system worked thus: the company awarded the contract to a contractor who had fulfilled the financial guarantee requirements. The contractor hired sub-contractors often for various tasks and/or plantations. The sub-contractors (often serving as supervisors too) recruited labourers and assigned them work. The labourers did the work such as weeding or cutting cane. The subcontractor transports (ensures that it is transported) to the factory, it gets weighed and the tonnage recorded. The Company pays the contractor per tonne of cane

delivered. The contractor pays the sub-contractor who in turn pays the labourers. This way, an informal bureaucracy emerged which served the company by being 'formally unrelated and outside' of it. This served to buffer it from labour related suits in case of accidents; ensured that there was reliable but unconnected labour provided on demand by the contractors and managed by the subcontractors; and finally made the company compliant to labour laws and standards. Further, given the growing demand for privatization of the company, the contracting of labour in effect was hailed as a perfect example of privatization and outsourcing contextualized and domesticated within community.

On the labourers' end, this spells uncertainty and risk. In effect no labourer has a job. Every morning they wake up at four and troop to the recruitment points often at some junctions between plantations or shopping centres. The subcontractor arrives and chooses randomly the number of people he needs for the day either leads them to the plantation or loads them into an open truck and are driven to the plantation. The rest are left waiting for another subcontractor. During peak months everyone is assured of work everyday they turn up. But during slack seasons and especially when there is a shortage of cane or the factory has reduced production, the chances to work are few and fought over. In some cases, the subcontractors demand for bribes to hire a person. Jack told me: 'you do not want to be here that time. This place is famine land. *Ni virisk-* it is risky. People get mugged... people sleep hungry'. Things are not made any easier by the contractors. During such 'hard times' they employ fewer people for more work at reduced pay.

'Some contractors are crooks. They subcontracted to people who did not care anything about labourers. Some are so cruel in their determination to get maximum tonnes. After they delivered the cane, they took months before paying us. You had nowhere to turn to because the company doesn't know you. *Sony hajui wewe-* Sony does not know you;' (Jolist).

In one occasion I accompanied some labourers in their morning wait for subcontractors, I witnessed how they tried to deal with the rogue subcontractors. The cane harvesters were anxiously waiting for the day's employers to arrive when one of them came and parked the open pick-up truck across the road. They all rushed across the road scrambling to be first on line. About ten of them were picked and the rest trooped back dejectedly. After a few minutes, another subcontractor arrived. No one made to move to her pick-up truck. She waited for a couple of minutes and realized nobody was moving. All the labourers were pretending not to have seen her, some were murmuring sarcastically: '*Si mweende kaŕi bwana*- can't you guys go work?' Then one elderly one said loudly: 'those who want to go can go... as for me I could rather go back home empty handed and sleep hungry than work for her.' I was curious and asked why.

Hey, you must be new, he said. That is Paulina. You will work for her fine. But to see that money, *utatoa machoŕi*- you will shed tears.

The migrant labourers and other locals working as labourers are temporarily recruited by the roadside each day, dumped there after work and forgotten when not needed. Their lives and relation with the company are defined by everyday uncertainty and chance. Most of them reside in the labour camps or the informal settlements around the nucleus estate and the town. As will be shown in the chapter five, the state of the housing tells the story and illustrates their position in very graphic terms as does the nature and state of their work. They live in mud or tin shack structures while the permanent employees live in fairly modern houses –permanent with water and electricity.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the way working in the sugarbelt is organized ensures a bifurcation of employment between those who work in the company and those who work in the plantations as casual labourers. Everyday lives of the labourers capture these dichotomies and hierarchies which hinge on process of continuous distancing as a motif of the

development project. The connecting theme in these dichotomies remains the bi-polar distinction between workers and labourers, persons and bodies; dependable and disposable. This distancing is achieved through a process of erasing their presence through a deliberate ambiguity in which the original objective of the development project is effaced. In a series of changes and turns, the chaos become the order and thus accepted as the reality of life under the development regime. The erasure of the original idea and loss of the development dream is best illustrated by the transformation of the labourers into bodies whose presence is continuously compromised and recast. How the conditions of work have created and maintained this distancing and erasure is the focus of the following section.

3.6 OFFICIAL ABSENCE VERSUS BODILY PRESENCE: WORKING AS MIGRANT LABOURERS

The South Nyanza Sugar company is highly bureaucratic where getting anything done requires filling out several forms in duplicates and in some cases in triplicate and several clearances and signatures; acquiring gate passes and authorisation for any entry. Payments of any sort normally take complicated paperwork which has been blamed for delays in processing of payments by the factory. Yet, my efforts to locate any documentary evidence of the labourers working under this system in the official company records did not yield anything (as shown by Roy's case above). Officially, the casual labourers are not employees of the company hence, they do not exist in the personnel records. While this has often been used to vindicate the notions of bureaucratic incompetency, it serves a critical function in the 'hidden script' of the company and its relations with the labourers and local community members. It stands as an invisible but effective mechanism of exclusion. It enables conditions in which on one hand hundreds of labourers on whose back the cane is grown, harvested, loaded and transported into the factory mill can come, work and leave without any official trace and on the other the

small scale cane farmers can be kept waiting for payments for months as ‘the papers are being processed’.

Figure 2: An aerial view of a morning scene at the casual labour recruitment point.



Note: *Young men waiting to be picked for work that day. Over 60% return home everyday without working. The bundles they are carrying contain their tools and work clothes.*

Documentary existence of the labourers is untraceable. The company wholly erased labourers from its sight and memory so to speak, despite their actual presence within its premises (to be elaborated in Chapter five). An officer at the human resource office told me; ‘It is normal. Nobody really cares.’ The acceptance of this erasure of a significant constituency of the sugar production system on one hand and the targeted beneficiaries of the development project on the other is a nuance to the established logic of extracting labour from the labourers

and dealing with local community members based and build on a process of distancing-keeping interactions impersonal and expedient. The distance between the labourers and the company is real. Many of the labourers have never been to the factory or company offices.

This distancing becomes important both legally and socially when the company does not require much labour and the labourers have to be laid off because it ensures a perpetual state of suspended contact and contract. Besides, any semblance of contact with the company is mediated through the supervisors, contractors and truck drivers who pick and drop them to and from the plantations; or lawyers whenever an accident happens and they have to sue the company and the police when they have been arrested for a myriad of transgressions. In effect, what is happening is that as individuals, they do not exist but as a collective resource (faceless mass) which can be picked in trucks, organized and supervised to work, they exist, hence their presence is only acknowledged during moments of transgression such as accidents or arrests.

The state of being officially blanked out (non-existent) appears to be intricately connected with the mode of entry and struggles of establishment of the factory in the region and as a significant part of the everyday making of the community. It is connected to the different relocations and displacements experienced by the poor and the contests over appropriation of the new regime of production relations by the wealthy and elites. It is to the latter's advantage that the labourers acquire a certain level of ambiguity in belonging, organizational formlessness and ultimate anonymity so that voice and action can be mediated as shown in their dealings with the company. For the community generally and the poor now joined by migrant labourers, relations of production are 'transformed utterly; a terrible beauty is born'.⁷¹ It is an ultimate level of dispossession- erasure of problematic presence that requires systematic ordering.

⁷¹ William Butler Yeats' poem: 'Easter, 1916' refrain: *All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born.*

The labourers however have defied this ultimate erasure by acquiring visual and bodily forms of documenting their lives and work in the plantations. Roy, has aged compared to the fading picture he showed me of himself in 1990. Life as a labourer had engraved itself on him. He has a slight stoop now and walks gingerly the consequence of an accident he had while loading cane one rainy day in 1995. His left hand has a missing thumb. ‘I cut myself by accident. *Kila mtu hapa ako na alama-* everybody here has a mark/scar,’ he tells me. Indeed I noted a myriad of cuts at various stages of healing. Many labourers have scars mostly in the limbs (hands and feet). These were results of accidents that occurred during harvesting (cutting), weeding, and loading cane. In some rare cases, they resulted from fights in which there are visible evidenced manifested by missing teeth, swollen eyes or gushes across the face. Roy, cited many of such cases:

‘My friend Jack has a deep cut across his chest he got in a fight and another on his knee he got after falling off a moving tractor. This is the danger of doing what we do; *hii ni kazi ya jashe* – this is a labour of sweat. *Ukijiangalia mwili, unaona maisha yako, historia yako iko hapa tu* - When you look at yourself you can see your life; you history is just here, (on your body),’

Under the extreme physical nature and conditions of their working, the labourers rely on their bodies as tools which must be in working condition always. Their bodies have developed the capacity to archive their experiences and contacts with accidents and travails of working in the plantations. In his words, the labourers’ physical bodies narrate their life histories as individuals but also as a group since ‘everybody has a scar’.

Figure 3: Non-resident Kisii labourers going home across the valley after a day’s work.



The scars map to degree of specificity, the nature of work and life one had led in the plantations. The labourers had different scars depending on what they did, and their temperaments. The cane cutters are likely to have panga cuts and scratches from sugarcane stalks while weeders have jembe cuts and knocked knees. Dislocated backs and stoops are common among the cane loaders. Roy had every kind of scar because in the years he stayed in the camp, he had done all kinds of work that happened to come his way or as directed by the supervisors. Within the context of the plantation economy's dispossessive logics, the bodies of labourers narrate their experiences of development dispossession. The individual's body instantiates the convergence of its disparate qualities, aspects and perceptions into a personal narrative reflecting life in the Sugarbelt; turning it into both a centre of subjectivity and a visual mosaic of different forms of agency, a location of voice and activity though silenced and erased, is defiant (Low, 2003; Csordas, 1994, Douglas, 1970).

This capacity of the body to narrate itself without necessarily deferring to its social position within the emerging social structure in the sugarbelt highlights the potential of

Foucauldian analysis. A mix of Foucault the disciplinary and governmentality notions holds great potential for analysis in which the body becomes a site of historical struggles and defiance against the totalizing narrative of social formation (see McNay, 1991)⁷². The body becomes a point of conveyance for the relevant role qualities- weeder, cutter, and loader. In effect the body becomes a text on which the corrosive and dispossession qualities and effects of labour are continuously etched cataloguing the self-management dictated by one's everyday tasks (McNally, 2011). Yet, the labourers in their actual lives have also established ways of enacting survival trajectories parallel to the operations of the plantation economy. In the following section I turn to the question of their survival strategies.

3.7 WORKING DEFIANCE: SURVIVING ON SIDE PLANS

The labourers have designed diverse ways of dealing with the work routines and the exclusion. Roy began as a weeder and in his words; this was the worst of jobs then graduated to cutting and loading sugarcane. A management take-over by the Booker Tate International Company⁷³ introduced a new valuation system where payment was pegged on the tonnage of cut and loaded cane. The system works thus: a group of four to six people cut cane and arrange it in stacks. The stacks are loaded and taken to the factory for weighing and the company pays per tonne. The cutters get paid ninety seven shillings (later it has increased to two hundred and twenty-five shillings) which is shared equally among the cutting group. A standard stack could weigh up to four tonnes hence each day each cutter could take home

⁷² I am trying to point out that the labourers are conveniently constructed as bodies by company similar to other elements of production, but they are actively participating in 'embodying' the plantation/labour camp etc. They 'talk back' despite being deeply involved in 'governmentality structures, they are not docile bodies" – Foucault.

⁷³ This came after successful lobbying by local leaders against the Mehta group. A number of factors, explained elsewhere were in play including the push by the World Bank for Kenya to implement the SAPs. Suffice it to say that the Booker Tate improved the working terms as part of its controversial entry to avoid a backlash and show that they were better. This did not last long as the politicians had other designs- they wanted one of their own friends (a local) to manage the company.

about one to three hundred shillings. Roy adapted to routine: cutting sugarcane when there was work and idling when not.

‘You tried to survive, do some odd jobs in town or even visit relatives. But with time you almost always found yourself broke, hungry and in foul moods. You felt bad [sic], my friend’.

However, the Booker Tate management was short-lived and the promises made to the labourers did not materialize. Roy’s life and those of his fellow labourers assumed the symptomatic caricature of employment situation emerging across the country with the increasing unemployment and downsizing of the public sector in the 1990s. They were deprived of reliable work to frame their daily lives, instead becoming used to being expediently ‘switched on and off ... systematically excluded’ (Friedman, 2007). In replica of the deprived on and offs of work, the labourers’ lives too became a series of moods and consumption. Roy repeatedly pointed out that the moods were often violent erupting in fights and quarrels exacerbated by the consumption the chang’aa⁷⁴ and marijuana.

The varying moods and increasing drinking of changaa, led to frequent fights and even allegations of theft. Roy was evicted from the labour camp and moved into the emerging slum –*Jiudendi*- translated from Kiswahili- *jijah*- meaning mind your business or take care of yourself. Here cheap drugs, sex and crime flourished as the norm. For Roy staying outside the labour camp presented a new burden –paying rent or negotiating over it all the time. The rental houses were made of mud walls, earthen floors and roofs made of 3-5 thin iron sheets. For this space, tenants paid between 50 and 150 shillings per a month depending on how far it was from town. At first Roy was a good tenant and paid his rent in time. Soon he learnt the trick:

Ukitaka heshima, lazima mwenyewe atoa jasho kupata dough yako. Otherwise atakuona mtu hivi hivi. – If you want respect, you must make the owner sweat for the

⁷⁴ Chang’aa is a traditional home made spirit distilled from a fermented mixture of brown sugar, corn flour and yeast with an alcohol content estimated to be over 60%-. It is so pure that it can be used as fuel. It is not exactly legalized so it is consumed clandestinely but widely especially among the poor.

rent... otherwise he will take you for an easy fool. *Ni kusweti kila mahali-* it is sweating everywhere’.

Moving out of the camp opened a new world to Roy. Here he had to take the initiative and make plans to survive instead of waiting for work and a free house, and because he could, he wanted recognition: respect. At Jiudendi, Roy begun to ‘grab’ a term used to refer to finding and taking an opportunity in whatever form it comes. First he realized that the landlords, most of whom were the large scale sugarcane farmers, did not own the land but had, through collusion with some supervisors and local council officers, appropriated some idle swamp and put up the structures to cash on the shortage of housing for new arrivals in the centre and the labourers expelled from the labour camps. Some of the landlords were supervisors who occasionally engineered the expulsion of labourers from the camp. Roy’s first act of grabbing was of a house; ‘you had to choose one located furthest from roving eyes; nosy neighbours could go shouting about your business.’ Why could that be an issue- keeping away from roving eyes?

Maisha hapa ni stress. Life here is stress. You do not want people knowing your ways of ‘eating your sweat’. *Hiyo ni siri zako-* those are your secrets.’

Was he involved in anything illegal, I ventured.

‘*Hapa, chief, nikusurvive-* here chief you survive; it is survival. *Ni jasbo lako-* it is your sweat. *Lazima utafute mbinu zako-* you must establish you own means of survival. *Hiyo ni siri zako, ni kazi ya mtu-* and there are your secrets, it is your own business.’

Roy gave me an update of his business. Over the years he had done many jobs, some of which he can not dare mention.

Mzee, hapa saa ingine unakaa unajiuliza, yule ni mimi kweli? Hapa ni kinyama. Wanaume butoa jasbo na damu. Man, here sometimes you sit and ask yourself: is

that me really? Here it is wild. Men sweat. Men give sweat and blood. Things people do here; no mother can believe her son can’.

Some policemen confided that they knew Roy as a ‘regular client of their offices’, euphemism for regular arrests and nights in the police cells.

Ni hao vijana wakujitafutia maisha Sony. Ni hali ya maisha hapa, lazima wa sweat; saa ingine kwa njia mbovu- he is one of these young men looking for life here at Sony.

It is the way of life here, you must sweat, sometimes in illegal ways’; one corporal told me. ‘We set them free after a few days in the cells. If we were to arrest all of them and prosecute them, Sony will not have enough labourers. All of them are involved in one petty crime or another; one petty survival scheme or another; illegal drugs, violence, threatening others with weapons, stealing, gambling and betting, and even pimping and prostitution. We only arrest the serious ones like murderers and burglars who break into people’s private property with violence.’ (*Corporal Kinyanjui, Awendo, 10th December 2010*).

Building many of these clandestine connections, Roy became adept at surviving from the sides ‘*mipango ya kando-* side plans’ than he did from the labour work. Sometimes he could make more money than he made from the labour work at the company plantations. He soon stopped cutting cane and became a broker instead. As a broker, his work was to get people what they wanted. If supervisors wanted underage labourers, he got them; if they wanted strong men he did. If someone needed urgent credit at a fee, Roy brokered it. When my field camera was stolen during a group discussion at Jiudendi; I was advised by many including the police to talk to Roy. Sure enough, he offered to get it back at a fee; I did not pay; I never saw the camera again. This blurs the distinctions in terms of the respective moral economies between the mainstream labour economy and the ‘side plans’ and other survival strategies.

Figure 4: Rental housing for labourers at the Jiudendi



Note the different states of dilapidation of the houses. The dilapidation marks the different waves of construction and arrivals.

However, not everything is crafty as Roy's case may seem, because there are other alternative plans considerably legitimate. Roy's friend Jack is engaged in such alternatives which are built unto the contours of the main factory economy. Sometimes sudden works arise which require hiring of particular skilled labourers to fill up. During the holiday season, the factory closes and conducts minor repairs and servicing. The regular and permanent employees may work overtime during such days but many opt out. Opportunities arise for skilled and unskilled labourers to get hired as technicians and 'helping hands' to provide manual labour during the servicing, assisting with manual tasks as moving heavy parts, lifting some fittings and cleaning oil spills during the repairs. Roy had joined Jack as a helping hand to exploit the opportunity in two ways: Jack would foot-drag stretching the number of days the work was worth while his part, Roy 'collected old tyres and other waste materials' which he later sold in the town.

There is always a huge demand for the 'waste spare parts including fuel containers from the factory'. It is a common practice to find company trucks and vehicles parked at

hidden junctions within the plantations, fuel being siphoned out into jericans for sale. New tyres often meet the same fate as they are exchanged with old ones at a fee by the temporary drivers hired. Collecting and selling of such ‘spare parts’ is part of the ‘grabbing of opportunities’ arising from the relations one develops by working in the factory. Roy calls it ‘the side plan strategy’ on which he has been surviving for over ten years.

The side plans reflect the different ways labourers opt to respond, talk back to the plantation labour system, its logic and practices. They represent both defiance- attempts to resist complete erasure and subjectivity; and deviance defying the dominant moral economy in practice but applying the same structural principles nonetheless. Roy’s former supervisor asserted repeatedly that Roy was a problematic labourer:

‘Roy was too fast and never patient. He never understood that here people sweat and learn. ... But you can understand. This is a hard place- no family, just sweat and hardness. He had to survive. But I never wanted him in my team... other supervisors also rejected him. He was not meant to be a good worker. But he is a strong one, he is a survivor.’ (*Nyakina, labour supervisor and contractor for sixteen years -20th November 2010, Jela*).

Jan Breman, in a study of plantation foremen, equivalent of the Sony supervisors in Indonesia, asserts that their role is often to ensure maximum extraction of labour at the least cost and most orderly manner. Thus they were both the managerial and disciplinary agents, experienced in the mechanics of plantation labour (Breman, 1989). In the Sony case, the supervisors pursue the expectations of the factory by manipulating traditional and ethnic networks whose employment had little to do with experience but informal networks with contractors. This served to emphasize the informalization of the labour system and the parasitic nature of capitalism to log into local cultures and practices facilitating and

smoothening dispossession and its chaotic dismantling of social reproduction. On his part, Roy had a different though similarly unflattering view of the supervisors:

They are suckers. You sweat, they eat. They never stop and if you don't wake up they keep sucking you until you are too old. I have seen them sack old men who have been here for ages. *Mimi nilikataa*- Me, I refused.

From the different sources, I gathered that Roy had become the archetypal rebellious labourer of the Sony whose defiance arose from his intimate experience- knowing how the system works to 'screw him' and opting to subvert it. Supervisors hated and avoided such labourers as much as they could. Such workers refused to collude with them and were often explained off as criminals and narratives of deviance constructed and disseminated about them. I was always getting subtle hints about why and how to avoid them or their corrupting ways. If a supervisor saw me with any of them he became reluctant to talk to me or even suspicious of my questions.

Yet, I also learnt, there were good and bad labourers illustrated by Roy's friend Jack. I often heard him say after a pint of busaa (a local homemade beer): 'I am a man who eats his sweat'. Jack had an aversion to written documents. He was always reluctant to sign any document hence the supervisors loved him. Everything with him was verbal making it easier for the sub-contractors to (con)fuse them at pay time. Jack arrived at Sony at the age of sixteen. By befriending a tractor driver from his community, he learnt to drive. But he never became a driver because acquiring the appropriate licence and eventually getting employed as one was beyond his ability in terms of money and time. He stayed at Ranjira labour camp, married a local girl who frequented the labour camp during the weekends. After a year Jack was a father of a baby girl. He was about twenty-two year. Life became hard, the child was often sick and eventually died of pneumonia. The wife conceived again and miscarried. Jack visited a witchdoctor who recommended that they move away from the labour camp where

their neighbours were jealousy and casting spells on his wife. He relocated to Manyani labour camp: 'I could not stay outside the camp. *Mimi ni mtu ya kambi, siwezi maisha ya buko nje*- I am a camp person, I cannot survive outside the camp. Life is too hard there.'

Because Jack had shown interest in driving, a generous mechanic asked him to be assisting during the weekends while he could observe and learn to clean tractor engines.

Initially I was helping him as a handy man... running errands for him.

Later he decided to show me how to clean. I was keen and patient... I

learnt and now I am an expert. Everybody knows.

Jack expresses his pride over this achievement: the progression from plain labourer, to trusted handy man, apprentice and finally as 'an expert' who 'everybody knows'. He never lost hope of one day getting employed as a permanent engine cleaner at the factory transport yard. 'If you get a job like that, *maisha inabadilika*- life is transformed' he often repeated. It was because of this expertise that he was at the factory that 2009 Christmas eve with Roy. He had been contracted as a skilled hand to help in the cleaning of the engines. For that he expected to take home about 500 shillings for each day worked which he hoped would extend for a number of days.

Jack's life mirrors the dystopian teleology of development and mirage of possibilities intended and offered by the Sony project for those with the disposition to bear and roll with its punches. The gradual acquisition of skills and opportunities- the crumbs of the factory as he calls them; and 'grabbing' them gives the illusion of progress towards a better life. As we talked, Jack never tired to show how far he had come: '*mzee tumetoka mbali*- my man, we have from far', he repeated often. This adoption of distance as the operational variable in assessing his life is both metaphoric and real. Jack had migrated to the Sony sugarbelt, miles away from home. But distance also denotes time, his aging. But the most critical meaning is the one between his image of Sony as a newly arrived labourer back at the age of sixteen and the reality

of the present. This distance also captures the dystopian turn of events and experiences- distance of the development experience in the community and between the income and needs of the migrant labourers. In essence the notion of distance captures the disconnections between the reality and imaginary of labour and working in Sony sugarbelt generally and specifically among the migrant labourers. Accepting that sweating was a necessary prerequisite for success, Jack refuses to give in to the impossibility of covering the distance.

The bad labourers were those who have not only been around for long but also are critical of the working regime. Many are those who have literally grown up as labourers and were on their way out. The good ones like Jack tend to be those who exhibit satisfaction with their working conditions and go to great lengths to 'follow orders' while still pursuing the development dream. In effect then, the distinction between bad and good labourers is the voice- the capacity to talk back at the supervisors. Roy states categorically 'I refused'. He refuses to go along with the indebted life of a labourer. His refusal seems an attempted self-assertion and reclaiming of agency to create order and self-management beyond being a labourer- a response to dispossession and subjectivity of the chaos. The path is measured in social and temporal distance - 'we have come from afar'- showing belief in the possibilities of the promised development and 'I refused' showing direction. Observing and interacting with the labourers over a period of time, I came to appreciate the dynamics of the two and apparently contradictory responses to the orders and 'sucking'. It may appear that while the bad labourers were engaged in resistance, the good labourers were colluding with the supervisors. Yet this would be distorted and superfluous reading.

Both groups though diametrically located on such a bipolar frame, are neither resisting nor colluding. They are engaged in a complex game of adaptation; finding cleavages in a system that seems to close them out and try to manipulate them to make their lives better. Neither group is engaged in a deliberate attempt to defy or remake the working structure of the factory

and its social organization of work. Each, unlike the older generation of Roy's father, is bent on finding a way of making the deprived conditions and chaos of dispossession work best for himself through '*mbinu zake*- his own innovations'. Herein is the difference between Roy's and his father's generation of labourers. The latter generation have mustered the dexterity and courage to innovate and adapt to the new relations of production, appropriation and accumulation in miniature fronts. They neither acquiesce nor quit. They see themselves as part of the development, defiantly opting to bend the chaos, integrate them remake the terms and stretch the contours of belonging. At a more visceral level, this is the big lesson they have all learnt from the plantation economy: getting screwed and getting to screw back.

Such clandestine networks as illustrated through Roy's case above have been the folklore of migrant plantation workers. Such folk narratives evoke a deviant character criminally surviving on the side, symptomatic of the slow degeneracy of urbanization in small agromanufacturing centres. My objective is not to reify such folklore and its simplicity but rather to illustrate how the chaos of development have led to deprivation and conditions of social stratification popular in the anthropology of emerging industrial complexes (Cooper, 1996; Breman, 2004; Kalb, 1997; Thompson, 1963) or subjectivities which are either docile or predictably self-governing (Foucault, 1979). Instead it shows how agromanufacturing development and its disciplinary forms are 'willed encounters' (Li, 2007 and Escobar, 1995). As power regimes, agromanufacturing development circulates and reproduces chaotically and exponentially in terms of the networks, surfaces and relations they generate and the moral economies that anchor them to sustain the survival of those it excludes. Everybody and every relation become the surfaces on which new agency and subjectivities are constituted and redeployed.

This kind of adaptation strategy somewhat vindicates Foucault's assertion that power is everywhere and continuously mutating into multitudes of infinitesimal forms and levels. This

reveals the flexible limits of disciplinary power of development as a controlled, directed and ultimate process⁷⁵. Instead, it points towards a subtle transformation into a tactile form of applied and adopted power- in some ways, akin to governmentality- that ambiguates its own form in face of the emergence of disorderly social structures and relations. For instance, the development of Roy into a labourer attuned to a set routine and responsive to the working demands of the sugar factory generates Roy the survival expert who, though still connected to the sugar production process, operates outside its normative structure. This is a case of disciplinary power not producing an ultimate subject but one that defies its end and generates new power as a subject with agency.

To this end, the phenomenon of side plans as survival strategies is best understood within the dynamics construction of migrant labour in the Sony. It is relational and socially contingent to the process of improving the region into a commercially viable and developed community in which belonging is redefined in relation to the sugar production process and practices. As a chaotic process, development has generates a series of unstable relations and conditions which require continuous innovation and adaptation to precarious alternatives and opportunities. The side plans utilize the logic of the factory to create an amorphous social and moral space in which relations and tasks take an elastic quality. In this space, no one is sure what is inside (acceptable) or outside (unacceptable). More importantly, practices dispense off with the different work-related identities and any form of skill specialization. The critical skill necessary is the ability to create an opportunity and make something out of. This echoes the oft promoted virtue of capitalism- invention and innovation of opportunity- which in effect becomes the enduring outcome of the Sony as a development project.

In a full circle kind of way, the development project succeeds in nurturing a state of perpetual chaos in the lives of labourers and survival systems. To fit requires alternative forms

⁷⁵ There is a common view that discipline produces an orderly and docile subject as its end. Here I mean that it appears that there is no ultimate point where the process of transforming young men into labourers stops. Thus development is infinitely mutating, producing unpredictable forms on and on.

of survival. This reveals a particular subjective logic: personal experimentation and innovation with the boundaries of existence within the labourer moral economy that excludes and forecloses on those it needs on an intermittent basis. The side plans as survival strategies for migrant labourers in effect do not contradict the workings of migrant labour. Instead, they immunize it against the possibility of becoming completely unbearable and thus a threat to the working of sugar manufacturing routines. They transform it into what Joao Biehl calls a 'subjectivity that contains creativity' and reveal '... the possibility of the subject adopting symbolic relation to the world to understand [and manage] the lived experience' (Biehl, 2005: 137). The side plan economy works reflexively on the contours of the official factory-community relations in which the flow of money begins from the factory and then permeates into the different segments of existence in sugarbelt in multiple networks.

By reflexive here I seek to capture a relationship in which the side plans are continuously referencing the goings-on of the factory as a formal economy. For instance, they are more active, clandestine and dense during the periods when the factory is closed hence fewer legal transactions going on and less money flowing in the region. On the other hand, they reduce when there is a lot of work and more people are working and getting paid. For those segments of the community that the factory does not have official relations with or chooses not acknowledge, these networks clandestinely organize and operate a different moral economy on the side. The side plans then become the discursive frames through which labourers become acknowledged, explained and located. They also provide the opportunity through which those who have been tossed out like Roy can re-imprint their presence and also activate their connections with the factory albeit under a different plane. By conducting transactions directly with the labourers still working in the plantations or taking up occasional opportunities like those with Jack, Roy maintains his connections with Sony. On the hand when he offers loans to those labourers temporarily out of work on the promise that he will be

paid when they get work, Roy manipulates both the active labourers and himself into a symbiotic relation with Sony. The rationality and calculations involved are strategic interpretations of their positions and experiences, cognizant of the transactions and relations of production in the plantation (Bernal, 1997). The side plans then in a way recast the factory, the plantation and the whole project generally as a series of relations which build around the subject of the labourer to generate a continuous network of transactional relations and practices which are all controlled somewhat by the demands and activities at the factory.

3.8 CONCLUSION: THE DYSTOPIAN TURN, SWEATING AND SURVIVING

During the fieldwork, I developed a camaraderie with Jack, Roy and several other migrant labourers among them Jose from Suba Kuria. One day Jose was very distressed: his wife had packed and left. He could not understand why ‘she was also doing this to him’:

We have a place to sleep. One room. But we get by. The child will go to school next year, the company says they will open another school near here or she can go to Mayenga public school. You don’t have to take her to an academy. But, what then? I can’t afford to take her further.... (*Jose, Mayenga Camp 2009, September 21st*).

Jose’s monologue encapsulates the dilemmas that define the migrant labourers’ lives and their attempts to craft some normalcy for their families in the camp. This is the life under the chaos of development; debilitating encounters, unmet expectations and inevitably unpredictable survival modes. Jose through his monologue reveals how the material and symbolic dispossession manifest in his deprived work and living conditions are effectively charting the life of his daughter and her future. Without asserting so, he explains that his wife seems to have been overcome by living conditions limited to ‘a place to sleep’, and the fear

that they cannot afford to take their daughter to school. Is it protest or defeat or fatalism? I asked Jose what he felt about being left by his wife.

Ni kawaida. It is normal. That is how life in the camps is. You get left. You get dumped. In fact, you get done by everybody and everything. The company does you in- no house, no salary, and no medicine. Your wife does you the same. No peace. Unatupwa tu! You get dumped. Kama kiatu mzee. Like an old shoe after use. That is it my man.

He became more metaphorical.

You see this sugar cane. That is us, the labourers. You get squeezed, crushed and sucked all the juices. When you are dry, you are dumped. If you are lucky, you can become molasses somewhere else... but you are finished. Like a shoe.

As I listened to this seemingly erratic though coherent analogy, I recalled the testimonies of retired migrant labourers I had been able to trace and interview. They all shared the same feeling, expressing their experiences of plantation labouring in one form or another: 'the factory used you and dumped you', Mzee Peter Ogiri in Nyamaiya simply told me. 'I have nothing to show of my life at Sony. *Walininyonya nguvu yote*- they sucked all my energy/vitality'.

In essence then, Jose was elucidating the very banal and visceral bodily experience of the chaotic dispossession wrought by the plantation as a mode of development. It is a succinct analysis and critique of the problematic and disorienting relationship between the migrant labourers (partly as members of the community targeted for improvement, and partly as creations of the improvement project) and the sugar manufacturing company as the development (improvement) intervention. It reveals the extractive practices of sugar plantation economy and the subjective embodiments of its effects on people and families, social relations and futures. The parallelism between the sugarcane as crop introduced on a scale alien to the region and the migrant labourers as a social category or amalgam of production relations and

identities generated by it is spot on. Both are in a way rooted in the region, grown, invested in though differently; manufactured and disposable. Still, both are linked to the logic of the factory as an improvement project and adhere to its framework as a chaotic development, imposed and executed through graduated deprivation.

While the plantation system of labour transforms social structures, relations and economy, the industry corrodes everything and everybody into a raw material subject to exhaustion, wear and tear and eventually callous disposal. Being dumped, being left, being disposed off, being done in, becomes and is a normal order of things in the industry. The chaos is the order. Though still human, Jose, Jack, Roy and their ilk have been sweated into disposable bodies whose presence and value depends on the expediency and utility to the sugar production process. The system according to Jose is manipulated to 'do him in' both socially and publicly as a labourer; and in private as a father and husband.

Traditional labour and production relations disintegrate into unreliable waged labour system under which the moral economy of reciprocity is subverted into a series of temporal and informal contracts. Eventually the employment promise becomes a nightmare of flexibility and precarity in which the labourers are left to their own devices for survival. Formal belonging is made contingent upon the relationship one has with the sugar production process- either in or outside. But an informal economy arises from the internal changes and subversions of the process of improvement as the factory becomes more focused on efficiency and increased revenue rather than the welfare of the labourers. By distancing itself from the labourers through contractors and supervisors, it lets loose a process of formal invisibility and concurrent informal visibility. It is in the informal realm that the existence of side plans becomes possible and mimetic.

Yet, the labourers neither resist nor submit. I argue that they make choices, adapt and survive by continuously reconfiguring their subjectivity and reconstituting a dynamic moral

economy along the workings of the sugar processing regime. This becomes what sustains their continuity relevance and participation in the improvement project. This was neither planned nor predictable but was not exactly unexpected hence is a revelation of the chaotic character of the Sony as a development project. The chaos and uncertainties are continuously generated, but the actors also continue to innovate and recast them anew in their different ways. Everybody is continuously finding an opportunity, a cleavage through which to access the promise of improvement.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MAKING OF A DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY: THE SOUTH NYANZA SUGARBELT IN KENYA

4.1 INTRODUCTION: AGRICULTURE AND CONTINUITIES OF RULE

The Kenya government launched an economic blue print in which it declared its aim to give Kenyans ‘a better deal in our lives and in our struggle to build a modern and prosperous nation’⁷⁶. A new slogan to promote this strategy was adopted by the Government: transforming Kenya into a ‘working nation’ in order to make up for the ‘lost ground’ through ‘economic recovery.’ The highlighting of national development as movement achievable through working, mobility and recovery summarize the recurrent conception of development in Kenya- as both deliberate willing into existence and perpetual progression towards higher and better forms of living. What this highlighting eludes with regard to commercial plantation agriculture, are the actual everyday experiences for people who have been at its core for over three decades.

After independence, agriculture got established as strategic modality of re-engineering, controlling and managing communities in line with the demands of an economy dictated by the rhythms of particular crops, their seasonal cycles and market regimes. Building onto the colonial programme of improvement and progressive change (as detailed in chapter two), agricultural development cultivated and established its hegemony over communities, directing them towards the cultivation and production of cash crops, mainly for global markets, thus fully immersing the country and local communities into global circuits of capital (Seppala and Koda, 1998). In this context promoting the nationwide cash crop growing was as much political as was economic: it was a response to the historical restrictions against African

⁷⁶ Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003 -2007 launched by the Ministry of Planning and National Development. Initially this had been contained in the Party Manifesto of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) the coalition of parties and politicians that eventually won the 2002 elections to succeed KANU’s four decade rule.

agriculture as it was a drive for national equalization of opportunity for every ethnic community (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1995).

In this chapter I show how the South Nyanza region became part of the agricultural development programme under independent Kenya. I explore the process of entry of the sugar factory connecting local and national interests as well as the different interests as play. Lastly I highlight the way sugar cane farming established its rule in the region and what this implies for different groups of the South Nyanza community. By way of a non-linear narrative, I capture the transactions and lived experience of the development intervention that the factory was intended to be through its entry and establishment. I also show the transformations and subjects that emerged from the process and evolution of the project to contemporaneously elaborate the emerging subjectivities.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF AGROMANUFACTURING IN SOUTH NYANZA

SUGARBELY

Nationally and globally agriculture became the central frame of the national identity and narrative as Kenya became one of the top producers of coffee targeting 70,000 tonnes for export by 1970; and tea whose acreage stood at 51,000 in 1962 most of it (98%) produced in large plantations and was intended for increment by a further 11,000 acres with factories in new schemes and small holder farms. Sisal and pyrethrum are the other crops which the Government projected. By 1962, Kenya was the world's leading producer of pyrethrum and by 1970, among the world's leading producers of coffee, tea and pyrethrum all of which were heavily reliant on migrant labourers and extensive small scale farms in Central Kenya, Rift Valley and Kisii regions. The dispossessive dominance of the cash crop economy created a nexus between the crops' cycles and the family lives and the imprinting of the different regions

with different crops. The crops acquire the authority to distinctively characterize the economy, life and politics of the respective communities, places, people and general in those regions.

Sugarcane, as the ethnographies of Mintz (1995) and Scheper-Hughes (1993) highlight, is notoriously and territorially hegemonic in this respect because of its intensive labour and land demands. It stifles other crops and economic activities in those communities; establishes itself and controls everyday routines and identities. The spatial dominance of the crops on the regional landscape encapsulates the social, demographic, political and economic patterns to the point of strangling any other alternative lifestyles.

The regional domination by certain forms of agriculture or crops (monocultures) has roots in the colonial policies which determined who could grow and where certain cash crops could be grown. Tea and coffee were upper class crops grown by Europeans in the highland regions, sugar and tobacco were predominantly run by Asians (Oucho, 2002; Kanogo, 1987)⁷⁷. Africans supplied the labour for both. Across the country, different regions where certain cash crops had taken dominance, family farms were converted into small holdings to supply the government –with crop-based cooperative factories being set up. For instance, Central Kenya, parts of the Rift Valley and Kisii became prominent tea and coffee growing regions while Western Kenya and parts of Luo Nyanza specialized on growing sugarcane and rice.

Much of the Luo Nyanza region seems to have been agriculturally by-passed by colonial settlers due to its low altitude and general unsuitability for the major export crops for the colony- coffee and tea; and higher susceptibility to tropical animal and human diseases. Northern Nyanza dominated by the shores of Lake Victoria was however suitable for sugarcane growing, a crop considered second class hence dominated by Indians. The two – coffee and tea- were targeted at a European market and exclusively controlled by European

⁷⁷ Swynnerton, Rogers. 1955. The Swynnerton Report: A Plan to Intensify the Development of the African Agriculture in Kenya. Nairobi: Government Printer. Submitted and adopted by the East Africa Royal Commission of 1953-1955 which sought to address the Mau Mau movement through villagization- increasing agricultural production of cash crops by African.

settlers. Sugar as a second class enterprise dominated by the Asian settlers, was mostly produced for local consumption, and built on the foreign capitalist ownership- local migrant labour paradigm like other major cash crops.

Globally, the British and other European powers had already relinquished their dominance of the sugar industry, the crop having lost its prestigious position it enjoyed a century earlier (Mintz, 1985; and Scheper-Hughes, 1993). This explains the linkage of sugar manufacturing in Kenya with the migrant Asians who mostly first came to Kenya in the late 1890s during the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway. Until 1960 they were the sole suppliers of sugar (Wanyande, 2001). The Indian firms leased large parcels of land, engaged local labour both in and out of the factories, spent the bare minimal and produced for the market. Presently, private Asian-owned companies continue to have controlling interests in almost all the Kenyan sugar manufacturing and distribution companies, Sony sugar included. The following is a chronology of the establishment of sugar manufacturing and production in Kenya:

1. 1922: Miwani in 1922 as a private business of the Hindocha family (Odada, 1986)⁷⁸.
2. 1927: Ramisi by the Associate Sugar company limited under management of the Madhvani group international of India.
3. Until 1960 private plantation farmers of Asian origin had a monopoly of supplying the factories with cane using African labour and few small holder farmers.
4. After 1963: The state got directly involved through Sessional Paper No 10 which provided a broad framework for the agricultural sector; and build on the 1954

⁷⁸ Odada, J.E. O, et al. 1986. **Incentives and management for an Integrated Agro-Industry: Sugar and Sugarcane in Kenya**. Report Submitted to the World Bank
 _____ **Incentives for increased agricultural production: the case of Kenya's Sugar Industry**. Nairobi: Fredrich Ebert Foundation.

Swynnerton Plan which allowed African to grow cash crops for export (Migot-Acholla, 1984).⁷⁹

5. 1966: East Africa Sugar Industry, later renamed Muhoroni Sugar Company. The land was initially meant for returning squatters but ended up being allocated to many prominent people who were absentee sugar farmer leading to poor performance of the company in subsequent years. Muhoroni was later given to the Mehta Group International
6. 1970: Sugar Belt Cooperative Union supported the launch of Chemelili Sugar company about 10 kilometres from Muhoroni. It was later given to the Booker Tate International for management.
7. 1973: Mumias factory in Kakamega, later renamed Mumias Sugar company and given to the Booker Tate International company for management.
8. Establishment of the Kenya Sugar Authority to coordinate the production and development of sugar cane and white sugar in Kenya.
9. 1978: Nzoia Sugar company set up in Bungoma under the management of French company Techniscare
10. 1978/9: South Nyanza Sugar Company (Sony) at Awendo initially managed by the Mehta Group (from 1979-1985) and later the Booker Tate International company (1985-2000) when the management reverted to the Government of Kenya. The Meta group still retains 0.21% share ownership.

⁷⁹ Migot-Adhola, S. 1984. Rural Development Policy and Equality; in Barkan, J. (ed.) *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* (revised edition.) Nairobi: Heinemann publishers.

In all the companies formed after independence, the Government of Kenya was the major shareholder: Sony- 98.8 %; Chemelili- 95.38 %; Mumias- 70.76%; Muhoroni- 74.17% and Nzoia- 97.93% (Wanyande, 2001). Further the Government controlled sugar production and distribution under the Kenya national Trading Corporation (KNTC). Farmers, according to Wanyande and other advocates of less government involvement in business control, had little involvement in the planning and management hence little incentive to increase production.

4.3 ESTABLISHING THE FACTORY: POLITICS AND REALITY

‘Sugar grows best where heat and water are plentiful...’ writes Philip Curtin in his discussion of the rise and fall of plantations economies across the Atlantic (Curtin, 1990). He may as well be writing figuratively about the political conditions of the South Nyanza in relation to establishing the sugar industry. The sugar project formally came into existence in 1978 framed within the turbulence of Kenyan politics and the swampy terrain of the host region. The establishment of the sugar factory in South Nyanza fits better within the context of national politics and economic dynamics rather than local community conditions. There has always thrived small scale farming of sugarcane used in the production of unrefined brown sugar (jaggery, locally known as *sukari nguru*) for use in the production of a local gin (chang’aa) especially in the neighbouring Kisii district and in small quantities in the South Nyanza. The principle argument for establishing the South Nyanza sugar company was the need to tackle rising poverty in the region by utilizing the large swathes of land available. The proposal was strengthened more by the fact that the lands were fallow, flat and swampy, and breeding grounds for malaria- spreading mosquitoes and tsetse flies.

By 1975 there had emerged obvious regional imbalances in development across the country. Regional development in Kenya was intricately linked to cash crop economies, ethnicity and national politics. Nyanza in particular was characterized by development

disparities between the dominant ethnic communities- poverty levels were higher among the Luo compared to the coffee and tea farming Gusii. The situation was exacerbated by the 1977/8 coffee boom and concurrent rise in costs of living that made the Gusii seem economically successful and the Luo poor (Republic of Kenya, 1979). Politically, the Luo community especially in South Nyanza felt excluded and marginalized.

The story of the Sony sugar project appears rather abruptly in the local community accounts and development documents revealing a kind of imposed usurpation of the local socio-economic and political routines by national plans. In the 1974-78 South Nyanza District Development Plan for instance, sugarcane is not mentioned as an important cash crop though agriculture is reported to be employing over 95% of the local population. Records show that the preliminary processes began as earlier as 1975 among government, international donor agencies and multinational companies. Between 1975 and 1976, Tate and Lyle Technical Services Limited, part of the Tate-Booker International agro-management company conducted a series of studies towards the expansion of the Kenya sugar industry in which the South Nyanza region was focal. A World Bank Report dated 1977 indicates an earlier proposal for a sugar project to 'stimulate development in an economically backward area and bring smallholders into the development process' (World Bank, 1977: p. 1)⁸⁰. By establishing a sugar factory, the project could serve the country's development needs in two ways: utilize the land to produce for the market and create employment opportunities for local communities. It is conceivable therefore that the establishment of the Sony Sugar company was a project of the regional and ethnic elite serving larger than local exigencies, political and economic (Kennedy, 1989).

⁸⁰ World Bank Kenya Appraisal of the South Nyanza Sugar Project Report; No. 1418-KE which also includes the evaluation study conducted by Tate and Lyle Technical Services Limited on behalf of the World Bank and Government of Kenya.

4.4 PLANTING CHAOS: DEVELOPMENT AS DISPOSSESSION AND DISLOCATION

The logical and conceptual beginnings of the South Nyanza sugar development project can be traced to the 1974-1978 Development Plan in which the Government sought to direct resources towards rural areas through greater decentralization of planning and implementing at the district level. With specific focus on industrial decentralization, it aimed to accelerate development in rural areas by creating employment for 650,000 people as farmers, family workers, self-employed or wage employees (GoK, 1974:109). Sare, as Awendo was known then, was identified as one of the rural centres to be opened up in then South Nyanza district with a new sugar scheme and factory proposed for construction in 1977. Its construction was completed in 1979 (Kenya Economic Survey 1979: 102)⁸¹. Sony was established with two ostensible objectives: to contribute to the national sugar supply grid; and to develop and raise the local people's living standards by providing cash-crop economy employment and income.

The first objective was easily realized- the company produced sugar for the market. The second one- creating employment opportunities- was not on target. It created unattractive manual labour jobs which failed to attract qualified workers from the local community. Anticipation had been for white collar jobs hence the notable reluctance by the locals to take up these jobs. Two explanations account for the reluctance among locals to take the labourer jobs the factory offered upon establishment. First, the persistent historically pejorative connection of plantation labour work in the agriculture sector to colonial racism which left many with little motivation to join it. It was left for the 'wandering foreigners' as migrant labourers are often called. Secondly, a lot of money had suddenly poured into the region courtesy of land selling and leasing of family farms and plots to the new factory and wealthy

⁸¹ Republic of Kenya, 1979. *Kenya Economic Survey 1979*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

farmers wanting to expand their farms (as shown in the previous chapter). Many of those who had sold or leased farms saw little if any reason to take up the lowly paying manual jobs.

The money changed lifestyles, practices and living standards in the area. Oti, a regular migrant labourer and one of my key informants, recalls it thus:

Wazee - elders became 'millionaires' overnight. They became 'tourists' moving from one town to another, visiting relatives many of whom were imaginary. My father could vanish for days- but we also enjoyed. Kids were bought the latest clothes- especially the King of Pop t-shirts which were popular among boys. Maisha, life, was good. There was money.

Oti connects the phenomenal explosion of short-lived affluence – being 'millionaires overnight' with that of mobility and dislocation 'becoming tourists' searching for an untenable good time. The vanishing of fathers from homesteads for days reveals the first 'catastrophic effects of the project on the community as a 'social engineering' process riding roughshod over the social and personal complexities of the ordinary families (Scott, 1998). In effect the money transformed hitherto village peasants into carefree moneyed agents of capitalist consumption who for the time the money lasted, lived under the illusion that 'development' had arrived and presented an opportunity for endless partying. But unlike Milkman's (1997) findings on factory life in the United States in the 1980s, the Sony did not establish a familial feeling among its earliest clients- the land sellers. To families such as those of Oti, it was a corrosive and dislocating experience.

Yet, Oti acknowledges the infectious entry of globalization into the community through Sony's money: children and community becoming consumers of emblems of global pop culture- 'the King of Pop' T-shirt- meaning a T-shirt with the picture of Michael Jackson- which were sold in the Asian shops in the town. Within the capitalist governmentality, this reveals a processual and symbolic socialization of the social body in South Nyanza into a factor

of production by initiating capitalist consumption habits- where labour production was the intended practice; consumption became the strategy of control (Foucault, 1994). Many of the local land owners were paid for their lands and recall with nostalgia the money that flowed. Indeed there was money during the launching period of the manufacturing plant. Family heads, mostly old men and in rare cases elderly sons, were persuaded to sell or lease their land with promises of money and good jobs for their children; electrification and piped watering of their homes, and improvement of local schools. It is hard to establish the actual valuation of the land, but from the old men in the area a picture emerges which is not wholly transparent. John Odhiambo, a 77 year old man told me that they were asked to nominate leaders to negotiate with the government on the spatial design of the factory and plantation. The exercise became a performative display of extravagance and affluence albeit in the future. The leaders:

...flew around in helicopters mapping the place. They even told us they will set up an airport here so that we could fly to Nairobi and abroad because development will come with the factory. Then they began moving us out from the nucleus. If you accepted you were given money- between 2000-4000 Kenya shillings per acre. If you refused, they bought all the land around you and you became a squatter. Then you had to move⁸².

Capitalist development operates through default modes of spatial enclosures through which they order social relations and practices to separate direct producers from land thus creating wage labour (Makki and Geisler, 2011). This wage labour is dependent on but expediently disposable by the capitalist projects (factory, plantation or mine) since their capacity to reproduce is irrevocably altered (Li, 2011). The formation of such enclosures is systematically set off with cartographic steps by which the spatial is opened up, documented and re-written as well as possessed afresh in a way that disguises the extractive intentions of

⁸² This is a common story with a variety of renditions. I have given the skeletal plot. Different narrators emphasize different aspects and minor additions and exaggeration spice them.

capital. The mapping of the South Nyanza region to accommodate the nucleus of the plantations and the company headquarters was a prototype in this manner. It was executed in a sophisticated manner nonetheless replete with dramatic episodes not only in the hyperbolic presentations of the project's possibilities but also in the strategic way government policy legislation inveigled itself into everyday activities into the local relations of influence and popularity sometimes comically.

According to the district and national development plans, a sugar development programme was launched with the objective of expanding sugar production with the establishment of two new factories in the country: south Nyanza and Nzoia. In both cases, it was envisioned that cane will be produced by the company's nucleus estates (plantations around the factory owned by the factory) and from outgrowers farms. In Sony, the nucleus farms were to be acquired by convincing the local small farm owners and the community (with regard to the communal swampy grazing lands) to relocate to other areas. The plan was to buy them out and in cases where they could not find immediate land the Lambwe valley offered an immediate solution despite its hostility to human settlement being a dry sandy tsetse fly infested place. The government offered to invest a further seventy-nine thousand sterling pounds in the elimination of the tsetse flies in Lambwe valley.

The eviction of people from their ancestral lands to provide space for the factory's nucleus plantations and the elimination of tsetse flies at the areas targeted for their resettlement offers a telling parallel with regard to the logic of the whole development project. The coupling of evictions (dislocations) and spatial domestication of land hostile to human habitation in a way reveals the imposition and subordination of local interest to capital in South Nyanza development plan as well as the internal incoherence of the improvement versus the will to rule narrative. It was also historically recurrent- it had been done in the 1960s and early seventies in many parts of Central Province and Rift Valley where communities were rounded

up and transported to new 'better lands' while their small ancestral plots were amalgamated into large coffee, tea or pineapple plantations by the political elites and friendly multinational companies. In most cases, the new lands were either climatically unsuitable for the traditional lifestyles of the dislocated people or already home to other indigenous communities who were not so welcoming. For instance, this has been the cause of persistent ethnic violence and animosity in much of Rift Valley between indigenous and relocated communities.

From interviews with community elders and retired civil servants in the region, I gathered that just before the official launch, there was sustained lobbying by government and the local community leadership to ensure that the dislocations were viewed positively. Select community members were often treated to briefing workshops and seminars in Nairobi extolling the benefits of the sugar project. Money was given out and more land payments were made. Such huge amounts of money had not been seen in the area before. At the then local living standards and national inflation, the amounts of money were considerably high (in hundreds of thousands) given that none of the land sellers sold less than ten acres⁸³. The money was meant to enable them buy new plots elsewhere but many could not get land of equal measure. Instead, they bought small pieces in the villages surrounding the company farms. Others migrated from the area to towns and other trading centres planning to launch businesses. A number expanded their home by taking another wife or two. Mama Monica Adhiambo, about seventy years now sums up the masculine and roughshod character of the movements and transactions that preceded and launched the Sony factory:

It was a men's thing. One evening he (the husband) comes home and says: *Serikali anahamisa sisi*. The government is moving us. I say to myself. He is drunk. So a week passes. Then he says: tomorrow I am getting paid for the land. For a week we don't see him. Then he

⁸³ An acre was sold for Ksh. 15, 000 or leased for about Ksh. 1000 per year. Leasing was made cheaper to encourage more sales of land.

eventually finds his way home. All clothes are new, he has new shoes too. But he is not alone. They are with like five friends and some strange men with ropes and large papers on which they say are maps. Then he gets into their *motokaa*- a motor car. Off they go. Two days later, he is back: I have found a plot in Mariwa, I ask him why. That is all I ask, why? He says: women can not hear (sic) *maendeleo*- development. Then he says: *serikali inaleta maendeleo kwetu*- the government is bringing development here in our village. (Mama Monica Adhiambo May, 2009- Oyani).

4.5 CONTINUITIES OF PLACE: DISLOCATIONS AND RELOCATIONS IN SOUTH NYANZA

Dislocations have been a historical feature of the South Nyanza community. What made the dislocations induced by the sugar plantation unique were the impositions and relations they came with- dispossession of, rather than assimilation into, the local political economy, especially with regard to land. This explains the eventual antipathy of the local community towards the Sony project. South Nyanza has always been a mix of cultures and political economies of different ethnic practices at different period but dominated by the Luo narrative. The dominant Luo community is made of immigrants who displaced the Gusii into the highlands which are colder; are surrounded by the Maasai and Kuria with whom they have had intermittent confrontations. Kenyan historian Bethwel Ogot emphasizes that the Luo population increased over the years was not simply by natural reproduction but through a process of cultural assimilation of other communities making them an example of what Ogot calls a 'hybrid population' (Ogot, 1967).

The Luo movements over the centuries prior to 1900 are correlates between ‘emergence of territorial political organization and the existence of a plural sedentary society’ according to Ogot. Despite the Luo’s tendency for territorial conquests, Ogot asserts that they had no special attachment to land ‘...as long as there was enough of it for their cattle and their crops. A man would readily leave his father’s grave and build a new home away if the land in the latter place was better and enemies fewer’, (ibid.: 39). ‘The Luo settle, use and then abandon the land when it became exhausted’, Sir Harry Johnston wrote in 1902⁸⁴. The arrival of the Luo in the South Nyanza region and subsequent settlement is estimated to have occurred between 1730 and 1760. Apparently, diseases had affected their movements; especially sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis) which is spread by tsetse flies. The Sare (later to be known as Awendo) area was relatively free of the tsetse flies and had lots of water and free grasslands over which they had occasional fights with the Maasais.

At first, it had been a favourite stopping place during their periodic migrations in search of grazing lands and trading with the Abagusii farmers; but eventually it became a permanent settlement. The new settlers were always afraid of the Maasai raiders hence built their main settlements on the Rapogi side and adopted the steadier and more defence-oriented home building technologies of the Abagusii- tightly fenced with thorny plants and clustered near each other as much as space could allow. In conversations with the elderly Luos in the Sony, the narrative of their need to survive against adversaries by adopting the technology of their neighbours is recurrent. For instance, they adopted the sedentary life of the more agricultural Abagusii and even build their homes like them. This provides an insight into the local generic and strategic adoption and adaptation, rather than imposition of ‘foreign’ technologies for the improvement of community.

⁸⁴ Johnston, H.H. 1902. *Uganda Protectorate*, vol. II in Ogot 1967. P. 132.

The Sony Sugarbelt has a history of population movements that predate the establishment of the factory. Before independence, land tenure and modes of utilizing the land seem to have been the key determinants in spatial population mobility alongside the labour regimes. Localized mobility referred to as *gweng* in the Luo language, was essentially within one's territory and was often driven by health, learning/education, water and herding /farming imperatives. Long distance barter trade involving dealers in fish, pottery, livestock and traditional metallurgy played a significant part in the mobility. Such mobility hardly made any lasting demographic or spatial impact on the community since the 'migrants' dislocated within brief periods and short distances and was mostly seasonal. Most returned to their homes. Long distance and permanent migrations began with the postcolonial government which intensified efforts in encouraging relocations into parts of South Nyanza, especially, Migori/Awendo and Mbita areas. Members of other communities were encouraged to settle in the region to ameliorate population pressure in their home areas such as Kisii, Kakamega and Siaya which had experienced relatively higher population growth.

The government had also another reason for encouraging these migrations: it needed these outsiders to sustain the fight against the tsetse fly menace in the area that had made it uninhabitable and unproductive. Another group of migrants into the area followed the tsetse fly fighters- those who migrated into the area from other areas in Nyanza – a relatively wealthy group from within and outside the district. The group used their relative financial strength to purchase large pieces of land for permanent settlement and extension of the families. With time, this group of migrants came to dominate the economy, politics and life in the region. They were (and still are) better educated, wealthier, connected and were more versed in the workings of modern government. Most of them had attended the mission schools in Northern Nyanza and were actually serving in many positions in the post-colonial Kenya civil service. Many of them were among those who petitioned the Moi government for the establishment of

the factory. Indeed many of those who took the reconnaissance plane rides described earlier belonged to this group of migrant settlers.

By 1970, it had become apparent to the more influential families in the region (mostly migrant – as explained above) that the Abagusii way of life- crop farming with moderate animal husbandry was making more sense economically than the Luo way of large herds of cattle and little crop farming. By 1977, in the whole of Nyanza Province, Kisii district earned more from agriculture than all the other districts combined. It had an average earning per person being 117.5 in Kisii while Kisumu had 24.8. Migori and Homa Bay districts which formed the South Nyanza region had no significant earnings from agriculture (Republic of Kenya, 1979)⁸⁵. Thus more versed with the intricacies of capitalist development by virtue of their relatively higher education and exposure, many of these ‘migrants’ kept, acquired and accumulated huge tracts of land within the immediate confines of the factory while their indigenous neighbours were dispossessed and dislocated. This resulted in an apparent selective pattern of the displacements within which the seeds containing the paradoxes of development and its experience to define life in the sugarbelt years later lay.

The establishment of the sugar factory and the resettlement scheme triggered another set of movements in the region. The factory caused massive depopulation of people who had originally settled in within the perimeter of the nucleus estate. Whole families and clans, most of them those who had been brought in to fight the tsetse fly menace, were forcefully or otherwise compelled to move to other areas such as Olambwe valley, Kanyamwa and other locations surrounding the sugar estate. Most of these were dry or swampy and uninhabitable for agriculture (see South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile, 1983/6). It is estimated that 1600 families (about 12000 individual lives) were evacuated from the nucleus estate of the sugar project between 1978 and 1979. The common destinations for resettlement of those

⁸⁵ Republic of Kenya. 1979. *Employment and Earnings in the Modern Sector, 1977*. Nairobi: Central Bureau of Statistics.

evacuated were Oyani, Kamagambo, Rongo, Olambwe, Migori, Kanyada and Kabuoch. By 1983, the local government projected that the sugar factory could be providing 500 jobs, 90% of the workers being those formerly resident in the evacuated areas. Sugar production had become the sole source of income in a variety of ways for the region on which about 156,000 people depended for their livelihood (South Nyanza Development Plan, 1979-83).

The population movements in the South Nyanza are not exactly novel but part of socio-political growth of the community. What characterises the sugar development project induced movements was their variegated character in which particular groups were affected differently; and the outcomes anticipated and irreversible. Moreover, there are contradictions between its intentions, its logics as a project of improvement and the effects of the dislocations on individuals and their households. These contradictions highlight the foundational chaos of the project: initiating dispossession and dislocations as the constitutive gems and necessary costs to be borne for the ultimate good of the community. Yet, what results is increasing vulnerability and exclusion of the very groups whose improvement was the target. Though designed as deterministic, the development intervention shows its nonlinearity in outcomes.

4.6 NARRATIVES OF THE DISPOSSESSION OF THE SUGAR PROJECT

The logic of the relations between the factory being established and the villages played the colonial dispossession anew. Villagers were dispossessed of their land albeit with compensatory payments, with a particular imaginary of development providing the justification. The potentiality of this development to open up the area was framed economically, monetarily to be specific, a very linear and simplified vision of an endless flow of easy money which generated an endless good time and wild possibilities for everybody. What also replayed itself is the masculine conception and experience of social and economic transformation (development). The transactions involved men only; women were largely

ignored and only got to share in the outcomes of the dealings albeit the harsh one such as household deprivation, family disruptions and increased domestic violence. The whole process was in effect conceived as chaotic, messy and brutal hence more attuned to masculine strength rather than feminine sensitivity.

The discernible and enduring involvement of women in the processes of dispossession and displacement that defined the launching of the sugar manufacturing plant was later as providers of sex and sex related services to the men (discussed further in chapter six). From many interviews and discussions with women, I found that it was the patriarchal control of land in the community that provided a justification for ignoring women and family during the planning. In a way this confirms Wolf (1992)'s assertion that development through industrialization tends to exacerbate the subordination of women (Wolf, 1992). It also facilitated the glossing over the more brutal and intimate consequences of relocation assuming that since the Luo men had been known for long distance trade with their neighbours and herding, it would not present any significant disruption and stress to families. Had women been involved, questions relating to household sustenance would have arisen complicating the sale narrative (Field Notes, 2009-2010 April).

The effects of the factory's entry on gender relations however, need be seen within the wider emerging social milieu where it was in effect restructuring the whole range of social and symbolic allegiances and commitment of production and reproduction in the community (Moore and Vaughan, 1994). Amid these glossy projections in the Government and local district development plans and reports, lurked the real effects of the factory's establishment. Families had been dislocated, sources and practices of livelihood disrupted and transformed; and the lives of the local community abruptly thrust into a new economy with little preparation. The family working ethic had been profoundly compromised by the land sales and the promise of easy modern jobs at the new factory. Homes had to be rebuilt with the little

money some managed to save from the after sale extravagancy. The activities in the local trading centres and urban centres absorbing the proceeds from the land sales and leases lured the able bodied men away from the village farms.

Those moved to the new areas found the land small; in Lambwe the area is semi-arid with poor drainage and soils making their traditional farming ways impossible. Herding was affected due to shortage of grazing lands; food crops were reduced due to land size and soils. Furthermore, as it turned out, many of the factory jobs were few and lowly paying. The five hundred jobs were no match for the over 10,000 work seekers produced by the displacements and influx of others from far off places. The locals could not stand the kind of work they were being offered- weeding cane, clearing bushes, building and cleaning which were seen to be demeaning and far below their conception and expectations of employment.

These disappointments and contradictions however capture the recurrent features of a development paradigm based on spatial dislocation and dispossession. The reorganization of land led to the establishment of social and spatial discipline cartographically and amenable to the developmental governmentality (Moore, 2005). The emerging disciplinary society and its forms of conduct generated and accommodated perpetual deprivation and displacement which showcase the chaotic aspects of development. The progress from the intentions to practices of the sugar plantation project produced several forms of deprivation which revealed that a clash of two production systems was afoot. Ferguson, (1999) sees such deprivations as central to the whole development process rather than its unintended outcome and serves to reorganize existing social frameworks to inaugurate new forms of rule.

4.6 MAKING SENSE OF CHAOS: NARRATING THE DISLOCATIONS

There are competing narratives and visions in the accounts of the local community about the establishment of the factory. Many of the wealthy farmers, retired senior company

and government employees, and council members I interviewed offer accounts where Awendo and the region are presented in a series of improvement steps. For them it represents modernization. From a swampy grazing land to a road side shopping centre where traders stopped for rest on their way to Tanzania in 1920s which follows a vision of pioneers:

‘The shopping centre then grew with a number of pioneers like Akaka Wiro, Anindo, and Aduo who donated land for the establishment of a town council. They had a vision to build a town which could compete with Kisii,’ (town council member, 12th Dec, 2010).

This elite narrative adheres to the officially documented trajectory of the development project in government plans and reviews. It reifies the notion of development as smooth transition from one state to another, all for the best. Notably, modernity is presented as a target state for which places compete for. However it differs a little in its presentation of the land evictions.

Here is the local council’s version:

Around 1977 the Ministry of Agriculture decided to start a sugar factory here. As you know, land in Kenya is owned by the State. But the Government could not just evict her own people just like that. So it decided to buy the land from them. They bought around 2500 hectares... *please note* [emphasis by respondent] that the Government is the one that acquired the land and then donated it to the upcoming sugar milling company. The company found some of the land not productive and gave it to the council which, for the sake of developing the town, leased it to developers and government offices such as the district officers and police posts..... (Town Council member, January, 20th, 2010, Awendo).

Figure 5: Traditional food granaries stand abandoned and empty in many homesteads



The town council's narrative presents a fascinating set of positions. First, the project was a government initiative and the local elite, most of who are related to many of the council officers, had little to do with its location. Notice how the question of eviction is both justified and humanized in one stroke. The land belongs to the Government but the same Government paid the evictees out of magnanimity not out of responsibility. Further, the narrative hints at the controversies surrounding the land question that have dogged the company and the local community for long: where did the excess land acquired by the company go? How did the Town Council come to occupy land within the company plantations so to speak as do other prominent families in the area? According to the Council version, the company donated the land which it had found unsuitable for cane. The overall thrust of the council narrative is to present the sugar company as a 'development partner; a jewel in the region'. It also casts blame

on any negative effect of the evictions on the inappropriate behaviour of evictees- they were paid for the land and opted to squander the money.

On the other hand, the locals who were evicted have a different folk account of the event. There are lamentations about the manner of eviction:

‘They simply evicted us and tossed money... little money at us and told us to look for land elsewhere. It was more expensive elsewhere... they left us on a desert’ (Mzee Airo, 2nd June, 2009, Rapogi).

‘They promised many things... they turned against us later. Some of us had double evictions- you were evicted by Sony, taken to Lambwe valley and then you were evicted again because the land was not productive’, (Mama Roseline Boke, Mariwa, 20th July 2009).

Emerging from the contradictory accounts here are the clashes of orientations to land and its ownership. The council and company supporters view the sale as basically a commercial transaction between willing buyer and willing sellers, commenced and concluded with the valuation and payments. The local people on the other hand, especially those who had been evicted, read it as a beginning of a lifelong filial relationship. The two orientations towards land and its transfer clashed. Whereas the company supporters approached the transfers from the distant modern capitalist perspective under the dictum: it is simply business, nothing personal; the local community viewed land as ‘our soil... where we are buried. ... where the umbilical cords were planted’. In other words transferring ownership is not a transaction but an establishment of a social relationship forming an extension of family.

From discussions with elders in the region, common traditional Luo territorial and demographic expansionist practice is based on the assumption that the new owners are welcomed as an addition to their community and expected to observe social norms and fit into the communal relations. As such, though land occupation is individual; it is transient and

social. The locals therefore fail to fathom the way the company ‘fought them’ by establishing new boundaries and other control mechanisms which involved new lived terms such as trespassing, company property and leases and maps. The ‘turning against us’ refers not only to the materiality of dispossession but also to the feeling of betrayal among the locals regarding the sale of land and evictions. It also illustrates quite succinctly, the ironic turn of development trajectory and expectations. In the words of Mary Ayuko, 78 years old, evicted from Komororume, this was perplexing and disorienting; a classic manifestation of the shocked subjectivity discussed by Friedman (2007):

‘I do not know why they do this. They keep fighting with us. If they find you on that land, they say you trespass on private property... but it is our land. What do you take from there? We are all passersby. We are the owners. But do they know that. They talk about the money... they take us to court... we get fined... but we are now related, we are family.... (Mary Ayuko, 17th August, 2010- Komororume).

Scott (1977) established that the clash between capitalist development and peasant economies and modes of life plays out on the moral economy of land and deprivation. Land acts, for the peasantry, as a buffer against absolute deprivation. The rationality and calculations employed in the capitalist development interventions such as the Sony sugar project, become representations and experiences which are interpreted differently depending on one’s subjective position (Bernal, 1997). But they also create and sustain those subjective positions by constituting and imposing new forms of relating to existing resources such as land and labour. In the case of Mary Ayuko, the rationality of the company to designate land as private and subsequently render it inaccessible subverts the moral, social and economic relations between people and land. To her, land, people and crops are ‘family’- a filial relation that sustains life which the company’s business-minded methods of land acquisition destroyed.

The evictions and subsequent implementation of land transactions reveal the violent aspect of the chaos of development which is generally ignored in the elite narrative. The way the transactions were carried out conveniently ensured that the result would be people who were in the short-term happy and overwhelmed as they signed away their lands. On the long term, it also ensured that they would lack the means and grounds to contest their dislocation and deprivation. The company manipulated and forced evictions in which the Government deployed the police to ensure those who refused to leave were forcefully cleared. The combination of the government forces, the company resources and a compromised community leadership effectively silenced resistance and continuous to deny the alternative narrative of the project from developing, albeit publicly. Though the process had its own paradoxes at that point, those in power were able to erase and flatten them out to project a coherent progressive account of development (Ferguson (1999).

Yet, given the inevitable need for the dispossessed to be present as witnesses and legitimating actors of the development project, other voices remain that recorded and recall differently. Mzee Julius Ouma is one those who remember:

The money was over in a little while. We refused to move because we deserved more...The district commissioner (DC) and the police arrived and began beating people and destroying our houses. We did not have time to remove our belongings... people were left with nothing (Mzee Ouma, Awendo, 16th May, 2009).

Mzee Ouma's rendition captures and conveys both the actual brutality of the actions and the abruptness in which it was let loose on the locals. Evidence is further provided by the series of public spectacles recalled by residents through which a unitary vision of improving the community was pursued. Elaborate public mapping was conducted where instead of the government cartographers and officials taking charge, local elders and prominent people were

given the lead. Yet as Foucault (1977) asserts, power never achieves all that it sets out, or claims to do (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000) since its public performance often ends up baring its weakness. One such anecdote regaled over and over by those who were evicted about one of the powerful old men who were part of the mapping exercise reveals how the displacements of one regime by the other over land was itself a ragged process.

Akaka was powerful but he knew little about mapping. Because people feared him, the company and government officers ‘pocketed him’. Ensured he always accompanied them during the reconnaissance flights around the area. Akaka was happy. Flying around in a government chopper as they took pictures and mapped the areas to be covered by the nucleus estate, pointing out the homes to be demolished... it was until the map had come out and the list of the homes he had identified for eviction was published that Akaka realized he had fingered his own home for eviction⁸⁶.

This story is told with lots of mirth but underneath the humour is the paradoxical unreliability and chaos that were to characterize the relations of the coming of the Sony factory. Even the local elite and project collaborators did not have enough information and understanding of its potential implications. Of course Mr. Akaka was able to renegotiate the error and up to now, his home remains the only private individual holding within the company’s nucleus farm. The rest whether correctly or mistakenly mapped for eviction did not have a second chance. They either took the money ‘tossed at them’ and left or got kicked out by the combined force of the police and local council leaders. Even in the cases where they accepted the money, there was the unwritten understanding that they were doing it for future jobs and better income for them and their children. It is only later, like Akaka, when they had finished the money they had been given that the reality hit them: they had boxed

⁸⁶ This is a story that is part of local folklore told in various versions, including senior managers in the factory, with undisguised relish.

themselves into landlessness and had no claim to the project. The renegotiation of the erroneous mapping by Akaka also illustrates another aspect of the development project: it had a tactility that allowed continuous negotiation and adjustment for inclusion and exclusion. Its striving for order was always in progress and allowed for disorder as part of its progress.

4.7 CONCLUSION: DEVELOPMENT AS DISPOSSESSION

Rural industrialization as a strategy for development engineers a restructuring of relations affecting conceptions and practices of economy and family (Tilly, 1978). From the foregoing, the launch of the Sony Sugar Company under the dispossessive development imaginary and political economy was undertaken by the independence government modelled along the colonial structure. By its own logic and organization as an agromanufacturing project it operates on the twin demand of labour and land. In the South Nyanza region, land was acquired through evictions and dislocation of the indigenous community. The displacement served two reinforcing roles for the factory: created a large pool of desperate labourers (who were landless) and availed large lands for planting sugarcane. On the other side, the affected community experienced and had to live with new ways of deprivation- the destruction of traditional subsistence systems, interruption of social relations and inevitably the intrusion by outside practices.

The result is a perpetual clash of interests which each side attempts to explain away by crafting an appropriate narrative. As seen, the narratives of the beneficiaries and those of the victims of the development project converge on one thing: the imaginary of the project as promoted in 1978 is different from the reality. In the words of Musa Oloo:

When they brought the money, we never thought it will be over. We believed them, there was going to be employment and earning.... They should have told us (Awendo, June 2010).

Yet, they offer contradictory narratives of responsibility and blame with regard to the dystopian turn of events. The chaos of the deprivation and displacement are manifest through increased poverty and landlessness is shrugged off regretfully by those who have benefited, but are lived with each day by those evicted.

In the next chapter I examine how the new spatial reorganization in the region configured social and economic relations as well as family lives. In particular I seek to show how the chaos of development inevitably creates differences and distinctions dominated by the flows and chaos of overlapping impositions of dispossession and accumulation that connect spaces and social entities or subjectivities.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SUGARBELT AS A CHAOTIC MOSAIC: DEPRIVATION, DIFFERENCE AND ABANDONMENT IN SPACE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chaos that characterizes capitalist development projects- dislocation, dispossession, appropriation and unequal accumulation- is predominantly and profoundly a geographical affair 'with an inherent spatial fix' on widening and uneven insertion of different territories and social formations into its orbit (Harvey, 2000:23). Development initiatives always entail attempts to design and implement particular modes of living and futures; an application of government strategies and force in order to territorialize a normative order and align it with particular social, economic and political interests (Cresswell, 1996; Pile and Keith, 1997; de Certeau, 1994). In the course of my fieldwork, I found that investigating the Sony as a development project was also an examination of the geographical 'appearance' and dynamics of the location. Through such an exploration the study was able to capture how the logics and physics of development translate into spatial practices and imprint themselves into the physical landscape. The study reveals a relationship between the people and the different places in the Sony in which the different dynamics of the improvement project become located, lived and visible. Spatial differentiations, contradictions and disruptions capture the landscape of dispossession.

The imprinting of development unto spaces is not a new idea I am propagating here. Sutton and Kemp (2011) for instance have discussed how rapid changes are also mapped on landscapes in ways that capture how rapidly, distressfully or even aesthetically such changes have been experienced. My interest however is to connect place as the location of action and critical constituent to other aspects of everyday life and historical change in the Sony sugarbelt.

I argue that it is embodied and constituted by, and constitutive of the lives inhabiting it. As the location of social activity, place is critical to understanding conditions as a 'persistent constituent element of social life and historical change' (Gieryn, 2000). Deborah Pellow in a discussion of socio-spatial organization in Accra argues that place is type of socio-spatial form that exemplifies spatial temporal transitions. The exemplification is contextually developed through practices, interactions and meanings that people activate and at times find problematic (Pellow, 2002). Pellow's analysis asserts that place connects institutional codes and social instrumentality in a continuous interplay between everyday sociality and materiality.

The concepts 'place' and 'place-making' become relevant to my study as a complex community of persons, interests and economies whose constitutive logic is perpetual dispossession in Sony where the imaginary and reality of improvement are intricately tied to the geography of the community (Bloomley, 1994). Sony as a place has acquired the capacity to make and shape people's lives in a way that their everyday practices affect (and are affected in return by) their 'local world or space time'- the here and now (Gow, 1995). The practices and the spaces dialectically constitute and shape identities of different groups in the Sony such as labourers in the labour camps, managers in the administration quarters and villagers in the villages. Through these different identities, particular forms of emplacement become alive or lived (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). As will be shown however, these places, like the lives inhabiting them, are not static or given; they are not naturally occurring nor do they have given properties (Ward, 2007). Rather they are consequential outcomes and manifestation of survival struggles, reflecting concentric relations that hinge on the processes of sugar production and their administration from the factory complex. Furthermore, these outcomes assume material and cultural meanings congruent with the contextual political economy (Lefebvre, 1991; and Blau, 1999) of the Sony region and sugar manufacturing.

The objective of this chapter is to show how different sites within the South Nyanza sugar region contribute to its construction as a dynamic place of chaos, shaping the lives and effects produced by factory's imposition of a panopticon effect. This will show how agromanufacturing as development reconfigures places, regulates material and symbolic cultural practices and builds lived experiences of social differentiation. The chapter examines the agromanufacturing world as a complex social world of multiple and visible co-existing realities. Through geographical presentation of the Sony sugar company community, it attempts to explore the connections between social worlds of the labour camps and the local villages and the company/factory complex and the particular identities or meanings that are associated with each.

The chapter discusses lives in the three sites: labour camp, factory complex and village. I explore the labour camp as a place where people and experiences of dispossession and continued deprivation have converged- a convergence site of the development's chaos so to speak. The factory complex on the other hand presents the location of the actual processing happens literally and figuratively. Here the dispossession of land and labour, the produced sugarcane produced from/through them and the mechanical machinery are brought together to produce sugar and deliver the development promise (symbolically). As the study finds, the chaos wrought by the earlier processes of development are reproduced afresh as socially differentiation and hierarchies. Lastly, the village is examined as a place that has been 'sucked out and abandoned' by the processes of development but still kept on the fringes to support the sugar production process. There is an ambiguous relation with the factory hence my argument that the village is a site of chaotic abandonment.

Sketching out the three different sites, I show that agromanufacturing development as a process is closely linked to place and manifests itself through a continuum of chaotic relations it develops with particular sites which in turn are imbued with various forms of

signification. The Sony sugarbelt manifests three such relations which are grounded on three interlinked sites. First there are the local villages in which abandonment is the defining feature of its relation with Sony; then the labour camp whose relation with Sony is best described as convergence and finally the factory whose relation and position serves to enact the various forms of differentiation and exclusion. Across these sites, there is a strong presence of a complex and continuous roll out of dynamic and chaotic relations which make Sony a living mosaic of identities and practices.

5.2 CONVERGENCE OF CHAOS: THE LABOUR CAMP AS HOME OF THE DEPRIVED

April, 20th 2009: Diary Entry

There is no gate, just open space. The rows of iron sheets- rusty; some rotting at the dados. It rained yesterday- mud and stagnant water. Strong stench in the air- mix of faeces and rotting sugarcane. Children running around; women peep from open windows; some come out. Two girls carry naked babies on backs. Weather: cold and humid. Cock chasing hen. Man with leaves enters latrine at the far end...There are swarms of flies... crows hover on the trees...

Despite the sombre and dejected appearance exuded from these notes I made, labour camps have unique vibrancy and warmth conveyed through continuous interactions and exchanges of information, greetings and occasional insults. Women who spend most of their day in the camp appraise each other of everything through networks of voices and children. The little of domestic cleaning and organizing there maybe is done amid a never ceasing inquiry into the state of the neighbour. Whatever can not be shouted across the verandahs is filled in by occasional dashes across the cloth-lines and rushes of children in and out of houses. The men, on a day off, sit under trees or outside the only grocery in the camp playing cards or

ajua- a game of smooth pebbles and boards (also known as *bao*). They play in turns, the winner staying on while losers queue up to wait for another turn. The playing atmosphere is full of banter punctuated by occasional shouts and high fives although at times it can be made competitive over money. Sometimes they turn the game into a gambling session with the non-players betting on those who are playing. Most of the gambling though is conducted during a game of cards- an improvised form of poker. Though playing provides a leisure avenue, it also serves another purpose. It gets the men out of the houses, gives them an opportunity to share information regarding work and share frustrations. It is an opportune place to meet new arrivals in the camp. 'Under the tree' as the play place is popularly known, is a fixed bench made of a wooden plank beside which two huge stones have been arranged. While players sit astride the bench facing each other, the board between them, two observers sit on the stones to act as arbitrators.

The women's day is rather predictable. They wake up in the morning and make a show of doing their gardens on which they grow vegetables. The size of the gardens does not need weeding everyday. However the idea of waking up and doing something out of the house gives them a sense of being productive and for many of them maintaining a semblance of the routine they grew up with in the villages they come from. In a way, it offers them the possibility of being 'real women' running their homes as opposed to being idle wives of plantation labourers.

It is something to do. It is hard staying in the house when the man has left to work. You feel useless... that is not what a mature woman should do. At least it is something I can call mine. (Mary Atieno, Manyani. 23rd May, 2009).

Traditionally for many of the women at the camp, home-making is their domain. This involves house cleaning, beautification and sweeping the compound; and growing food crops with which they can feed their families. This is not possible in the camp.

Here there is no house to beautify; they are tin boxes which have nothing. You cannot sweep the yard; the houses are so close by (Mary Atieno).

Mary reveals that the nature and structure of the labour camp dictates their daily routines and ultimately their lifestyles. The women are confined to the camp in and around their houses. The few who attempt to get out and work or conduct some business in town are constrained because of the stigma associated with the labour camp residency: they are seen as sex workers and/or thieves.

‘The moment you mention that you stay in the labour camp, people change... they kind of fear you,’ Mary tells me. I used to go into town and wash people’s clothes. Then one day the wife accuses me of sleeping with her husband and first born son. If only she knew how much I had resisted them she should be thanking me.

There is commonly stigmatized attitude towards the women of the labour camps as morally compromised and sexually promiscuous. There is a sexualized image of the life in the labour camp further fuelled by the alleged high incidence of sexually transmitted infections among the labourers. The sexualized image is historically traceable to the initial make-up of the labour camps; they were full of single men who at every two weeks had money to spend. Many of them spent the money on acquiring women from the bars and brothels that had sprung up. The pay days got defined by drunken sexual orgies among them. When the conditions improved and the labourers could bring along their wives/permanent partners, the reputation

had taken root hence any woman seen in the camps was assumed to be a hooker picked from somewhere. Though few people acknowledge the money flowing from the camps, it is their identity as repositories of transactional sex opportunities that persist. This is what hinders attempts for people like Mary to engage in alternative livelihood work outside the labour camp.

A local shopkeeper confirmed this sexualized image of the labour camp residents: '*Ni wakora, hao watu*- they are crooks, those people. You sell something to the wife, and then the husband attacks you on the road claiming you are taking his wife. And all you did was to help'. The fights and attacks over women are common place within and outside the camp. The grocer in Manyani labour confirmed to me that almost every month there is a fight over women.

'Here every man is afraid of losing his woman. There is fear.'

Why?

'That is how life has taught them here. Look around you... if a woman has three children, most likely, they have different fathers. They have to eat. As a labourer you can not assure your family of food every day. I can not blame the women.

The women are forced to look for ways and means of survival for their families; yet when they attempt to do it right their reputation as camp women precedes them and locks any door of opportunity. Whereas they have devised ways of dealing with the camp as their place of residence, the camp as a tag, as an identity is more complicated to deal with. Its reputation follows and often precedes them outside and defines them more than their actions can. The case of Ruben Okumu's daughter, a seventeen year-old struggling with school in the local day school illustrates this:

The camp follows you everywhere. The teachers at school treat me differently.

Always teasing you... making these funny remarks about your looks and the

boys... they are something else. I can not go to the shop without the shopkeeper making a pass; asking what else I need: just ask you, I can make your life easier... *maisha ni ngumu unajua*- life is tough you know'. (Joyce, Opoya, April, 23rd. 2010).

Plantation residences have and reflect wider hierarchies (Otto, 1980). Joyce's sentiments underline the connection between the material conditions and symbolic significations of the labour camp and the everyday life and futures of the residents. Loic Wacquant (2008) has detailed such dialectical processes arguing that the concentration of dispossessed and deprived categories in defamed and stigmatized areas leads to idiomatic identity formation and loading which ultimately stick on the residents and comes to define them in the eyes of the outsiders. Such stigmatization serves two concurrent ends. First, it ensures that the residents are exoticized as strange and wild hence whatever conditions they are living in are a consequence of their own making. Secondly, it perpetually constructs a boundary around them which closes them in thus not only reducing competition for any resources but underlines the continuity of dispossession. For instance when the local council was planning to construct a sewage system, the residences of labourers were not considered. Upon inquiry, the local council planner expressed disbelief:

...The labour camps? Well... I do not know whether those guys will accept... they will steal all the pipes. Within no time the toilets would be blocked... *bao watu ni ngumu*- those people are difficult. (May, 18th 2010, Awendo).

The incredulity of the idea of the labourers being part of community is obvious in the planner's response. For him the labour camps are out there and the residents are invisible. He doubts their inclination and ability to use a sewage system which will make their sanitation better and reduce the amount of human waste thrown into their vegetable gardens. Realizing

the obvious bias in his answer, he quickly casts aspersions on their character by asserting that they would most likely steal the pipes; and clog the toilets because they are ‘difficult people’. O’Malley (1981) established that honour and reputation are dialectically connected to modes and relations of production. Within the realm of capitalist development and dispossession, practices and places reflect the shifts in repute and honour in tandem with the trajectories of deprivation, appropriation and accumulation.

The infamy of a place accompanies the emergence of surplus identities- ranging and multiple contradictory subject positions- that operate alongside but outside the development framework (Kayatekin and Ruccio, 1998) thus becoming a tool of providing or withholding services, the very purpose of development. The more people and their ‘places’ are dispossessed, the more disreputable and dishonourable they become, especially discursively. Loss of control and utility over their labour relocates migrant labourers into infamy effectively ensuring that they can not articulate any political claim in the region. The connection of modes of production and accumulation to reputation and honour of place embodies the chaos of development imprinted through the spatial subjectivity of dispossession, as shown by Wacquant (2008; 2009).

Manyani labour camp started as a temporary residence for migrant casual labourers from distant areas during the heavy labour demand between 1979 and 1981. The labourers themselves started the camp – it is said that some three young men from Nyamaiya in Kisii came to weed cane and it rained. They had nowhere to sleep so they cut some grass, some posts and built a temporary shelter from the rains. They lit a fire and borrowing some maize cobs from the passing women, made their first meal. The next day, because they could not sleep comfortably, they were the first ones on site and by the time the other labourers arrived, they had already completed weeding their rows. They realized that if they stayed around without having to go home, they could do more work and make more money. Residing within

the plantation obviously saved on time and cost making the labourers more productive but cheaper. Realizing the utility of the resident labourers, the company took it upon itself to build more and 'better' cabins in a more organized manner. They designed standard cabins measuring eight by eight feet made of iron-sheet roofs and walls. By 1985, there were seven labour camps each with a population ranging between 350 and 600 people. Of the people who live in the camps, about 50% are adult males; 20% adult women and the rest children.

Though starting off as a random adaptive response by the labourers, the company noted and deftly adopted the convenience and utility of the temporary residences and sought to impose a spatial order further underlining the centrality of territorial discipline in the whole development project (Weber, 2004). This reveals the way capitalist development interventions discursively and practically relate to and utilize disorder- they presume its existence, generate or perpetuate it. But more critical, is how it utilizes it to enhance its modes of rule within a particular spatial and temporal context. On the surface, the establishment of the labour camps makes simple operational sense- natural need for shelter addressed in a cheaply and conveniently under the prevailing circumstances.

However, the camps reveal the socio-economic dynamics of the process of chaotic dispossession and a processual establishment of its lived governmentality. It reveals how existing cultural practices were conveniently co-opted into the apparatus of the plantation economy's depravity. In particular, the cultural construction of bachelorhood among the Luo and Gusii communities provided a handy frame for explaining and making sense of the setting up the labour camps. In the two communities, traditionally unmarried men lived away from the homestead often in the open grazing lands in temporary and poorly constructed huts (*simba* for Luo and *gesarate* for Gusii) from where they looked after the community herds and learned the various crafts of surviving adult lives. In these traditional all-male residences, all they had were

the very basic implements for survival because the residences were 'liminal' space between childhood and manhood, home and away.

Figure 6: Row of houses at the labour camp



Juxtaposed with the construction of labourers as 'bulls' by the supervisors discussed earlier, the labour camp provides spatial liminality to explain the individual dislocation from the village to the factory on one hand and the transformation of rural young men into labourers. But structurally, it also shows how development while promoted as improvement, is instead dispossessive: capturing and appropriating local practices and social structures by and into new forms of rule (Joseph, 2010). The liminal quality provided a necessary ambiguity for the convergence of different forces of production and logics that formed the chaotic emergence of the plantation economy in Sony. The raw labour from the villages, the local

hostility against migrant labourers and the exploitative labour-maximizing techniques of the company found an ambiguous zone; spatially inside the plantation and officially outside the scheme of responsibility of the company. The factory encouraged those from other distant communities desperate enough to take up residence in the camps, at least for the duration of work. The resemblance of the labour camps to the traditional '*simba* and *gesarate*' was able to connect the infamy associated with migrant labourers to the notion that migrant labourers were as single, rampantly virile young males of ill-repute.

The convergence of socio-cultural and economic relations and practices of dislocated labourers at places of temporary residence is a recurrent characteristic of capitalist development projects which require massive unskilled labourers such as plantation agriculture and mining. The disciplinary apparatus applied on labour concurrently imposes itself on the social and cultural landscape to create and maintain an environment of chaos and 'capture' (Escobar, 2008) within which a polyseny of places and culture is harnessed for capital accumulation (Shiva, 1993). Ferguson (1999) discusses these converging dislocations in the Zambian copperbelt seeing them within the context of the heterogeneity of modernity while Burawoy (1972) reads them within the realms of class formation and nationalism. In both cases, the labour camp remains a site of chaos and 'capture' materially and symbolically, where the dislocated rural workers can be expediently visible or invisible. Wolf (1992) demonstrates a similar process in her examination of factory workers in rural Java and to an extent as does Aihwa Ong (1987) while illuminating the possible 'spirits of resisting the capitalist discipline' constituting the capture. What these studies illustrate is the multiple and overlapping chaos that defines modernity projects such as the Sony sugar agromanufacturing development.

5.3 DISPOSSESSION AS PRODUCTION: THE FACTORY COMPLEX AND ITS CHAOS

Sugar is characteristically a ruthlessly predatory crop which captures and dominates the natural and social landscapes of the host communities and the factory complex becomes the epicentre of the ruthlessness, standing against the often dilapidated residences of labourers (Scheper-Hughes, 1993). The factory complex composed of the 'hacienda' or plantation lord's residence, the actual machinery and administrative offices actualizes the way capitalist production appropriates spatial relations symbolically to produce material relations and 'things' (Burawoy, 1979). The structure of the factory complex reflects the totality of the development imaginary in miniature by showing the kind of relations that make it work, the hierarchies that define it and the processes of manufacture and closure that make up its dispossession goal a reality as Scheper-Hughes (1993) and Milkman (1997) demonstrate differently.

In the scheme of power relations, the factory plays another critical part; it stands as symbol of the dominance of the development project both in the region and within the plantation. The factory provides a panoptic effect on the everyday lives in the region thus dictating the pace and patterns of action- subjecting everybody and everything to its gaze. In this section, I seek to illustrate this point by illuminating the spatial organization of the factory complex, its relations and implications to the lives of labourers and the plantation community as a whole. As Scheper-Hughes amply asserts, the factory complex connects the sugar fields, the master and servant quarters as well as the boiler rooms and the trucks transporting the sugar to the market.

The connection has relational implications- it links the different components and processes of the economy and the governing underlying chaotic dynamics of bureaucratic structuring within (and as) development interventions, further illustrated by the overall arrangement of the different offices, houses and facilities in the complex. The Sony factory

complex comprises of the factory (the sugar processing plant), the company management and administration offices; the management residences and a high class guest house where presidents and other high government dignitaries have on occasion dined. It also has a high cost privately run school, a fuel station, hospital and a police station. The complex further hosts a stadium, a well manicured garden with several commemorative trees planted by the different politicians and senior administrators who have graced the factory. On the eastern side, are the residences of the permanent but low calibre workers neighbouring a cluster of squatter houses and a store for the national cereals corporation. Between the processing plant, the middle level workers' residence, and the squatters' cabins are the police station and a scattering of mini-shops and vegetable vendor posts. The administration block, the factory, the guest house and the residence of senior managers are highly guarded with five gates to be negotiated between them. Unauthorised entry and photography are prohibited ostensibly for security and safety reasons.

At the main factory gate a huge crusher stands, symbolically broadcasting the nature of the business going on: a huge billboard proclaims 'Sony Sugar Company. The Home of Sony Sugar, Simply the Sweetest'. From a distance the pillowing smoke filling the air announces the factory's stale breath (see picture above). The dark dumpsite behind the factory fence reveals the outcome of its continuous grinding which the company allegedly generates biogas fuel (the company however relies on electricity and wood fuel for its operations). A tarmac road leads to the gate of the factory, where several trucks at various stages of arrival and departure fight for space. Tired truck and tractor drivers at varying stages of hunger and exhaustion yawn and try to doze off the hours waiting for their turn at the weighing bridge. Sugar transporting trucks are also waiting, the drivers looking healthier, better dressed and tired from a different stress. Most of them sleep in the town overnight and are famed for excessive partying (alcohol and

sex). As they wait for their trucks to be loaded by the casually hired loaders, they doze away the afternoon heat in the comfortable back seats of the trucks.

The differences between the two sets of transport crews reveal some of the ironies of the sugar industry in relation to the development objectives set out for its establishment. The long-distance sugar transporters from big cities across the country who come to collect sugar for sale are distinctively better off compared to the local cane transporting crews. They hardly talk to each other and one senses some antipathy between them. The former also receive generous daily allowances for the time they spend waiting for their truck to be loaded with sugar while the latter sometimes have to wait for the respective contractors to be paid, often months later. Should the truck drivers desire, they can stay at the company guest house whereas the tractor drivers are not allowed entry unless when hired for manual tasks during special occasions. In effect, the factory treats outsiders better than it does its labourers. This bias is traceable to the various development plans and policy documents relating to the sugar industry emphasizing marketing and sales over production and welfare (see Republic of Kenya, 1965; 1984); revealing a sales driven (capitalist) logic which put premium on salesmen over labourers. In effect, this is the larger contradiction of agromanufacturing development.

The various entrances and blocks in the complex are architecturally and functionally distinct as are the various activities and people going on in and out of them. From the processing entrance, the next gate leads into the administration block. Here most of the people going in are driven in nice saloon cars. The pedestrian gate has fewer users compared to the main one through which cars enter the compound. For the number of days I hung around the administration block, I never saw any plantation labourers going into the compound. I asked one why they never entered there:

I have no business there. *Hapo ni kwa wakubwa*- that place is for the big shots. You can not be let in *hivi hivi*- just like that. *Lazima huwe na* appointment- you must have an appointment.

But, I just walked in and I had no appointment, I pointed out.

Sawa, lakini jiangalie balafu butuungalie- Fine, but look at yourself and then look at us. *Wewe bata wanaweza fikiria unaenda kuona mkubwa ama unataka* tender- you they (security guards) could easily assume you are going to see the director or even going to procure a tender. Not us. *Hapo ni pahali ya wakubwa* that is a place for the big people... he repeated. (Joash Mjuma. Sony, 20th July 2009).

Joash's response is not isolated. Among the labourers I interviewed four out of ten have never been to the factory and over ninety percent have never had to visit the administration offices. This is attributed to two reasons: they hardly have anything to do there and there are too many restrictions against entering the compound. The guards at the gate demand to know who and why one is visiting in any particular office. Many of the labourers find these procedures discomfoting and scary. 'You feel like a suspect...and uncomfortable just walking there... besides they never listen to us', Joash told me.

The discomfort Joash and the others feel with regard to the administration is born of the relationship that has developed over the years: the administration has distanced itself from the labourers instead opting to deal with contractors. The distancing links and perpetuates the labourers' infamy enforced by the rigid mechanical boundaries of the factory as it processes the raw into final products and waste (materially and symbolically). The social differentiating is imprinted and lived as part of the relations that develop within the factory and become progressively ingrained as definitive of people's lives. This differentiation has been effected through a number of incidents, especially those which provide opportunity for the factory to act out its power. For instance, at one time the labourers organized a protest which turned

chaotic. The company administration called in the police who beat them up during the ensuing riots. Since then the relationship between the factory administrators and labourers has remained suspicious and acrimonious and mutual avoidance is the unwritten rule.

Figure 7: The Sony factory complex from a distance



In the administration block reside the general and executive management departments, finance and accounting and human resources. Ideally the human resource department should be the contact office for labourers but, as it clarifies, its mission is to attract, develop and maintain adequate, qualified and competent staffs through maximizing return on investments and thereby, reducing the financial risk arousal to the organization⁸⁷. Given their temporality

⁸⁷ Human Resource Department page on the Sony sugar Company website; www.sonysugar.co.ke (20th July, 2011).

and unskilled qualifications, it seems that the labourers do not fit into the human resource management scheme of the company. Furthermore they are recruited daily through contractors, under the department of agriculture which coordinates services related to ensuring that cane is grown, harvested and transported to the factory mills. Thus the human resources administration block is inaccessible to migrant labourers.

To ensure the comfort of its management and support staff, the company has a comprehensive medical services facility, a state of the art gymnasium and the Sony complex primary and nursery schools which high standard facilities. These facilities in essence are meant

Figure 8: Lawn gardens around staff residences



to ‘manufacture’ an island of comfort, luxury and modernity amid the squalor and deprivation in the region. The medical services and the gymnasium ensure the employees’ lives are cared for from disease and lifestyle-related complications while the school ensures that their children’s education and futures are neither compromised nor contaminated by the local conditions and standards of education. To guarantee the stability of the modernity island, the factory has a contingent of several security guards to provide security for the company assets. The island of luxury is further protected from any bad repute by the company’s corporate affairs and communications department which ensures that a positive perception of the company as a caring organization both internally and externally is maintained. According to communication from the department, the company contributes to the enhancement of better living conditions in the community through building of roads, providing health care services, promoting education and environmental conservation and disaster response. The company medical centre is situated within the factory premises to provide efficient and high quality health care system that is accessible, equitable and affordable to the employees and their dependents’. It also extends part of its services to the surrounding community.

Outside the factory gate, the road branches out with one arm proceeding on towards the other less noisy and greener part section of the complex. On a good day, kids can be seen cycling their branded bicycles followed by underage nannies who would otherwise be in school, or voluptuous radiant mothers enjoying a day with their kids. These are the senior management residence bungalows. Each of the brick and tile houses has its own entrance, parking lot, a spacious compound and a garden. Inside the compounds, an array of decorative plants are watered regularly. Company security guards patrol the compound. On the far end is the company guest house which also serves as the residence’s restaurant.

Inside the guest house, there is a huge cable television where patrons can watch sports and soap operas. Outside the balcony of the guest house, a large open beautifully landscaped

and manicured lawn spreads out. On the lawn are several commemorative trees and shrubs planted by various dignitaries who have graced the company including a president, first lady and prime minister among others. In a way it shows the projected imaginary of the company as a development project in the region. Interestingly, these were among the first structures to be built when the company was launching and helped whet the appetite for the project among the local community members. It also stands as a monumental indictment of the distance between the project as it was marketed and the project as it has become when juxtaposed with the labour camp or the surrounding villages. The price of a cup of tea at the guest house can pay a labourer weeding cane a day's wage. In effect, Joash' words are recalled in deeds: this is a big people's place.

5.4 THE LIMINAL SPACE: REGULAR WORKERS' RESIDENCES

The permanent staff that are not in the management and administration- mostly technicians, farm supervisors and a motley of support staff in the offices- stay within the complex but relatively distant from the executive bungalows of the managers. Their houses differ from those in the labour camps because of the material – they are concrete built; and are more spaciouly composed of two to three adjoining rooms. They have been built in rows of numbered blocks consisting four house units, assigned one per family. They have reliable water supply and electricity. Initial plans for the houses did not envision them for the accommodation of families, hence they are quite small. The housing stands as a middle place between the factory and administration quarters and the labour camps.

I find the location of the permanent workers' residence significant and illuminating of the way spatial relations narrate the relationships in the Sony. The residence provides a visibility and symbolism that captures and represents a transitional space between the solidity and permanence of the factory complex and the temporality of the labour camps. In these

residences both the frustrations and promises of development are lived and spatially manifested- some houses are equipped with the latest gadgets such satellite dishes for bootlegged satellite TV stations from Tanzania; huge fridges which are often empty and stereo systems; exuding a sense of upward mobility. These used to be the coveted residences for many of the workers because it pointed to the start of a career path: once you were employed and assigned a house it meant you were fully employed and living the development dream. Yet, over the years, many workers also dropped out and the security and promise it represented became compromised as the company downsizes its workforce now and then. Others have retired without any credible pension or saving given the low wages they earn. The possibility of upward mobility in the ranks of the company for many of the residents is extremely slim because as the company modernizes many of them become redundant. The residence in a way has become the site of redundancy and ambiguous uncertainty for its residents.

Figure 9: Houses for permanent non-managerial employees of the company



Within the permanent staff residence are a police station, a dumpsite and a church. The church stands a short distance to the police station. The dumpsite, with a mountain of waste from the crushed cane is hidden on the other side next to undulating riverbank. I did not manage to get a logical explanation regarding the location of the three: a police station, a church and dumpsite in this manner. Roy, my key informant during the study, once made a joke that given the business the company had in store for the locals and migrant labourers, it needed an elaborate dumping structure: the police for dumping those it did not like and would present threats; the church for those it was guilty about and the dumpsite for those it had completely wasted. Notwithstanding his obsession with disposability, the joke made more serious sense than it appeared to.

The factory complex is a multifaceted site with a variety of social relations and differentiated power fields. At the very core stands the factory- the engine built to manufacture sugar and sugar commercial farming for the development of the region. The factory dominates the political economy and social life of the community as a panopticon, a visible testimony of its developmental mobility and symbol of modernization. In the lives of the labourers and their everyday experiences, the factory complex captures a different imaginary and reality. First, it makes concrete the structures of rule by projecting an enforced differentiation characteristic of agromanufacturing development projects especially with regard to labour (human resources) and the local community (farmers). The differences in material and symbolic investments made towards the aesthetic quality and security of the central factory complex and the management sections compared to the labour camps shows the inherent social and material differences.

Delle (1999) using archaeological data shows that production relations in coffee plantations in Jamaica were embedded in the landscapes. The way space is utilized within the plantation is intimately linked and constitutive of the social formations. More significantly, the physical and architectural landscape shapes the social landscape by providing the visual

boundaries for different groups and the roles they can play. In other words if development is presumptively chaotic generating different forms of belonging and access to resources; it imprints this unto its spatial locations. The organization of the plantation landscape is particularly significant in the control of labour though sometimes for entirely different objectives. In the cotton and sugar plantation in the American South, the spatial arrangements of the plantations were part of the disciplinary and managerial practice employing the panoptic gaze to saturate the whole plantation with the circulating presence of the plantation owner (master) to prevent slaves from deserting; deliberately designed to intervene 'in almost every aspect of their lives' to ensure they remained in the plantation (Epperson, 1990).

In the Sony, despite the similarity of the spatial arrangement to the American case examined by Epperson, the logic is the opposite: the factory landscape is arranged so as to keep the labourers out- to ensure that they are kept off the factory premises and can also be occasionally allowed in expediently. This divergence in meaning and use of the spatial arrangement seems to be linked to the historical background of the respective plantations: American slavery and British colonialism and their respective subjective positions accorded to the labourers. Under slavery, the labourer slaves were constructed as part of the plantation. Under colonialism, the African labourers were presumably free-agents selling their labour for a wage. It is the latter logic that explains the need to keep them out of the factory rather than in. Also, the subjective positioning of the two reveals the depths of dispossession inherent in either labourer as they transit between dominated exploitation and developmental subjectivity. The slave seems to have been dispossessed of both labour and agency to a level of finality while the Sony labourers are kept in a state of continual and periodic dispossession, retaining a survival degree of agency. This degree of agency explains the continuity of social differentiation in which racial segregation is replaced by social economic and employment

status in constructing spatial identities and belonging as wealthy locals join expatriate managers and foreign capitalists to appropriate land and labour for accumulation (Bradshaw, 1990).

The operations of the factory also serve to highlight the end of informal relations that predate the factory's establishment- kinship, social reciprocity and land ownership- by imposing itself as a new production regime which processes raw resources into products in an efficient and impersonal manner. Development is revealed as mechanistic industrial efficiency, stratified and restricted access to opportunity and benefits in a more disciplined modern manner. Thus dispossession is deftly transformed into manufacturing of order and increasing efficiency as well as keeping off undesirable elements which linger around the development process. The fences and gates underline the different spatial and actual divisions among the workers while concurrently connecting the whole region- geographically, socially and discursively- to the bureaucratic machinery that runs the factory as capitalist investment. Alexander (2002) studying sugar factory bureaucracies in Turkey posits that the factory connects the existing social relations, interests (state and corporate) and places with stake in the sugar industry. Unlike Alexander's case in which the bureaucracy of sugar production incorporates and builds on kinship and reciprocity, the Sony factory utilizes its spatial bureaucratization to emphasize the erasure of labourers and local farmers and the social ties they may represent.

In particular, it may seem that the rigid formality is part of the distancing to ensure that the process of rule instituted by the factory is maintained. In effect this is the function of the entire factory in the region: to show development as a bounded state machine which dispossesses and appropriates its benefits unequally but in an orderly manner, has boundaries to keep others out and others in while appearing to be open to all who can pay the price. This as, Neil Smith has eloquently put it, reveals the logic of development which derives from contradictory tendencies inherent in capitalism which pursue differentiation and equalization

simultaneously in the built environment (Smith, 1990) and by so doing buttresses its chaotic dominance. What I found at Sony is that the factory produces chaos through which it plays and occupies multiple and complimentary roles and positions. It is a structural symbol of development in itself; but it is also the panoptic of the whole region. The trail of smoke from the factory chimney, the ringing gong, stinking dumpsite, the storeyed buildings, the stadium and other features of the factory complex, command attention and literally order the life and imaginations of the people in the region and Awendo town specifically. In the next section I show how the dominance of the factory and its chaos are relational and networked into the villages around the plantation through the labourers and cane transporting tractors. It generates forms of relating that ensure that actions and lives in distant villages are controlled by its routines in a network of surveillance power relays.

5.5 DISPOSSESSED AND DEPOPULATED: THE DESERTED VILLAGES

A lonely dog welcomed us with a tired bark which died off abruptly as it had begun. Ken Akama, the labourer who had offered to take me to his home village, smiled and told me not to worry. 'The dog does not bite. It just makes noise ... I guess it makes it feel useful... to ensure it get its crumbs flowing from Mama Teresa's table.' Mama Teresa came out of the house and shoed away the dog. She squinted our way and smiled broadly at Ken. 'Amosou- You are fine?' 'Ber Nyathiwa- Fine one of my blood'. The home is not what I expect of a Luo village. There are three houses, two iron-roofed and one grass thatched. A typical Luo home has several huts belonging to the parents, the sons and animals. For a lady of Mama Teresa's age, I expect to see several houses belonging to the sons. She has four sons, she tells me. They have all left home. She does not want to talk about it. But now and again she quips: 'it is the curse of Sony; first she takes your men then your children. Then you wake up one day, and [snaps fingers] everything is taken.' At her age, she expects to be surrounded by daughters-in-law and grandchildren, a compound full of houses and cows and food granaries. Except for one

widowed daughter-in-law and her four children, there are only two cows in her compound. With nostalgic melancholy, she says:

‘There are no bulls. Nobody to look after them. Bulls need boys to make them plough. In the whole village only two homes have ploughing bulls,’ (Mama Teresa Akinyi, October 23rd 2010).

The parallelism between the absence of ploughing bulls and young men in the village is astounding. The imagery recalls the construction of young migrant labourers as bulls by the supervisors. Apparently Sony is not only luring away the men but also reducing the number of bulls which plough the land for food growing. The sons, the lady says, have left. She does not want to talk about it further; it is not her favourite topic:

It is the Sony curse. First it takes away the men, then the children and then everything.’ She keeps quiet. Then, ‘when I grow potatoes, I know the children will not sleep hungry, When I sow millet, I know I will have flour for porridge. But with this...’[pointing to the sugar plantation]. ‘For this I have to sell my little maize to get a kilo of it. To taste what I grow’.

The perturbing contradictions of Sony as a development initiative that promised a better life but has turned into a dispossession machine are aptly captured in Teresa’s statement. The disconnection between effort and outcome; family investment and effect are obvious to her. She contrasts the differences between the traditional farming logic (more subsistence oriented) and the agromanufacturing farming of cash crops. What stands out from her words is the way in which both the company and village farming logics put the individual (life) at the centre. However their orientations and objectives are clearly different. For the village farming, one works and grows that which provides sustenance and directly linked to life in the village. The Sony sugar plantation logic on the other hand does not factor the village’s sustenance but for maximum extraction from the villages’ lands and labour for the company’s profits.

The new logic not only dispossesses the village farmers of the resources but also makes them use the little they have left (meant for food) in order to ‘taste what they grow’. Recalling Jack and Roy’s words earlier, the village logic ensures one eats his sweat, but the factory logic makes one pay to taste his sweat. Clearly, unlike the food crops, the sugarcane is not meant for them as farmers but as customers. It is this insidious transformation of the producer into a distanced and inconsequential buyer of her own produce that Mama Teresa finds incongruent with her relation with work.

Figure 10: Typical village homestead surrounded by sugarcane plantations Mariwa.



The initial mapping of the Sony nucleus territory was not fully explained to the villages in the outskirts. To the villagers, the boundary was seen as a way of keeping them out of the development project. Many elders felt that they were being sidelined and left out hence made frantic efforts to ensure the boundary expanded to include them. According to Teresa and

other older women I interacted with, many local women were against the selling of their lands. They had gathered information from Sare/Awendo (during their weekly markets visits) about the habits men developed after getting the money. They had also been told that the sugarcane plantations required more labour. Knowing how lazy their men were, they suspected that the work will be left on them. Their opposition to the sugar project was thus motivated more by the fear of increased work loads than knowledge about its potential consequences to their food crop production situation. Many households experienced a lot of domestic conflicts as the women were strongly opposed to the sale or long term leasing of family farms. Teresa told me of homes which broke up as some men beat and chased away their wives whom they accused of being unwise and against development.

Men can be clever sometimes, my son; Teresa began. My husband and other men were disappointed when the map showed that we were outside the nucleus farm. At first they tried to get the company to change the boundaries ... you know expand them so that our village will also be under Sony. 'We do not want to miss on the development' my husband would say. They formed delegations to the DC, the MP and who else I cannot remember. They were told: contract the company. Sony comes and contracts all of us. We ask: how do you contract someone your land. It is like giving somebody your cow but he lets you keep it, feed it and the only time he takes it over to his place is when it calves. We also have children who need milk. But the men were adamant. We kept quiet (*Mama Teresa, Marina*).

This portrayal of women as anti-development and subsequently riding roughshod over their concerns is common with the development of capitalism and enterprise in many communities. Mulholland (2003) found that men often take credit for initiation of capitalist development projects, their success and use this to justify patriarchal domination of family

decision making and control of family property and production resources. The fascinating thing however in Monica's narrative is the way rural patriarchy was utilized to establish the dispossession of lands and labour and direct them towards the needs of the sugar industry. The state apparatus represented by the local chief was complicit in this silencing of women opposition against the wholesale hand-over of land. The local chief (now retired) recalls many domestic conflict cases he had to handle at the time. According to him the men were right:

We had to fight for our village also. Women could not understand. I had many cases here, women complaining ... but we had to move as a community. We had to support development. (Retired Chief Omollo, Mariwa, 20th Feb. 2009).

The boundaries of the nucleus plantation were not reversed as the men had wished, so the women had temporary reprieve. The company however, in collaboration with a prominent civil servant that time, agreed to enter into leasing contracts under a hurriedly formed outgrowers' association. In this case, the villagers would lease their farms to the company for a specific period, grow cane on it and get paid upon harvest. Many of the farmers were given huge deposits for the leases. As Teresa put it, the company hired the cow, but left them looking after it and promised to return for the milk. It was after the first harvest, two years later that they all realized the big shock: the money they had received as deposit consisted of over 50% of the total value. Interests, farm input costs, some unspecified penalties and occasional advances the husband had secretly taken reduced the eventual net payments to negative figures leaving the family with a debt to be paid from the succeeding harvest. As it stood, the family now owed the company money for growing its cane. The outgrowers' supervisor advised them that the solution was to have a long term contract with the company so that the accumulated debt could be spread over a longer period.

The men became bitter; they thought that the initial cut out of the boundaries was the cause of their difficulties. The children could not go to school and many of the young men and women went to work at Sony. According to Noah Opir, in Ranen village:

‘The sugarcane won’t let our children go to school. They learnt from the earliest that their fathers are not likely to afford school fees; and they can make easy money from Sony’.

The men in the village were confronted with two options, either stick in the village and grow the cane for the company or relocate to the labour camps to become casual labourers. Some of the older men took up both roles; they were cane growers who did cane cutting as they waited for the cane to mature and possibly redeem themselves from the contracts with the company.

There developed an intense sense of abandonment in the village which was by now feeling effects of the Sony project in a unique way. It was being abandoned by the men and young women. The sense of abandonment is more prevalent among the older women who have had to shoulder the consequences- increased responsibilities of keeping homes, raising children and ensuring that the family kept its contract with Sony. In particular, the effects of the Sony project on the village families came in two ways: leasing out family lands which in many homes generated many incidents of domestic violence due to the disputes arising selling and leasing out farms. The money paid to the men for those farms changed them drastically in habits and lifestyles. Secondly, there was an exodus of men and younger women from the village who, after the initial money had drained out, were forced to move to the labour camps or town centre leaving women to fend for families on their own.

The compound effect of the violence and exodus was the reduced capacity of the village to support itself in food production. The leasing out of family land and exodus of the men combined to compromise the villages’ ploughing of land and subsequent crop production. The activities of the women were also constrained especially those who had been active in

barter-trade and other forms of exchange predominant in the villages. Whereas before the women had various foodstuffs to sell and exchange, the array of products was reduced because the land had shrunk; and their daily and weekly routines and work schedules had overloaded and exhausting. The regime of the sugar industry inserted itself into the family and gender routines of the village effectively transforming them into uncertain survival modes rife with chaos.

The proximity of the village to the labour camps nurtured a reciprocal relationship with the village which began from simple exchange food and labour. Initially the labourers could visit their families in the village, occasionally taking the money they had saved. Often than not, they went for food supplies and conjugal visits: Teresa called it, the ‘monthly dip in the pot.’ Also, when the cane matured, the home boys could be joined by other labourers to cut it. Due to the social pride, most of the local boys never turned up to cut cane in their own villages. According to the retired chief, they were proud and did not want their people to know that all they did at Sony was cut and carry cane. So every time cane was being harvested many strange men arrived in the village spending days on end and getting acquainted with the local people. Many of the local women sold porridge, bananas and boiled maize (nyoyo⁸⁸) to them. Some of these young men identified local chang’aa dens where they could get cheap liquor. They returned over the weekends and whenever they were off-duty for the drinking.

Within the next ten years a strong link got established between the villagers and the foreign labourers’ resident in the labour camps. In the early 1990s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic took a toll on the men who had joined Sony in the 1980s. Many of them died. Overnight, there was an increase in the number of widows and orphans in the village. The intriguing observation about the effect of HIV and AIDS in the village was that it was unconventionally gender skewed in favour of women. More men succumbed to HIV and AIDS than women.

⁸⁸ Nyoyo- is in *Dholuo* for a mixture of maize and beans boiled and fried.

Discussion with local health practitioners could not reveal much to account the discrepancy. Discussion with the older women over the possible explanations generated two threads: the immorality and rampant sex thread on one hand, and the nutrition and harsh working conditions in the labour camps.

Most of the village women believed that in Sony, there were many single women most of whom had broken homes and were readily available for the men who were also living in the labour camps on their own. According to the village women, the men and the women in Sony labour camps and town were engaged in endless drinking and sexual orgies which had no bounds hence the rapid transmission of all manner of infections. This alleged rampant promiscuity was also tied intricately with the breakage of families both in the villages and labour camps. According to the women, labourers' departure from homes left their families struggling to survive in terms of nutrition, income and social cohesion. Children grew without or with fathers they rarely saw. When they came of age, they followed their fathers to the labour camps where they mingled with different lifestyles. The combination of broken families and increased sexual liberalism according to the women led to increased sexual relations most of which were risky thus leading to more infections. Yet, such conventional logic then could demand that a high number of the women also be infected since the men made regular conjugal visits to the village as well as the labourers who cut cane around the village and occasionally having affairs with the women. The answer to this dilemma according to the woman lies in antagonistic relation the plantation has had with women which excludes them from most of its dividends including diseases.

Sugar plantations seem to have problematic gendered relations with host communities especially those it displaces and dispossesses for its establishment. Scheper-Hughes (1993) narrates the devastating antagonisms between the sugar plantations and women which they described as 'sterility curse'. The barrenness of the land due to the geological dominance of

sugarcane is linked with the incidences of infertility and infant mortality. They then link the deprivation and abandonment of families by men with a litany of gender roles- the 'jealous step mother' and the 'other woman' – to show that the factory and all that it represents brought competition and deprivation to the village and rooted them on the family fabric. The obvious antagonism of village women against the factory has been buttressed with their continued exclusion from the employment opportunities in the factory as well as other options of accessing the benefits of the plantation, a fact confirmed by total absence of village women in the company employment or contracts of any sort.

Beyond the social impact, the physical chaotic effect of the plantation and factory on the village landscape is also self-narrating. Expanses of sugarcane plantation and muddy roads for the cane transporting tractors visually show the direction and callousness of the extraction process as well as the dominant control of the village lives and routines. The village as a physical space becomes indistinguishable from the lives of villagers, especially women, both narrating and living the sense of loss and abandonment.

5.6 CONCLUSION: SPATIAL CHAOS OF DISPOSSESSION AND SUBJECTIVITY

The development of the region, when examined as an amalgam of sites, can be appreciated as a process of placemaking in which a range of expansive and intimate transformations are imposed, adopted and lived out. In particular, it demonstrates how as a process of rule, development shapes the physical, social interactions and the lifestyles of rural regions in Kenya integrating elements of traditional practices and expediently appropriating them to create a geography of spatial chaos. My objective in this chapter has been to show the way the spatial chaos from the overlapping dispossessions of development has imprinted itself unto the local landscape materially and symbolically. Through this, I have attempted to detail

how this imprinting produces and get maintained through spatial differentiation and social imbrications.

The factory, continuing the colonial project of civilizing natives to modern bureaucratic work habits and lifestyles, ensures that all resources are ordered and coordinated towards production of sugar ostensibly to increase incomes in the region. But the capitalist logic-maximizing the profits and accumulating them elsewhere disrupts this civilization and improvement narrative as it generates spatial dispossession and deprivation in the villages and labour camps. This has led to social and spatial inter-dependent hierarchies where the factory complex is significantly higher than the village. Meanwhile the factory complex maintains the utopian idea of social improvement alive, giving the region an aura of development with all the features of modern-day industrial complex- pollution, security, recreational facilities, private schools and health centre- ensconced in immaculately maintained islands of affluent lifestyles. On the other hand, the labour camp remains a place where absolute chaos of dispossession converges and people are perpetually locked in a struggle for survival. The village is a site of abandonment –left behind literally and figuratively.

But still deprivation, differentiation and abandonment are all located on a continuum of dispossession which defines agromanufacturing as development in Kenya. This spatial variety in essence captures the chaos of agromanufacturing as development. Land use changes the social relations and activities of rural communities in Kenya (Nyongo, 1981). The point I wish to make in this chapter is that the geography of a place is intimately related to the application of the disciplinary power of development and its biographies of those who have made it home or interact and negotiate its impositions as part of their everyday lives. From the foregoing it is seems that the agromanufacturing development has embodied a pervasive and tactile disciplinary regimen of dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, linking social relations with construction of landscapes through everyday practices (Pels, 1997). The sense of

abandonment in the village stemming from a compromised social and economic environment, the forms of differentiations in the factory complex build on the bureaucratic boundaries, and deprivation in the labour camp underline Foucault's conception of power as an exercise and overall effect of strategic positioning (Michelakos, 2009). The way in which different practices that imprint various forms of exclusion, dispossession and deprivation get accepted as everyday norm are on one end effected through simple disciplinary routine acts such as body checks; and on the other through a conduct of conduct which define the factory life.

The compromises made at each of the sites are connected to the intrusions and impositions of the sugar plantation into their local systems of survival and reproduction thus shaking their sense of 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1990). They carry cultural as well as lifestyle implications on the traditional and familial bases of identity and security; are lived each day by the deliberate and rigid forms distancing between the factory complex, the labour camp and the villages. The questions which the different site narratives raise with regard to development of the region can be addressed in terms of the chaotic dispossession of land and labour and institutionalization of systems of extraction based on differentiation and exclusions. Under these chaotic processes, social units and institutions- from the individual to family and local community leadership- are transformed into agents of the factory and sites of contesting everyday existence.

It may seem that the development agenda is structurally incoherent and ineffectual because it appears caught in a tense interplay between the destruction of social structures which support and sustain the labour base and the implementation of extraction of labour and land as resources for the immediate production of sugar. Yet this is the chaotic paradox of development seemingly between the disciplinary (dispossessive) dominance of structural forces (what has been labelled the creative destruction of capitalism) and the individual possibilities of agency that remain within the collective subjectivity brought down on labourers and villages.

From a spatially sensitive perspective, agromanufacturing as a development strategy is basically about generating this incoherent chaos as its order. It seems that its interest is not to create a direct and smooth relation between productivity and living standards; but one between increased productivity and social differentiation based on increased dispossession and exclusion respectively.

Chapter SIX

EATING OUR SWEAT: CONSUMPTION AND LIVING AS A LABOURER

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Wright (2006) employs the concept of myth to demonstrate how by being identified as disposable, third world women are simultaneously summoned 'into existence' as subjects 'with explicit relations of power and hierarchy' (p.5), and as the suffering but necessary victims of progress. Within the mythologizing, the labouring women acquire a contradictory subjectivity in which their public erasure is actually their public insertion into the capitalist development system. In this chapter, going back to Ouru's statement about migrant labour work: 'you sweat to eat' (chapter one), I make a similar assertion though somewhat varied. The two operative notions in Ouru's statement: sweating and eating summarize the lives of migrant labourers. To sweat in effect means to work hard, to be active and alive thus generating produce for the market. To eat is to become a consumer- not only for survival but also partake in the public activities of the region.

What I established from my fieldwork is that the migrant labourers have acquired particular tactics and mannerisms segmented for framing and conducting their private and public lives in ways that connect them to eating and sweating. More importantly, through this, I show how the dispossession generates extreme cases of depravity and how this depravity is lived with everyday and every moment. My point is rather basic here: the migrant labourers have learnt to create distinctive private and public spheres as a strategy of maintain a semblance of sanity and order in their lives. Yet even here there is no escape from the discursive and lived contradictions of dispossession. The plantation and factory maintain their overarching and insidious dominance of their lives, perpetually subjecting them to deprivation,

precarity and exclusion. But the labourers subvert the whole process of sweating to eat and use it to negotiate their public presentations and private tribulation. This is in effect a declaration of presence, a presence that must be accounted for in personal and domestic ways. In this chapter the focus is on how the individual, the household and the public space have been compromised and co-opted into a series of deprivations and sites of struggle for agency. Linked to this is the finding about the dispossession of masculinity- how the male migrant labourers' masculinity has been compromised and diffused from the private sphere forcing them to strive to recoup it in a chaotic public arena.

6.2 CHRISTMAS WITH JACK /PRIVATE SUFFERING

Christmas Eve 2009, well past nine o'clock. I had been sitting at Nyowinyo café for three hours before Jack and Roy finally showed up. According to our prior agreement, we were to go to Jack's house for supper. He had assured me that Christmas was going to be his treat. By the time they came back, Jack was visibly tired and worried that his children may have gone to bed before they 'saw Christmas'. But Roy was upbeat. He had several drinking engagements for the whole night and a famous musician was in town. I paid for the tea I had been taking and followed them out of the hotel. At the junction, Roy bid us farewell and told us to find him at Alambo Bar later when done with the children or at Sugarview Hotel where the musician was to perform. For him spending the occasion at home was a thing for children and wives. Men had better ways and places to spend it- among other men.

The import of Roy's statement with regard to where one spends such an occasion was not in the words he used but rather in the tone and unspoken message he was passing. Spending Christmas at home for men implied many things few of which can hardly be construed masculine compared to going out with other men and enjoying is on the other end of the masculinity spectrum. By opting to go home first and then possibly join the others later,

Jack was attempting an intricate balancing act of ensuring both his masculinity and domesticity in his role as a family man common among the labourers in the camp.

We arrived at the camp well past midnight. There was a Christian crusade going on at the nursery school and children were still making noise outside their houses. A number of them were carrying mandazis and whenever they crossed paths of candle-light rays emanating from the many open windows and doors, I could observe a certain radiance which resonated from their voices. Inside Jack's house were two women- his wife and a neighbour- having a cup of tea with a plateful of mandazis. For us, coming in from the cold, this was really a welcoming treat. The wife however was not very happy, things could have gone better.

The children wanted chapatis but we cannot afford that. They also wanted new dresses... you know Christmas used to be different at home. We could get new things and eat good food. At night you could join the other children singing all over the village. (Rose 25th December 2009).

Across the villages there are always noisy and jubilant Christmas festivities but in the camp, the celebrations are not only muted but take a rather bitter tone- nostalgic and melancholic- about what they left in villages. Noteworthy however is the fact that the village celebrations are not as expensive; the labourers comparatively spend more on the celebrations than the villagers but they seem to be missing more than the villagers. The feelings expressed by Jack's wife stem not from the impossibility of acquiring some exotic diet and expensive clothes for the children, but from the feeling that the labour camp is a deprived disorderly place, where nothing worthy celebrating happened or thrived. Whatever one managed to eat, purchase and even own was already tainted- it felt inadequate.

The feeling of deprivation dominant in the labour camp is based on both the origins of the labour camps (see previous chapters) and the disconnection people feel with home. The households are bare and the range of food choices is limited by availability and affordability.

The complaints by Jack's wife Rose are not essentially about the failure to have a traditional village Christmas but rather the lack of choices and predictable certainty over household diets. Apparently then, basic items such as clothing and food, whether exotic or ordinary, acquire a different meaning among the households. In these new meanings, they assume the ability to 'transmute acts, substances and the relationships among them into units of different meanings... eating [and eating] taking a wholly different significance...' (Mintz, 1985:172).

We finished the tea and before long, we were offered the main meal: chicken stew and a huge mount of ugali. Then a two litre bottle of orange soda materialized from the bag Jack had been carrying. The children rushed into the house and each took a plastic cup from the tray near the cooking stove in the kitchen corner. The soda was a novelty and the children began to fight over it. It was dangerous given the size of the house and before the mother could stop them, one stumbled and sent the open chicken stew pot falling over the edge of the stool. The second child fell on it and landed on the hot stew that was rapidly spreading over the rough floor. The father reacted fast as the mother did making them both collide over the child. For a moment nothing happened; time stopped as the mother and father angrily stared at each other, each trying to outstare the other. The first child stopped for a moment and then wriggling her way between us; opened the door and vanished into the darkness and noise outside. The second child who had fallen stared at the parents then let out a deafening scream. The father scooped her up and rushed her to the candle light as the mother tried to hold her legs. We all huddled around her screaming little form as the women tried to soothe. 'My stomach, my stomach...' she kept screaming. When we finally lifted her dress to expose the stomach we noticed that she had been slightly burnt- the chicken stew had been off the fire for sometime.

The mother began to sob, heavy heart-rending sobs that shook her whole body. The father soothed the girl, gave an extra ndazi and she gingerly went after her sister outside. The

parents sighed; relief was written all over their faces, bodies and even manner of talking. ‘Thank God’. The wife said. ‘What could we have done, if she had been hurt?’ ‘Forget it, woman’, the husband retorted. ‘Forget it, kabisa-completely’. He turned to me and sadly said: ‘here you can not afford accidents. We have no money to take anybody to hospital. Last month she was sick, do you know we had to give her hot water, herbs and salts ... God listened and heard us’. The tension passed. We finished what was still left of our meal.

This long rendition of the episode is intended to expose of the multiple ways the chaos of dispossession are evident and lived with within the private lives of the migrant labourers. And through them one can get an inkling of how the larger process of development becomes embodied in people’s everyday moments. It reveals how deprivation outside the home finds its way into the household and the basic existence of the family. My emphasis here is not on the scary aspects of the moment but the way it provides an insight into the domestic lives of migrant labourers as family people trying to fulfil their roles as parents and family guardians and the risks and uncertainties they live with. The precariousness, the danger with which they live become obvious especially given the nature of housing and camp life in which they try to meet their obligations.

The moment of near shock provides a window into understanding the ‘experience of decline’ in personal fortunes- ‘the feeling of loss of status... unpredictable and unproductive ... (Friedman, 2007). It, in effect, reveals what Taussig (1997) calls a ‘mimetic quality’ in which the labourers perform a multiplicity of roles while miming the pathologic and alien qualities of conditions and roles they have been assigned by the depravity. Chaos in this situations are not out there but here and now in every aspect of their existence; the changes they have undergone since moving from the safety of their villages and the momentary uncertainties their whole lives are saturated with. Risk is not an unlikely event happening, but the likelihood of not happening.

On the immediate level, it intrigued me to explore the living standards especially with regard to health and food so as to reveal how the households in the labour camps adapt to the chaos of deprivation. Food is scarce in the camp. On average, households spend over fifty percent of their income and time looking for and preparing food. Given that the average size of the households is between five and seven- three to five children in a nuclear family, basic daily requirement of food is about two kilogrammes of maize flour, half-kilogramme of green vegetables. At the minimum, a litre of milk per day could be enough while two kilogrammes of sugar are sufficient for a week. At the existing purchasing prices, such a family will require an income of about seven hundred shillings for one week. However the total average income of the labourers is no more than five hundred in a week hence to survive the families have to do a lot of adjustments especially on the dietary requirements. That is why the simple meal on a Christmas night represents an attempt to make things a little rosy for the family by giving them what passes for a treat of a wholesome meal. The nutrition level among labourers is very low- many of them go without a meal for at least day in any given week.

‘We survive on the cane we cut. I know of many guys who cannot work elsewhere except in the cane harvesting section because there they can eat all the cane they want. *Unajua mima ni mzuri, ukikula moja ni maji tu unahitaji-* you know sugarcane is very good, if you chew a whole piece, you only need water.’

(Musa Oyoo, labourer, Manyani, 29th November, 2009).

What makes sugarcane such an instant hunger gratifier is the natural sucrose it has which gets broken down very fast once in the body, streams into the bloodstream to provide instant energy stimulus which thus ‘fooling’ the body that it has been adequately fed. Many of the labourers survive on and are used to this diet. Common nutrition and hygiene related ailments are rampant. The consequence on their physical health is obvious- most of them despite the heavy work they do are emaciated and sickly. Their children are similarly

malnourished- kwashiorkor, scabies, marasmus and other malnutrition-related diseases are the norm in the labour camps. Drunken fathers often talk of their kids as ‘my officer’.

The reference to ‘officer’ is a dual-meaning statement conveying both the embarrassment and pride of the labourers. First children are a form of self-affirmation for the labourers and justifications of their continued stay in the belt hence a source of pride. ‘My children need food, how else can I feed them. They are my burden and reason I withstand this bad work,’ Jack told me many a time. The children here provide the motivation to work and compel the parent to work hence in the hierarchical sense they are the officers in charge of the labourers’ working life. But the second meaning is more telling of the labourers’ awareness of the children’s poor health: they call them officers due to their extended tummies which are similar to those of the fat and pot-bellied senior managers of the company.

In a way I find this part of the transformation of the disciplinary regime of the plantation into a governance of self by the labourers- integrating the chaos of deprivation into a discursive order with which they can logically and contextually cohere their lives. The migrant labourers employ self-deprecating irony to assert that though they may not have the physical evidence of affluent living, their children do. It is a deliberate attempt to subvert the obvious ill-health into a statement of better life. Their women however, do not make any attempt to be so ambivalent about the health of the children. They call it as it is thus showing their ignoble regard of the discipline of the plantation tinged with nostalgic dystopia.

The children are sickly; look at them. But you cannot blame them. What is there to eat- they need food to grow instead, they are full of worms... and their fathers drinks all his money out their having a good time with the clean ones.’

(Josephine Auma, labourer’s wife, Manyani, 20th October 2010).

According to the women, the children are suffering the consequences of their father’s cavalier negligent lifestyles- they drink all the money with the women (the clean ones) of the town.

Cleanliness here is a metaphor for the things that are driving the labourer husbands from their homes into the arms of other women in the town the imaginary of modernity included.

The way in which the marital chaos and domestic deprivation are linked to alleged sexual proclivities of the labourers, is a dominant narrative in the sugarbelt which loads a sexualized dimension to their already besmirched identity. The apparent categorization of women into the clean and not clean is somewhat ironic: those who are in essence morally dirty (husband snatchers and prostitutes) are being referred to as ‘the clean ones’ by those who are morally clean- keeping their homes and married. This is the paradoxical situation women living with their husbands in the labour camps find themselves in- that despite their socio-cultural fidelity to the idea of family and married life, they are the dirty one. They are thus forced to reverse their claims to morality by subverting the notion of cleanliness into a pejorative term used to rebuke their husbands. To understand this we need to back peddle a little and have a glance into the general outline of family relations and conceptions in the labour camp alongside Jack’s household.

Though Jack’s case is different, families in the camps are often temporal: migrant men cohabiting with women they meet at the camp, plantations, or nearby shopping centres, villages or bars. At the end of the month, many of the men go back to their villages and ‘real’ marital homes, returning once the month’s pay has been deposited at home. The camp ‘marriages’ are convenient arrangements which provide support to both parties symbiotically until children come along. Jose, a 32-year-old labourer who has been in the camp for over ten years and lived with three different women in such relations, explained the rationale of the camp cohabitation:

It is not marriage really. You see; you come here, you work and live like an animal...you need company and somebody to do some little things for you; to make you feel human. But it is also difficult. These camp women know what

they want. Sometimes you feel ‘they are using me.’ But you understand. Life is hard here for everybody. (Jose, Awendo, 02nd November 2009).

Jose has been a labourer for over fifteen years, yet he can barely afford to visit his home village. He is confined to the camp even when he often has no work because his choices are limited. He is ‘*mtu wa kambi*’- a camp person as they often refer themselves. Life in the camp is his personal narrative.

There are also camp women- those who came to find work but found the actual labour work rare and insufficient to cater for their needs. Most of such women are widows or single mothers from broken marriages in distant villages. Other women migrate into the sugarbelt to work in the local brothels as barmaids, with a concurrent engagement in a parallel trade in illicit homemade brews and other cheaply availed intoxicants. During the day or week days when the labourers are busy in the field, the women occupy themselves with petty trade: selling foodstuffs and vegetables, sweets, fish and pieces of homemade sugar candies. All forms of trade and survival strategies depend on the money flow from the factory. This link between the money and the sexualized lives in the sugarbelt is as old as the sugarbelt itself. It began with first settlements and establishment of the town which saw the influx of single men and women who finding the difficult life in the belt unfamiliar turn to unfamiliar strategies such as staying together in ambiguous relations to support each other. In all the cases I observed, there are no clear terms for the relationships: people walk in and walk out. Some of them transform into actual marriages such as Jack which then take a more stable structure and provide a sense of stability and reliability. Most of the women find this safer because then they can ‘plan things’. The notion of ‘planning things’ reveals the chaos of the life in the camp and the attempts to order them which inevitably push them towards traditional frames of reference.

Yet, the accidental near-burning of Jack’s children brings out the never-ending cycle of uncertainties and threats the household contends with each day. On a door next to Jack’s

house the following words are inscribed: Masumbuko –suffering; jomolewa- welded/burnt which somehow summarize the general nature of life in the camp. Many of the households in the camp have accepted the reality of continuous lack/ deprivation of certain basic necessities, making suffering that comes with it a natural companion of the plantation life. In their narrative, the suffering is stuck on them- sort of welded branding which they can not evade hence the subconscious self-depreciation of the women as ‘not clean’. The chaos and the uncanny are not unpredictable but inevitable and acceptable.

Yet, within these chaotic confines and deprivation, they too try to carve out spaces of orderly living and some form of levity. In Jack’s house there are a few ‘luxury’ items which show the attempt to enjoy- a china-made battery operated radio which hardly worked because they could not afford to buy the dry cells it uses. On the wall a black and white fourteen inch-screen television was hanging covered with a dusty cloth. It was obvious that it was hardly used. Occasionally, Jack would whip out a phone from his pocket with which he neither received nor made any call in all the occasions we met. To charge the phone battery he had to take it into town every couple of days. For a while, it was a puzzle, until I realized that charging the phone also had another purpose in his life. It provided an excuse for him to leave the house and go into town whenever he wanted.

Most men in the labour camp have their own exit tools. They call them so: *kitu ya mbinu ya kuepa shida za wanawake*- the tactical tool for escaping the women stress in the house’. This provides a genuine though made up reason to make a hasty exit from the house and the camp in face of domestic tensions. Most of them are under the illusion that the women are not aware of the tactics. A conversation with a group of women disabused this notion completely; the women know it and actually deploy it against the men whenever they want them out of the house.

Soffy: The men think they are clever. You know sometimes we just don't want them around, so you annoy them. I know how to chase mine from the house... ask him for money and make fuss about anything.

Mary: Mine picks up the phone which never rings and pretends to receive a call... and out he goes... I go like... where are you going? What do I do now...? But inside I am laughing.

Tabitha: Mine begins to cough saying the smoke is hitting him and he needs some air... indeed he vanishes into the air.

These statements reveal a behavioural strategy which both men and women employ to deal with the household stresses most of which are due to suffocating confinement in the labour camp. Instead of engaging in overt confrontation, the couples opt for avoidance of the real concerns. Both men and women explain why they can not do things differently:

The women are trying my friend. Life is hard...many of them may not really understand what we go through... but you can understand what they go through... *wanakaa na watoto, watoto wana njaa. Unajua mwanamke ni nguo, sasa hapa hatuwezi* – they have to stay with the children... the children are hungry most of the time... you know women are appearances; dressing and being beautiful. Here they can not get that. That is why you try to be out as much as possible ... you do not want to feel so useless (Martin, Manyani, 4th April, 2010)

According to Martin, the façade of escaping the house is a valve for letting the women deal with their disappointments and possible confrontations over the deprived condition of the household. Through these confessions, both the men and women evoke a feeling of social claustrophobia caused by the camp. On the other hand, the women ignore the men's home-avoidance tactics because:

They are men... always wanting to act tough and show off... but what can they show off here: these rags... *hii mikebe*- these tins. The more they are out there with others they can pretend to be happy and leave you alone in peace (Rosemary, Manyani, 28th April, 2010).

The women indulge the masculine fantasies of dominance which have become significantly vacuous in the plantation. Men, as Rosemary puts it, are still preoccupied with acting out their masculine roles as per their village traditions. But this bravado is compromised by the circumstances of the household which can hardly facilitate the enactment of masculinity. The home is not supportive of appropriate gender role realization hence the tactical escape from the house to out there with other men where according to the women 'they can pretend to be happy' while leaving the women alone.

The emasculation of the men in the camp households thus represents the dispossession as a derivative deprivation of men imposed by the circumstances of their work and income. An insidious form of violence is witnessed; captured by the graffiti on their walls and doors: *Chomeka*- get burnt; *masumbuko*- suffering; *kombo kombo*- crooked/twisted. The recurrence of the motif of being burnt or wasted and suffering in their discussion provides the nuance into the way they view and actually experience their lives which eventually leads to twisted lives and masculinities. The twist exposes the private dilemmas and grief of the labourers in the camp generally and in their households particularly. More fundamentally, this twist makes the dilemmas of the chaotic and dispossessive character of the capitalist development established in the South Nyanza as visibly and intimately lived by the migrant labourers.

Through these household vignettes, the chaotic complexities of the plantation economy are revealed as they impact on people's everyday lives thus, their family lives and family roles especially how the emasculation of men. This stands significantly in contrast to the

women's situation in the village discussed in the previous chapter. Whereas in the village the expansion of the plantation has undermined women's roles and security; in the labour camp it is men's roles as family heads that are rendered precarious and vacuous. The common thread between the village and labour camp is the tenacity of the women to hold the families together using different tactics. The chaotic trajectory of agromanufacturing development is fleshed out here as it contradicts its masculine insertion into the community (see previous chapter). In the next section I explore how the labourers 'escape' their emasculation and fit in the logic of the plantation- asserting their presence in the region.

6.3 CHRISTMAS WITH ROY: PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASCULINITY

Jack made an excuse about seeing me off after the meal but in truth we were going to join Roy in town for the Christmas celebration proper. A rising musician called John Junior was in town and we had tickets. We arrived at Sugarview Club, the venue of the concert well past midnight. A group of young boys I had seen at the labour camp earlier were outside trying to sneak in but the security was quite tight. We paid for our tickets and were allowed in after being stamped on the palm. There were over three hundred people inside; a cross-section of the Awendo community including local business people, Sony executives, labourers and almost all the bar maids and single women in the town. There were no seating spaces left but first we had to find Roy. He yelled for us from the other end of floor. He had a table with two empty chairs which he motioned us to take. It was a small table like the rest; which somehow Roy had managed to hoard one the whole evening. It was crowded with beer bottles and the three other chairs we occupied by two heavily made up women. Roy introduced us and jolted one of the women off to the dance floor.

Jack looked around and motioned a roaming waitress who came and popped the bottle open. He took a long sip, pouted his lip, swirled the beer around the mouth then made a very

loud swallow. Two more followed. A long sigh and a satisfied groan followed. Then he said: I needed that my friend. Now Christmas *itaanz'a kimameni*- now Christmas will begin men style. He looked at the remaining woman, looked at me and motioned a question. I shook my head sideways. A raised eyebrow asked the question why; I motioned that I was waiting for my date. He switched to his mother-tongue and begun an earnest conversation with the girl. Before long, they had vanished into the dancing crowd too. I sat there alone for a long time enjoying a Smirnoff Black Ice beer that had materialized from the dance floor to join the crowd on the table. The waitress told me a friend from Sony had sent the two bottles for me. It was going to be a long night. The night progressed into the next day; our table constantly replenished with bottles of beer materializing from everywhere.

In the dancing and drinking it was hard to distinguish between labourers and company executives. Many of the migrant labourers like Jack bought beer and drunk with abandon. It was a far cry from the situation we had left in the labour camp. Here was Jack and others like him, who in the few hours back had endured humiliating silence in their homes because they could not afford to buy their families the Christmas goodies, splashing money. The strange thing was not the confirmation of their women's alleged infidelities and extravagancy with the 'clean women' but the way they appeared to come alive and free. The way the men gestured in the house, avoided the wife's gaze, nudged you to cut short conversations so that you could get out of the house fast; away from the children's cries and the condemning gazes of the wife stood in total contrast with the lingering way they sat and talked with the women in the club. The men at home were timid stragglers; the ones in the club were aggressive and free-flowing merry-makers.

This public extravagancy replayed the habits of those who lived through the initial money flow in the region especially the land sellers who had been evicted and the villagers whose lands had been leased; and the sugar and animal traders who frequented the town.

According to the now established folklore in the sugarbelt, there was extravagant partying. Joshua Okoth who was twenty two in 1978 describes the early years' manner of drinking thus:

You did not take a friend out for a beer and buy him a bottle. People bought beer in terms of crates. Sometimes people would compete on who could consume more crates. Each man used to buy crates enough to cover his height. They used to say: '*nifunike*- cover me'. A man stood up and waiters piled crates full of beer as high as his head so that those on the other side could not see him. Fully covered.. (Joshua, Awendo, 2nd June, 2010).

In a way, being covered was metaphorically apt if one recalls that most of these men were poor and had just been evicted from their ancestral lands. It also becomes apt if one recalls their current status in the labour camp where their families are struggling to survive each day. However the most significant form of covering relates to the haze of drinking and merriment in the club, where men connected with a number of women commencing or continuing with many clandestine affairs. I was surprised that even Jack had such an affair. Interestingly, Jack was a different person with this woman- he was all over her, concerned whether she was feeling cold, whether she had eaten and whether she wanted another beer. In more than one occasion, I heard him tell her not to worry, '*leo mambo si mbaya*- today things are not bad' meaning he had money. How is it possible that the same man who had literally grovelled, growled, begged and cried before his wife that he had no money would suddenly afford to buy beer? The drinking life is more public and extravagantly conspicuous. Roy explained it thus:

My friend, life is tough at home. Here you come to relax and enjoy the sweat you have worked for. *Hapa kila mtu ni sawa and the jabber here hawana maswali mingi kama nyumbani* – here everybody is equal and the beautiful ones here do

not have issues like the ones at home. You feel like a man here; (Roy, 25th December 2009).

Being 'like everybody' however fleeting is of significant importance to the migrant labourers. It is their way to establish their presence and negotiating the dislocations of masculinity manifested by their general camp life. As Roy shows, it is intricately linked to the issue of masculinity- here the women are not only beautiful but also less bothersome- 'they do not have issues'. Being treated as equal and masculine by the other revellers and the women respectively restores the compromised masculinity experienced and suffered at home with regular partners. The irony of agromanufacturing family life revealed here is the displacement of domestic tranquillity for men from the house to the club. Whereas normally the private household is the safe haven of masculinity, in Sony the public is a safer place to be a man. This reveals the chaos of development as a reversal of roles and distinctions between the private and public contextual constraints to masculine agency within the personal and domestic sphere.

The local pub/club has become part of the social landscape providing the convergence zone where lost identities and masculinity may be reclaimed. The way, the labourers who usually avoid people, stare down other patrons and compete for the women's attention on and off the dance floor as well as populating their table with beer bottles, is in a series of contradictory actions which reveal a tenuous but established narrative of struggle to reclaim personhood. From my observation, interactions and the information I could gather, a pattern of the labourers' lives emerges. They lead double lives which oscillate between the home and the bar or drinking places. The home life is the private realm where they suffer misery, deprivation and are always broke. Here they are constantly being nagged and occasionally abused by their wives or permanent partners making them feel and live in a state of emasculation. Development here becomes experienced as a loss and reclaiming of selfhood,

especially selves constructed as masculine. The interesting point to be made here is how either way, the process of dispossession and manufacture of capitalist subjectivities is sustained amid the active participation of the subjects themselves who are continuously contesting and finding their place in the continuing flux.

Ethnographic inquiry has for long established that consumption is more about social relations- about the dyadic relationship between the subjective need and its satisfaction by a particular object (Douglas, 2003). Howes (1996) sees consumption as a cultural construct through which the banality of development becomes lived as it transforms basic needs and life necessities into patterns of everyday lives. Consumption provides a social field in which local communities and their practices can become engaged with and recreate themselves despite constraints of structural domination (Comaroff, 1996). Comaroff further shows that changing modes of consumption reveal how commodity cultures of capital and empire play existing societies and emerging identities in a complex way to facilitate social negotiation of agency and subjectivity. Consumption as a social field then presents an overlapping convergence of the local and global capitalism characteristics and forms of dispossession (Fine, 2002); and in the case of the migrant labourers, it also incorporates the personal.

Consumption in the private sphere (the household) reveals the inadequacies and deprivations that connect the labour camp character unto their lives. The pub on the other hand offers the men a site for reclamation through participation in the sociality practiced by excessive consumption. What is still persistent here is the way the different social subjectivities that have emerged in the Sony region are negotiated without clearly transforming into class antagonisms. By participating in the club life, they reinsert themselves into the social landscape of the sugarbelt and more importantly acquire the capacity to witness and record the deviance of others. Whereas their bodies record the effects of their work on themselves, their episodic presence in these public arena performs their masculinity body.

6.4 CHRISTMAS WITH ROSE: INDEPENDENT WOMEN

The public reclamation of respect and identities (masculinity) above is not limited to men only but to women too. Most of the women in the club that night were the local sex workers, business women trying to scrap through and many single mothers. Their lives are in many ways tied to the history of the factory and how it has affected their lives. Take Rose's story for instance. Rose dropped out of Mayenga primary school in Riosiri village at class eight and got married to Omosh, a local boy whose father leased the family farm to a sugarcane farmer contracted by the sugar company for a period of ten years and had showered Rose with money and gifts. After the money ran out, Omosh left home and travelled to Awendo to work in the new company that had promised them jobs. The only work he would find was as a casual labourer. He visited the home every two weeks; then monthly and eventually became quite rare.

Rose bore two children. After five years she realized her husband was sick; he hardly came home, and spent more and more time going to hospitals. Eventually when she visited him, she was astonished to learn that he had been cohabiting with an older woman who sold chang'aa in the town slums. Omosh had lost his job six months earlier when he became too sick to work- his contractor dropped him. She took him home. He died a year later. Rose told me her life story:

There I was twenty-six years old; three children no husband and possibly sick. I decided to go for a test and luckily I turned out negative. But I was still miserable! Yes, I was not sick. But I still had three children to raise! Miserable! It is better being sick than being declared well. (Rose, Sugarview, 25th December 2009).

In the context of the risk of an incurable disease like AIDS, it can be shocking to hear somebody express regret over her negative HIV status. But among the labourers and the local

women such as Rose it is a common sentiment. In most hard hit communities and groups it is advantageous to be sick. Then one can easily attract assistance or have a justification for their deprived state of living. Being poor, deprived and healthy means one is neither fit for assistance nor able to survive and cannot explain why she is in that state. I heard many a time young children asking their mothers in the labour camp why they could not find food for them since they were not sick: “I know so and so’s mother is sick that is why they do not have food. Why don’t we have food too? You are not sick!” Thus being well and deprived the capacity to assure your children’s needs is the ultimate level of humiliation the women can suffer since it is also visible and loaded with unmet expectations.

Being sick on the other hand gives one a new category and identity which comes with excuses, justifications and legitimate barriers to public scrutiny regarding one’s ability to provide for family. If lucky, it also triggers public support and charity. Rose had to deal with this situation:

I tried to find a way to support the children in vain. So finally I had a choice to make: to use all means necessary. In the village women get support from family men after the husband’s death but then not so if he had died of AIDS. Nobody was coming forth to assist. He worked in the company for over ten years, but he was a casual labourer, no pension. I realized I was going to have to take drastic action. My children had to eat. I came to Awendo and started working in the bar. The village has been sucked off, the men are dying; and nobody wants their widows. The village does not want young widows. Here you got accepted and there are good men like Roy who can help without weighing you down (Rose, Awendo, 2009, Dec, 25th, 2009).

What is striking about Rose's narrative is the exuded intimacy with the degeneration of social institutions and support mechanisms under the weight of agromanufacturing development. Following the dispossession of land in the village, poverty and precarity get acquainted and connected. Stigma and the motif of being deprived and disposed off, mingle reflexively and smoothly. Rose's statement: 'The village does not want widows ...the village has been sucked...' is a loaded assertion. She does not cite a particular act of eviction from her village by any particular person or institution. In fact she told me, in subsequent interviews, that she frequently communicated with her late husband's family who sometimes visit her. The village has been drained of men and support for sustenance of those affected by deprivation, a repeat of Mama Teresa's testimony (previous chapter). She is alluding to something larger- the structural forces in the form of land leasing, unemployment of the dead husband and the strictures which impede women's participation in the sugar-led economy. The socio-economic environment that determines her survival has generated chaos and an amorphous zone within which she must find ambiguous and subversive identity and agency to survive. Being in the village where there is no land no possibility for sustenance presents an array of threats which make her existence and survival precarious and in effect doomed.

Traditionally the local communities had social protection mechanisms of supporting and caring for widows. However the loss of land to the sugar factory and subsequent commercialization of all forms of labour and work have ensured no free assistance is available. Thus if they cannot afford to pay for services, the village can not afford to host them too. Widowhood becomes a compound form of dispossession under the multiple assaults of land deprivation by the sugar industry, precarity of work and AIDS stigma. This results to fast degeneration of individuals and the families into extinction through sickness, malnutrition and eventual death; or transgressive innovations by the women which entail transforming their identities and lifestyles. Yet even under this transformative transgression, the chaos of

dispossession persists into more intimate levels- their bodies are sexualized and manipulated to correspond to the emergent logic of the new 'development regime: the market logic'. The notion of labour here then becomes flexible while maintaining the reliance on physical health and strength to make a day count. The new women rely on their body and sexual appeal to survive and fit in. In essence then, as illustrated by Rose, it means relocating the private grief of losing a husband to the public as a single and available woman joining the industry as a service provider, who sadly is potentially disposable.

In the ever-emerging and established chaos of agromanufacturing development, Rose is not alone in eking out survival by transgressing the boundaries of moral and gender propriety. Cella, a twenty-five year old mother of a seven year-old son tells a similarly compelling story. She was in school in Koku secondary when this soccer player of Sony swept her off her feet in 2001. She dropped out of school the next year after she became pregnant. She moved in with the man who frequently beat her and left her without food. She gave birth to a sickly baby girl who eventually died. She did not want to get another child but he insisted when she began demanding that she goes back to school.

I think he did not want me to go back to school. But he could not stop me... somehow he got me pregnant again. A year later I had my son. The man could not even come to pick us from the hospital. My mother came for me, when I got back to the house the man had left. The last I heard of him he had gone back to Nairobi. I learnt later I was not the only woman he had been keeping. They are like that those players of Sony; I guess it makes them feel very strong that way. (Cella, Awendo, 2nd June 2010.)

Cella stayed with her mother for a while but it was difficult. Her own mother had been left by her father who had leased the land and moved to the lake region with another woman with whom they contracted a disease and both passed away. She had seven children to support.

Cella went back to Awendo and tried to get a job in vain. She eventually started selling vegetables on the roadside, spending hours in the sun with her baby strapped on her back. Then she met Amina a Tanzanian lady who worked in the bar.

Amina advised me to look for a job in the bars, where I could work at night and sell my vegetables during the day. It was the best advice someone has ever given me. You see I look young and when I dress well, men are fooled. I can sell more beer and get big tips.

It has been five years since Cella started working as a bar waitress. She has since enrolled her son in a school, rented a nice house and employed somebody to run her vegetable business which also doubles as a second-hand clothes shop. During the Christmas dance, I saw her with one of the company executives. She was happy and confidently sipping her beer. Those who did not know would have been excused if they took her for the executive's wife. Cella was not worried about what people thought or said about her liaison with the executive.

I am not worried or really care what the people say. They don't know what people have gone through. I am a free woman and he helps me a lot. But I am not his wife. [She laughs]. You know what, they call us names... they call us parking women; (Cella, 25th December 2009).

Cella's acknowledgement of the pejorative metaphor used to describe women who are on their own, working in bars or are assumed to be sex workers in the town is as subversive as it is liberating. At one level it is an acceptance of the metaphor's implied non-specified 'hybrid' belonging to any particular individual like a parking lot where anybody can park for a given period without any permanent claim to ownership. Being in a state of flux, changing hands and characteristics capture the nature of development in the Sony region. From conversations with these women, I found that this fluid identity is borne defiantly. They are proud to be independent and given their different biographies, this identity builds their networking and

brings them together as a group. Their pasts and experiences of bad relations and deprivation compel them to defy the socio-cultural norms and chart a common alternative lifestyle that make them fit in the Sony political and moral economy.

In essence this recasts the Durkheimian solidarity and Weberian rationality to societal change to capture the development of orientations which are defiant of communal normative prescriptions. Agromanufacturing development not only engineer division of labour, anomie, and competition for resources. It has also set in motion disconnection from social ties and self-regulation driven by self-interest (Durkheim, 1997; Weber, 1947 and 1983; Aron, 1968; Larrain, 1989). It puts the women outside the ordinary everyday lives of the community as products and spaces of departures and entries. They are akin to processing points which at which different components of products gain entry into the system, but also points at which waste components and products can be made and exit the system and packaged for onward transmission. This aspect of the metaphor bestows on the women a certain level of fluidity and ambiguity which makes them suspect to the rest of the community. It also ensures their perpetual stranger status which becomes both a liability and asset in the economy of the sugar belt. They can use it to relate with the men and therefore support themselves; but to other women it is a marker of infamy. For the women to succeed then they have to subvert the infamous identity and highlight the useful one: as independent and free agents. The bar and the club become the arena for both the labourers and the women to exercise their free agency and for a moment defy the logic of ignominy that their deprived state accords them.

6.5 CONCLUSION: RECONCILING PRIVATE SUFFERING AND PUBLIC ENJOYMENT

The construction of public and private lives among the migrant labourers goes hand in hand with the (de)activation of traditional gender roles and practices. The increasing

deprivation of migrant labourers as individuals compromises their ability to live their masculine roles within their households thus compromising their positions as family heads. Dislocation from their villages exacerbates this as it also robs the women the structural and institutional frameworks within which they can equally play their complimentary roles. The deprivation reveals the risks of existing at the margins of an economy that deploys erasure and expedient exclusion as its tactics of government.

As a response to the chaotic character of agromanufacturing development the migrant labourers have embraced a deviance in lifestyle that allows them a form of public agency and re-insertion into the life of the community. Within the construction of survival strategies 'side plans', I find this a social tactic for adaptation. This existence of private suffering and public enjoyment in the lives of the labourers and other players in the sugarbelt reveal a particular pattern of reversals and inflections of moral norms. It also raises interesting questions regarding what exactly development may mean to the people affected, the community structure and the norms. One is persuaded to rethink and posit a view that maybe this reversal is the essence of development: losing faith in the cultural present to an emergent moral economy, adapting to its different framework and conception of morality. A framework which requires deliberate subversion of the existing norms and roles in spite of, the obvious and inherent, risks and threats to individuals and the social structure. This is a framework that essentially acknowledges and incorporates chaos as its *modus operandi*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OVERVIEW, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

‘You sweat to eat’. I reiterate the oxymoron used by a childhood friend summarizing the contradictions of migrant plantation labour in Kenya to commence discussing the findings of my study of migrant plantation labourers and rural community transformation in South Nyanza in Kenya. Disentangling the oxymoron was a journey into the idea, imaginary and expectations of development viewed against its outcomes over the years as manifested by the living conditions of migrant labourers in the plantations; the relations between the plantations and the remnant peasantry in rural Kenyan villages, and the panoptic place of the plantation (and factory) in social transformation of rural Kenya.

My study presents a spatially and temporarily relational micro-level exposition of plantation migrant labourers’ lives as artefacts of development and everyday lived experiences of capitalist-state development interventions in rural Kenya. This way, it manages to show how development is an imposed and willed process in which power is systematically circulated to eventually establish itself as natural. The imposition is enacted through an adept mix of discipline and government. However, this does not generate total subjects at the mercy of total institutions and control, but rather a series of chaotic identities deviant but mimetic of the structure of the development intervention. Migrant plantation workers are an exemplary example of such chaos: they are neither inside nor outside the agromanufacturing project but exist with and alongside it as part of its social field. This ambiguity and amorphousness is the true nature of agromanufacturing development in rural South Nyanza.

At a theoretical level, the notion of chaos within a Foucauldian paradigm is very central in the dissertation as an innovative attempt to examine development in South Nyanza. In

particular I sought to expose the ways in which subjects of modernization projects (represented by the sugar processing plant) are predicated on the idea of managing and improving backward and chaotic space through civilizing, ordering and improvement. I go further to that contrary to stated intentions; the outcomes of development are implicated in generation of chaos, uncertainty and chaotic logic and establishing them as norm. Ultimately, chaos becomes not just an outcome as Nazpary (2002) shows in the case of post socialism Kazakhstan; but a conceptual paradigm of explaining development and its thereafter. To survive, those caught in its orbit are forced to acquire compromised agency, adopt generated identities and subvert the moral economies of development as strategies for survival. The aim of development interventions in Kenya is to improve individuals, households and communities economically and socially. This objective is built on a series of modernist assumptions which construct social transformation of communities as a teleological process of society progressing from primitivity to modernity.

My findings offer a critique of the implicit teleology and the modernist dichotomy often used to interpret rural communities' responses to agrarian capitalist transformations and dispossession. Such dichotomous paradigms tend to view local adaptation to the workings of the plantation or factory production economy imposition within the resistance- submission realms (Scott, 2009; Ong, 1987; Youe, 1987). Instead my findings show that the plantation economy as a development intervention, operates on a imposed dispossession mode, generates ways of conducting lives, entrenches them into the everyday, not as haunting willed acquiescence (Li, 2007; Pandian, 2009) or deprived docile despondent disposability (Ferguson, 1990; Bales, 1999) or uncanny and confusing (Collins and Jarvis, 2008) which dominate analyses of development; but as malleable, mobile, amorphous and dynamically creative and adaptive multiple subjectivity. What my study shows is that such teleology ignores the chaotic character of development and thus fails to bring out the overlapping and heterogeneous

existence of modern subjectivity. Further, this kind of subjectivity generates a form of agency through which migrant labourers strive to make sense of, and manage the disorder generated by the overlapping dispossessions.

However, this agency has not generated the structural and institutional sociality to herald orderly and relational structures such as those implied by common development critique frameworks such as those centred on class formation processes (Kalb, 2000; Murray and Post, 1983). Instead, they have engineered an identity that mimics the logic of the plantation economy outside and along the contours of the plantation thus forming what appears to be a graduated dispossession (Ong, 2000). The graduatedness of dispossession is illustrated by the levels of intimacy that deprivation acquires: for the community, land and social structures are deprived and compromised; at the household social roles, basic needs and security are debilitated which at personal level, the sense of self and individual autonomy are shattered. It is this layered deprivations that capture the chaos of development in Sony and also explain the absence of any enduring structural unity to facilitate social formations such as class. The corrosion of both the social character and ties among the migrant labourers is absolute and all conduct is attuned to the ways of the new economy anchored on and around sugar production.

But within the civilizing-disciplinary-governmentality continuum they form an incoherent and chaotic subjectivity engaged in deviant and defiant response to the graduated and continuous dispossession wrought by the plantation economy. Connecting the lives of migrant labourers to the sugarbelt villages and the panoptic structure of the factory, agromanufacturing is revealed as process of continuities of willed improvement which at the core is about building coherent domination to facilitate dispossession of land and labour. Echoing the factory-plantation dispossession structure and logic, the migrant labourers and sugarbelt community work-related actions become innovative survival strategies, adopted materially and symbolically in face of the exclusion from the appropriation and accumulation

wrought by the sugar factory and its economic mode. This survivalist mode is revealed through the ‘side plans’ the labourers make; the defiance of women; the reconfiguration and activation of masculinities and above all the reconstituted moral economies that govern this side plans. It also comes out through the spatial configuration of place that has emerged and organized the physical and social landscape in the sugar belt. In essence this is my point: that when faced with structurally incoherent contexts and regimes of imposed improvement, communities adopt ways of surviving the new set of relations and acquire practical ways of conduct which are neither resistant nor docile. Instead they copy mimetically the logic of the development regime and integrate it into their lives as part of the repertoire for survival tactics within which resistance and domination, dispossession and accumulation mingle and mesh into the everyday realities. In the context of my field ethnography, this may as well be the development.

7.2 DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

Throughout the dissertation explicitly and implicitly, I have shown that migrant labourers in the agromanufacturing sector in Kenya are participants and symbols of the plantation as an imposed social and economic group located within the system as objective and active entities of development (Gardner and Lewis, 1996). Through them, I show how the imposition of sugar economy has transformed the rural communities, baring its depriving intimacies as well as its different guises and experiences on individuals, families and physical landscapes. By connecting different aspects of everyday lives: individual biographies, landscapes and relations over time and space, I relay the overlapping but converging meanings of Ouru’s multifaceted oxymoron- connecting the hard place, eating sweat and making money as a way of life.

In chapter one, I show how over the years, the plantation and the factory have emerged in Kenya and served as distinctive and characteristic socio-economic structures/institutions of production relations between people, place and community (Mintz, 1985). I also highlight how they have been studied as sites of systemic capitalist extraction and appropriation of land and labour (Schultz, 1964); and as institution of domination (Cooper, 1980) and regime of modernization through dispossession (Gupta, 1998; Li, 2011). With a colonial background, large scale commercial agriculture has established different cash crop hegemonies where particular crop plantations dictate the social and economic landscape in those regions. In many ways, plantation agriculture is a paradigm for social and economic transformation of communities in the Kenya. The social transformation actualized through dispossession of land and labour was first framed as a civilizing mission during the colonial period and later as development in the post-independence Kenya. I therefore show that exploring migrant labourers involves a temporal and spatial dimension as well as an intimate lived everyday experiences.

From the study, I establish that migrant labourers are an ambiguous fluid social formation without the structural consistency and unity to be a class. But within the civilizing-disciplinary-governmentality continuum they form an incoherent and chaotic subjectivity engaged in subversive response to the graduated and continuous dispossession wrought by the plantation economy. Connecting the lives of migrant labourers to the sugarcane belt villages and the panoptic structure of the factory, agromanufacturing is revealed as process of continuities of willed improvement which at the core is about building coherent domination to facilitate dispossession of land and labour. Through chapter three and five, I show the temporal and eventual spatial insertion of communities into the logic of agromanufacturing development. I show how commercial agriculture was established in Kenya as part of the colonial mission to civilize the natives by linking spatial order with personal work ethic. Essentially I point out that

inherent in this civilizing project was a capitalist dispossession process targeting African lands and labour.

The emergence of plantation agriculture in Kenya as a mode of developing led to the racially structured dispossession and deprivation of Africans and generation of migrant labour as a social identity made of landless and temporarily employed poor men dislocated from their home villages. Force and coercion were its founding mechanisms, destruction and recreation of social spaces its operating processes. After independence as in the case of the region under study, land loss to the Sugar Company, rural unemployment, poverty and regional politics provided the impetus for steady flow of migrant labourers. This too sustained the dispossession of labour and land from the villages by the commercial farming enterprises, but this time under the rubric of rural development through rural industrialization. I show how coercion was a recurrent strategy of acquiring land and destroying traditional subsistence agriculture leading to increase in general entrenchment of poverty and household vulnerability rather than strengthened livelihood bases as the entry of development had envisioned.

A sense of abandonment and regret pervades the region's villages and indigenous community members. From the foregoing, the launch of the Sukari Sugar Company under the dispossessive development imaginary and political economy undertaken by the independence Government modelled along the colonial structure. By its own logic and organization, agromanufacturing projects operate on the twin demand of labour and land. In the South Nyanza region, land was acquired through evictions and dislocation of the indigenous community. The displacement serves two reinforcing roles for the factory: create a large pool of desperate labourers (who are landless) and avail large land s for planting sugarcane. On the other side, the affected community experiences in new ways of deprivation- the destruction of traditional subsistence systems, interruption of social relations and inevitably the intrusion by outside practices. The result is a perpetual clash of interests which each side attempts to

explain away by crafting an appropriate narrative. This temporal dimension of the establishment of agromanufacturing development is covered in chapter two and four.

In chapter three, I focus on the lives of migrant labourers in the Sony labour camps that have seen the promise of employment turn into a series of temporal and informal casual labour stints. Focusing on an archetypal migrant labourer, Roy, the chapter shows the process of recruitment and survival in the plantation and eventually the survival strategies they adopt to adapt. Through him I show how the social lives of the migrant labourers have become materially and symbolically symptomatic of the processes of dispossession, extraction and disposability that agromanufacturing is actually about. Through the detailed and unapologetic exposure of the living conditions and experiences of the migrant labourers, I show how every aspect of individual and household lives becomes a variable of both disciplinary experience, subject positioning and brutal objectivation, all invested towards the maintenance of the ruse of development under agromanufacturing production. The key point made is that while the plantation economy transforms social structures and relations, it corrodes people and their every day lives into subjectivities perpetually exposed to precarity, exclusion, invisibility, disposability and erasure. Yet despite all these, the migrant labourers have crafted room for agency.

In chapter five, I focus on placemaking to show that dispossession brought by the sugar factory mode of development has imprinted itself into the local landscape materially and symbolically. The factory, continuing the colonial project of civilizing natives to modern bureaucratic work habits and lifestyles, ensures that all resources are ordered and coordinated towards production of sugarcane ostensibly to increase incomes in the region centred on the factory. The process fuses spatial and social processes, practices and experiences to create a flowing overlap of extractions, dispossession and subject making. This magnifies the panoptic

effect of the factory and plantation through not only the visual present, but also through the connected behavioural effect on people and households.

What is captured also is the way development essentially adopts and assumes a patently capitalist logic- maximizing the profits and accumulating them elsewhere- and thus disrupts its premised transformative narrative. Consequently it generates spatial dispossession and deprivation in the villages and labour camps leading to inter-dependent spatial hierarchies where the factory complex is significantly higher than the village. The factory complex maintains the utopian idea of social improvement alive, giving the region an aura of development with all the features of modern-day industrial complex- pollution, security, recreational facilities, private schools and health centre- ensconced in immaculately maintained islands of affluent lifestyles. On the other hand, the labour camp remains a place where absolute dispossession converges and tries to survive. The village is a site of abandonment – left behind literally and figuratively. But still deprivation, differentiation and abandonment are all located on a continuum of dispossession which defines agromanufacturing as development in Kenya.

To capture the contradictions of agromanufacturing subjectivity, I explore how the migrant labourers negotiate private and public interactions. These interactions are closely linked to the construction and activation of gender roles. The private sphere is linked to the feminine roles, located in the household which is the arena of the private suffering. The masculine role is assertive and plays out in public as the men employ it to eke out enjoyment through consumption practices. However, the fundamental finding in this chapter regards the apparent reversal and inflection of moral and gender norms in an emergent moral economy. I posit that this reversal of traditional norms and gender role utility recasts the civilization motif of development and the processual dislocation of the private into the public as a product or property for capitalist dispossession. This is the logic and irony of agromanufacturing

development: that social geography is continuously recast and reconfigured on and around the individuals on whose bodies the industry is designed, implemented and highlighted- the migrant labourers and dislocated villagers at the plantations' periphery.

7.3 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

I began with the puzzling anecdote from a former plantation migrant labourer who asserted that the plantation is a hard place where one sweated to eat. Through lives of migrant labourers of the Sony sugar company, I explored what sweating means and how people eat and survive. I have demonstrated the actual material and symbolic veracity of this statement and shown that indeed it is not an oxymoron but a real lived condition. I have shown that migrant labourers are a created identity and socially emergent group on whom the dispossession of land and labour is implemented and imprinted. This process began by the colonial government persists to the present thus demonstrating the persistency of development as willed regime of improvement that is continuous and fluid in its logic and adeptly adaptive in practice. This logic informs rural development interventions in Kenya. I have also shown that dispossession is not just a structural or relational condition but a personal and spatial experience which thrives on differential access to and accumulation of the benefits and costs of development by different groups. I have further shown that dispossession deprives and subverts social relations and traditional safeguards and practices to for its application. This destruction of social relations and traditional safe guards links the contemporary development interventions with the colonial civilization projects hence revealing their common chaotic character.

Beyond the academic fascination with the overlapping subjectivities: spatial, temporal, individual and collective, there is a bigger and more enduring reality. The development through dispossession of rural communities in Kenya is implemented by a collaboration of individuals more adept at locating and utilizing the opportunities and fissures accompanying the

development projects and facilitated by State collusion. Through the collusions, the development nirvana intended becomes a mirage and a harrowing experience in which there is no end or boundaries. Everyone and every aspect of life are sucked into serving the development project, to create a continuous loop between the macro and micro aspects of place temporarily and spatially. For instance children and women in the village live through the consequences of decisions made by ignorant blindsided men many of whom have long been deceased.

The deceptive thing however, is the way in which the structural violence and chaos are recast to blame and stigmatize the migrant labourers and the villagers as degenerate and problematic. This needs to be the concern of ethnography, especially in view of the growing attention paid to new global land deals in which more rural communities in the South are likely to fall prey to. A more granular analysis which combines focus on social formations, power and governance needs to be ingrained in such ethnographies, which must necessarily and, as a matter of principle, be engaged. Applying the concept of chaos allows such granular approach since it accounts for the unpredictability and chaotic turn of development projects.

7.4 FINAL COMMENTARY ON STUDY

Throughout the chapters, I have shown a deliberate profligacy towards application of theory in examining the lives of migrant plantation labourers in Kenya. My rationale has been two-fold: first my core focus is to highlight the subject of plantation migrant labour as a legitimate subject of anthropological and sociological ethnography in/on Kenya. So far, it has been a subordinate element of studies focusing on other issues such as health and historicization of class and elite formation. Related to this is the subject of land use and ownership in Kenya which has been ignored in relation to establishment of plantation economies in rural areas. Throughout the study, I link plantation economy to local lives and

the global capitalist of dispossession, thus laying ground for subsequent studies which could link this to the emerging patterns of the global land grab.

Secondly, following the suggestion by Foucault that theories are tool boxes, I opted to pick concepts and experiment their utility. Most of the research on development in Kenya has been overly conducted on Marxian terms in which the concept of class is predominant. While acknowledging the utility of class as a structural model for explaining differences in social formations that have emerged in Kenya, I felt new concepts that capture the constitutive practices that create and sustain the local differentiations such as those observed in the South Nyanza region. Instead, I suggested and tried the concepts chaos, governmentality and its precursor disciplinary society to show that agromanufacturing is in effect a disciplinary project which over time develops modes of regulating and conducting itself in and through its chaos.

The dissertation critiques the classical teleology of development as willed improvement which trace as a legacy of the Eurocentric and modernist history of social transformation. This implied adherence modernist legacy connects the Sony sugar project with the colonial agriculture and the national development planning. The colonial civilizing projects, the national development planning and the rural transformation of South Nyanza are connected by their tendency to produce disorder and chaos, rive with informality and precarity. My study finds that the concepts of chaos and discipline provide a creative framework for examining the sugar plantation relations and elucidate the logic of migrant labour and dispossession practices. They also elaborate the experiences and everyday lives of migrant labourers and communities under capitalist plantation developments in Kenya. I have suggested rather covertly that the concepts of chaos and discipline, especially the notion of panopticon serve this purpose because of their ability to navigate between structural and elemental positions. However, to further illustrate the complexity of conceptualizing the plantation migrant labour in Kenya, I also highlight the finding that the disciplinary subjectivities are continuously compromised. The subjects are

neither resistant nor docile but actively adapting, adopting and adjusting the relations to make space for their survival. This is my key finding: that agromanufacturing development in Kenya has become an arena of reproducing chaotic and graduated dispossession continuously changing and thus demands of ethnography to be innovative in selection and application of conceptual tools.

To this end, I recommend that more detailed and extended ethnography needs to be undertaken in the rural plantations, especially sugar plantations in western Kenya focusing on work-family relations. This would reveal the actual extent of social transformations that the agromanufacturing development interventions have actually wrought on the communities. It would also contribute to alleviating the poverty of data which would facilitate more nuanced theoretical engagement on the subject. Further such ethnography, could build on my introduction of a Foucauldian approach to further explore the possibilities of understanding disorder and chaos as conceptual products of development as a disciplinary project. As a Kenyan, I can not ignore the conditions of living and working the migrant plantation labourers survive through. I suggest that policy-oriented research is urgently needed to explore the working conditions and social security of the migrant labourers with a view of recommending ways to give them a modicum of decent living. The reality is as I have shown in the study that migrant labour is part and parcel of the Kenyan agromanufacturing, it is not going anywhere hence the need to address its structural and institutional conditions.

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