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Agency and Structure: The Case of the Youth in Nairobi Slums

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Abstract

This paper explores how the agency and structure are interrelated, by following the case of the youth in Nairobi slums. The case of Nairobi slums is exploring interrelation between agency and structure in a specific setting, where agents everyday experience vulnerability, marginalization and exclusion.

In this paper, structures are conceptualized as social patterns constituted by cultural schemas, moral norms and biological predispositions and surroundings, that may either empower or constrain free actions of individuals. Likewise, human agency is understood as always expressed in some relational terms, conditioned by an environment or other factors. This approach to the link between agency and structure is inspired by Giddens structuration theory. I find the writings of Giddens, Archer and Bourdieu the most adequate to grasp human capabilities of changing their surroundings. Each of them, in their own way, highlights the fact that even if we are by nature restricted by multiple factors, we are changing society by every action we conduct. On an empirical level, this inquiry seeks to explore how youth in Nairobi slums navigate through the challenges of everyday life, and to gain an insight in motivations and opportunities that drive them to participate actively in their communities. Living in the slums and being restricted by slum structures, leave youth with the lack of options. Some of them find inspiration for action by being a part of youth groups. My findings suggest that the main drivers that enhance agency of youth in slums are commitment to community and desire to bring dignity to other dwellers of slums. The conclusions in this paper are based on analysis of household surveys conducted in 2018, as a part of the Planbørnenfondens Safe and Inclusive Cities Program, and interviews I conducted in spring 2020.

Key words: agency, structure, collective action, commitment, youth, slums

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1 Introduction

1.1. Epistemic Object: Definitions of agency and structure

Since its birth in the early 19th century, social sciences have been dominated by the idea that society is not just constituted by groups of individuals, but also of social and cultural structures that determine individual action and thought. The atmosphere of the whole era was enhanced by the industrial revolution and new scientific discoveries which led to a tendency of thinking in a manner of mechanisms. Mechanism included reducing knowledge in many scientific branches to the simplest comprehensible facts, such as the belief that human behavior can be understood in the same manner as studying the work of machines. In the social sciences, those ideas were reflected in observation of the social world through deterministic structures.

At least until the late 1960s, according to Sztompka (1994:30) and Latour (2005) amongst others, social sciences were dominated by the “Durkheimian problem”, suggesting that individuals are subject to real and external “social facts”. Social facts - institutions, values, norms, law, etc. according to Durkheim, as external factors constrain and define individual behavior. Later, the idea of “social facts” continues to be present in functionalism, structuralism, poststructuralism by the term “structure”.

As Sewell (1992:1) pointed out, “structure” is one of the most important, elusive and undertheorized concepts in the social sciences. At the same time, he indicates, it appears to be impossible to do social science without the term “structure”, but also nearly impossible to define it adequately. As a starting point, I adopted the Levi-Strauss definition. According to him, structure is “the totality of elements, related in that manner that none can undergo a change without effecting changes in all other elements” (Levi Strauss, 1963:279).

This implies that the relation between agency and structure is dynamic, in constant change. Thus, one structure can not overpower individual freedom, because in the next moment that structure could be changed by some other effect. That dynamic indicates also how social change occurs.

Levi- Strauss's definition, however, does not exhaust all important factors of structure in the field of social sciences and surely is not sufficient for the purposes of this paper so I will refer to structure as unconscious or conscious patterns constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas, moral norms and sets of resources with a feature to empower and constrain social action, but at the same time be reproduced and changed by that action. Taken as a modified version of Sewell's definition inspired by Giddens work (Sewell, 1992: 27).

The aim of this paper is not to discuss structure as such, but to explore what impact structure has on agency and if so, how agency can change structure. Therefore, the second important concept to introduce is an agency. Agency here is related to terms such as capability, self-efficacy, intentionality and so on. Similar to the concept of structure, the agency often appears in academic texts but what scholars mean by it can differ considerably from each other and also from the common usage of the word.

According to Ahearn, the term agency gained popularity in the late 1970s as scholars reacted against structuralism's failure to take into account the actions of individuals. The 1970s activists who challenged existing power structures in order to achieve racial and gender equality inspired ideas in academia towards the development of new theories which included the potential effects of human action (Ahearn, 2000: 12). Entering the sphere of feminist theories the term resistance was adopted as a crucial aspect of agentive expression (Mahmood, 2001: 205).

Afterward, one of the pioneers in the popularisation of the term, sociologist Antony Giddens, described the agency through an individual's ability to observe his own experience and ability to give rational account for the action. That idea is conceptualized by his *knowledgeable agent*. Furthermore, he managed to gather agency and structure as interrelated and united elements of social life (Giddens, 1986).

As the discussion progressed, new definitions of agency appeared. Introducing capability, Amartya Sen refers to the potential but also to the actual power of agency in terms of valued choices (Gangas,2016:24). Here into the debate enters 'a person's well-being' (Sen, 1985a:197-198, *ibid*), and 'achieving self-respect or being socially integrated (Sen, 1999:75). Sen reveals agency through commitment and normativity. Further, Bandura contributed to the debate through his concept of self-efficacy and emphasized the importance of self-perception as

a key factor for a successful conduct (Bandura, 1995, 2000). Both Sen and Bandura complement Giddens in the analysis of agentive motives of youth in Nairobi slums.

The tendency of giving primacy to human action and analysis of everyday interactions, in literature called - Weber problem, had a deeper impact on society. As Tamara Hareven suggested, focus on human agency in the new social history has changed our image of common people as passive victims of historical and institutional change. “The discovery of individuals’ and families’ effort to seize control of their lives has exorcised the ghosts of social breakdown from the study of migration, industrial workplaces, urban communities and institutions of welfare and social control” (Hareven 2000:326, Brettell, 2002: 432). Hareven’s observation can apply to the patterns that could be encountered in the actions of slum youth.

That dichotomy, giving primacy to the individual on the one hand or the society on the other, ceases to prevail in the works of Giddens and Bourdieu. Both argued for mediation between the agency and the structure. Giddens (1984) criticized interpretive sociologists for the imperialism of the subject, and functionalism and structuralism for the imperialism of the object. He attempted to harmonize that opposition through his theory of structuration. Structuration is the process in which social agents change the structures, while at the same time the structure enables them to act. With a similar intention, Bourdieu (1977) introduced his *habitus*, as a concept to explain how the structural aspects become concretized in human character.

Other suggestions explain relations between the agency and structure, and some of them will be discussed later in the text, because, broadly, this inquiry aims to understand better how individuals shape their actions, and what role structure plays in it. It is worth noting, that interrelation is widely differently understood, some modern theorists, such as actor-network school, deny pre-existing social structures, stating that structures only emerge from actions within the network.

1.2. The research question

The interest to explore this topic in the context of a slum environment came to me last semester, while I worked on a project related to African slums. A colleague and I made a research for the Planbørnefondens programme *Safe and Inclusive cities*. The main goal of the programme was to empower youth to take initiative, such as participating in community work or starting small businesses. Many development programs nowadays are based on empowerment and participation. During the development lectures at that semester, we also discussed the topic

of such programs and their efficiency and purpose. The topic brings questions such as: *Can empowerment of individuals produce social change and how?*, or *Can it be expected from limited and vulnerable youth to improve their conditions only by their own forces?*. Individuals in slums are often marginalized and excluded from wider society. It is often anticipated that a limited position weakens their agentic capabilities. This paper aims to question that assumption.

To sum it up, my research question is :

What the analysis of relation between agency and structure reveals about agentic endeavours in the case of youth in Nairobi slums ?

1.3. Life Conditions and historical notes in slums of Nairobi

To say that youth in the slums face enormous limitations in shaping their lives should come as no surprise. Slums are known to be the places of the greatest deprivation of material welfare in societies and one of the most vulnerable places when it comes to healthcare and educational opportunities. Slum inhabitants face a lack of an institutional and legal framework to guarantee them the safety and security, so in many cases, they experience unsecure conditions in housing and unjust public policies (UN Habitat, 2007:10).

Slums are highly populated urban areas, characterized by poor housing structures. In Kibera, for instance, population density is estimated at 200 000 people per km², making it one of the most densely populated informal settlements in Nairobi (UN Habitat, 2020). Shanty homes are often built in a hurry, made of materials such as tin, wood, plastic sheets or anything that can be reused, and as such are often inadequate to resist heavy rains, high winds or other bad weather conditions (UN Habitat, 2003: 11). The vast majority of slum inhabitants experience scarcity of the basic needs; everyday life is marked with a lack of reliable sanitation services, a supply of clean water and reliable electricity (ibid).

According to UN-Habitat, in 2012, around 33% of the urban world population, approximately 863 million people, lived in such conditions (UN-Habitat, Global Urban Indicators Database, 2012).

The global overview shows that the number of urban population living in slums in 2012 was the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (62%), Southern Asia (35%), Southeastern Asia (31%), Eastern

Asia (28%), Western Asia (25%), Oceania (24%), Latin America (24%), the Caribbean (24%), and North Africa (13%). Among individual countries, the proportion of urban residents living in slum areas in 2009 was the highest in the Central African Republic (95.9%). Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of people living in slums dropped, even as the total urban population increased (UN Habitat, 2012: 99).

Slums tend to grow for different reasons. For instance, rapid rural-to-urban migration, poverty, forced ghettoization and poor urban planning (Bird & al, 2017: 1, Wanjiru & Matsubara, 2017).

One of the explanations for the origin of modern slums, is the increase of urban population in the mid of 20th century, due to the fact that agriculture ceased to be the main source of income for the majority of people. Many people started to leave villages and move to urban areas primarily because cities offered better job opportunities. Ooi and Phua, among others, suggest that urbanization creates slums because migrant workers are forced to settle in slum areas, and local governments did not secure proper settlements for new habitants (Ooi & Phua, 2007: 27).

In the case of Nairobi slums, many scholars indicate that slums are a product of urbanization brought by colonialism. Wanjiru and Matsubara suggest that planning of Nairobi as a city (the 1898 Plan for a Railway Town, the 1926 Plan for the settler capital and the 1948 Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital) in the early 20th century had already included the unfair distribution of terrain which allowed segregation of the city, still evident in today's structures of Nairobi. The Europeans who arrived in Kenya in the 19th century, created cities such as Nairobi mainly to serve their financial interests. The Africans in Nairobi were considered to be temporary migrants who would only stay in the city while there was a need for more labor force. However, due to the cost of travelling back and forth between rural and urban areas, families gradually migrated to the urban centre and settled in the poor areas, because that was the only place they could afford (Wanjiru & Matsubara, 2017; Obudho & Aduwo, 1989).

In the following sections, I will first introduce theoretical concepts, and then the methodology I used to tackle my research question. Finally, in the last section I will present my findings.

2 Agency and structure in theories of Giddens, Sen and Bandura

I divided my analysis into three parts. In the first part I focused on external factors that influence dynamics between agency and structure, in the second on internal factors, and in the third on the expression of those dynamics, or the agency itself. Inspiration for design of analysis came from the Sabina Alkire text about subjective quantitative studies on the human agency (Alkire, 2005). She believes that the first significant empirical approach to measure human agency is found in the theoretical work of Albert Bandura and his self-efficacy approach. Bandura is, in the wider scientific community, acknowledged for his contribution to the field of psychology with social cognitive Theory, and as a link between behaviorism and cognitive psychology. His self-efficacy theory holds that empowerment or human agency has internal and external determinants. In the case where people perceive themselves as being capable of accomplishing certain actions, they are more likely to undertake them. Consequently, actions and reasoning are more determined, and people can effect changes in themselves and their situations through their own efforts. According to Bandura, people's efficacy is limited by the external environment as well as by their own behaviours (Alkire, 2005: 237, Bandura, 1997, 1986).

2.1 External factors: Resources and agency

Thus, In the first part I observed how agency and structure are interrelated in the context of the environment, or external factors. More precisely, how the environment influences the agentive capabilities of the youth in Nairobi slums. The factors that influence the environment are: slum structures, western NGOs, development aid programs, and globalisation. I analysed external factors as follows - a) external factors can either limit some actions because actors experience lack of resources, or b) external factors as resources can enhance some action by giving opportunity to actors.

The term resources in this context originates from Anthony Giddens. In the glossary of his book "The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration" (1986) he defined structure as "Rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action" (p 377).

Further, he divided resources into: allocative resources that are “material resources involved in the generation of power, including the natural environment and physical artifacts; allocative resources derive from human dominion over nature” (Giddens, 1986: 373), and authoritative resources - “non-material resources involved in the generation of power, deriving from the capability of harnessing the activities of human beings; authoritative resources result from the dominion of some actors over others” (ibid).

According to Giddens, rules and resources are inseparable and together create ‘modalities’ of structuration. In other words, agents via interaction, knowledgeable capacities, rules and resources re-create a structure and thereafter social practices (ibid:28). Even though rules and resources in structuration theory are considered to be conjoined, I separated rules from resources analytically because structural aspects of rules in this context could be more clearly and directly observed as internal factors that influence behaviour and agentive capabilities from the “inside”.

2.1.1. Resources across the time and space: Reproduction of social change

Further, the concept of resources was useful to grasp the relation between external factors and their influence on the action. That concept brings closer the abstract and complex idea of the structure without entering the foucauldian world. Slums due to the lack of resources can easily appear as regimes of oppression, but that is only one of several options to analyse the case. To some extent oppression cannot be denied but, supported by Giddens, another option to observe individual agents is as they represent the only active power in social relations, who employ resources to make things happen, intentionally, or otherwise. Following Giddens (Giddens, 1984:181):

“structural constraints do not operate independently of the motives and reasons that agents have for what they do. They cannot be compared with the effect of, say, an earthquake which destroys a town and its inhabitants without their in any way being able to do anything about it. The structural properties of social systems do not act, or 'act on', anyone like forces of nature to 'compel' him or her to behave in any particular way. “

Thus, domination or power of external factors such as NGOs, structural constraints of slums, poverty, corrupted institutions or development aid programs are not able to just ‘act on’ youth without their consent. Resources are media through which power is exercised, but power exists

“within social systems which enjoy some continuity over time and space presumed by regularisation of relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interaction.” At the same time,” all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors”.

That is called the *dialectic of control* in social systems (ibid:16). By the nature of things, agents are always able to engage in a dialectic of control and influence a social change.

Regulation of social practices is what constitutes the realm for power, domination, institution, or any durable social form. What is essential for Giddens theory is the notion of “continuity over time and space”. To begin with, the life of an individual is constituted of day-today routines and over a period of time these routines continue to reversibly exist in the realm of social practices. Consequently, after the life span of one individual through next generations and continuity of social practices, these social routines are transformed into 'supra-individual' *durée* of the long-term social institutions, and the *longue durée* of institutional time` (ibid).

Figure 2: Development of social integration in system integration across extended time-space

Social integration	System integration
Reciprocity between actors in contexts of co-presence	Reciprocity between actors of collectivities across extended time-space

Social integration presents a level of face-to-face interaction, social practices that happen at the exact moment in the exact place. Afterwards, in modern times, the dimension of time-space is extended, enabled through system integration and institutionalism in general, humans become able to stretch out our co-presence across time and space, and transfer the abstract concepts of time and space into our social practices (Giddens, 1984: 28). Time and space distanciation, as Giddens calls that process, is the stretching of social systems across timespace, based on mechanisms of social and system integration (Giddens, 1984: 377).

According to Giddens, that process is one of the main characteristics of modern times. In pre-modern cultures social life was concentrated around smaller geographical units. All cultures had some modes of time-reckoning and forms of standardised spatial markers, and that designated abstraction in relation towards time and space, but still primarily connected through the situatedness of place. In modern time, the separation of time from space involved the

development of an “empty” dimension of time. The invention of mechanical clocks and globally standardised time zones- symbolize changes “which could not only be local, but inevitably universalizing”(Giddens, 1991:17). Equally, the global map presenting the universal projection of places reminds us of the new perception of space. That provided the ground for new modes that coordinate social activities without necessary reference to the particularities of place (ibid).

That process is due to modern technology, more evident than ever. The changes that happened as a result of the stretching of the time and space, therefore will be demonstrated as well in the western world as in Nairobi slums. Possibilities of nowadays communication and availability of information brings *novum* ungraspable to fully understand social life at this moment, and thus leaves open space to discussion regarding all imaginable implications on the relation between agency and structure, even in the short period of the few following years.

In addition, the availability of information changed the position of trust. Modern societies are characterized by the disembedding of social institutions. That disembedding is characterized by expert systems, as Giddens called them, systems that place time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients that make use of them. From there, expert systems enter all aspects of social life in conditions of modernity. Trust, however, is not directly given to knowledgeable experts, but after the process of intrinsic reflexivity, modern individuals choose to either give his/her trust to the institutions or not. (Giddens, 1991:18,19).

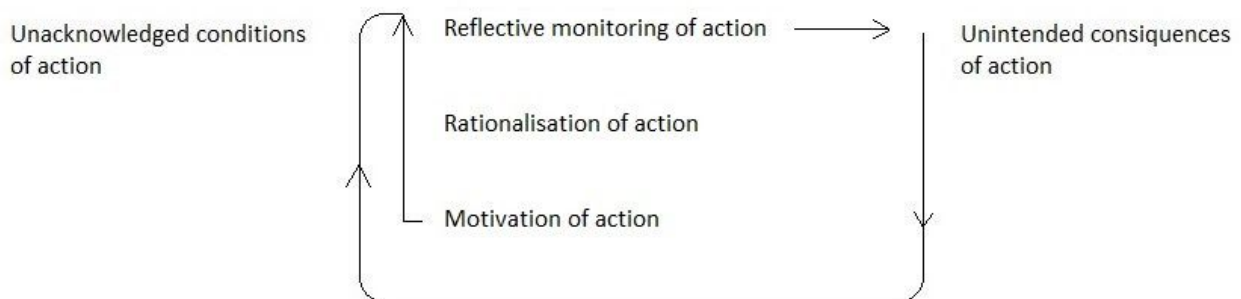
2.2. Internal factors

That point led us to the next perspective from where relation between agency and structure could be observed. Before expressed in social relations, agency is set in motion by internal forces. Without reflexivity, motivation, biological, psychological structures and value systems agentive endeavors would be just random actions. Giddens emphasises precisely that distinction when he defines agency. The focus in structuration theory is on knowledgeable agent, one who is capable of knowing the reasons for one's decision, explaining them and constantly monitoring one's actions. To recall, Giddens considers that the creation of society is founded on face to face interactions. Inspired by Mead, Garfinkel, Goffmann, and Wittgentsein's philosophy, he brings to social sciences a mixture of psychology, particularly behaviorism, and analytical philosophy - by analyzing language and behavior, he points out how that is crucial for understanding the basic characteristics of social interactions.

2.2.1 Elements of agency in Giddens theory

In Giddens theory, the main characteristics (embedded sets of processes) of interactions are: reflexive monitoring of action, rationalization of action and motivation of action.

Figure 3: Cycle of action explained through motivation that influence reflexive monitoring: produces and it is produced by unintended consequences of action



Reflexive monitoring of action describes the purposive character of human behavior, agents ability to monitor, observe its own behavior and interactions An agent is capable of

observing other people's reactions and then acting, monitoring the flow of conversations and keeping track of their own actions. Reflexivity in this context should not be understood as 'self-consciousness', but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. The differentiation between reflexive monitoring of action and self-consciousness is that self-consciousness refers to an individual's ability of knowing, awareness of self-action, behavior, appearance and so on (not necessarily in the flow of action, across time and space), while being able to monitor reflexively your own action by the definition includes a purpose, an intention prolonged through time-space. Monitoring implies acting of a purposive agent, who has reasons for actions and is capable to elaborate them. According to Giddens, monitoring makes the continuity of social practices possible (Giddens, 1984: 3, 376).

“Thus it is useful to speak of reflexivity as grounded in the continuous monitoring of action which human beings display and expect others to display. The reflexive monitoring of action depends upon rationalization, understood here as a process rather than a state and as inherently involved in the competence of agents.” (ibid:3)

Rationalization of action refers to the capability of competent actors to explain grounds of what they do, as they do it, such that if asked by others, they can supply reasons for their activities (ibid: 376).

Giddens distinguishes the reflexive monitoring and rationalization of action from its motivation. Unlike monitoring and rationalization, motivation is not directly related to the continuity of action. Motivation refers to the potential for action, while monitoring and rationalization are derived from the mode in which action is carried out by the agent across the time. According to Giddens, motives rarely have a direct impact on action, most of our day-to-day practices are unconsciously motivated (ibid: 6). However, that is not relevant for the purpose of this paper so I will leave it without further explanation. Additionally, my findings are eventually directed toward actions that would be considered gravely motivated.

2.2.2. Moral norms as structures in the formation of action

Although Giddens included the notion of meaning in reflective monitoring of action by addressing its purposive nature, and to some extent left a place for different sources of motivation in his theory, he didn't really emphasize ethical aspects of agency. Thus, I needed to look further to understand my findings. From the stories I heard it was evident that the motives that propel youth in slums are deeply ethically driven. To an extent, it would not be wrong to categorize youth agency as devoted, committed or such. The actions I captured were all about the commitment toward community and improving living conditions for others. The notion of that type of motivation in modern literature first was captured by Viktor Frankl. He suggested that the primary motivational force in human beings is search for meaning. While Anthony

Giddens typified an agent as a rational and conscious individual who through routinization of everyday life finds a sense of meaning, or ontological security, as he calls it. Other authors such as Frankl or Sen focus on more ethically driven aspects of agency. I believe there is nothing wrong with Giddens observation, after all, humans are complex creatures and the way humans act cannot be captured by only one theory. However, I found different observations regarding motivational factors relevant to explain the patterns of action in slum areas.

Amartya Sen recognizes an agency aspect as “the moral power to have a conception of the good” (Sen, 1985: 186). According to Sen, commitments may replace the agent's own goals. His theory of commitment as an alternative source of motivation, aims to undermine the behaviorist explanation that rational behaviour must be self- interested (Sen, 1977, Cudd, 2014:38). Acting on commitment means doing something out of a principle, a promise, a group norm, or the expectation of the future welfare, rather than acting on one's own prosperity. (Sen 1977:95)

Such behaviors, based on commitment are common modes of human behavior. However, they seem to deny classical definition of agency, if agency is understood as the agent acting on his own goal. Thus, Cudd suggests a broader theory of human agency, in which human agency can be expressed as fundamentally social or biological in origin, rather than just intentional (Cudd, 2014, 50). According to Cudd, the problem lies in the idea that social commitments and moral norms are seen as something external of agentive free expression. If they are external, then moral norms perform some kind of action on agency. That dichotomy, however, exists only if we see moral norms, commitment and society separated from agents. Bourdieu resolved that problem by introducing the concept of habitus into social sciences (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus speaks about that internal content, an embodiment of cultural capital, moral norms and rules within human beings. Similar to Heidegger's *Dasein*. Humans are by nature involved in the world. Thus, commitment, as intentional care for others, may show the manifestation of *habitus* or *dasein*, that embodiment of “being part of the community.”

2.2.3. *Commitment to the community as an embodiment of a structure in agentive endeavours*

As I previously mentioned, Giddens understands rules and resources as unseparated modes of structure. However, I analyzed resources as external factors, and left rules to the internal factors analysis, for the following reason. Rules have a component that is embodied into human beings, as part of social thinking, or cultural capital. Fundamentally, rules represent “methodical procedures” of social interactions, or how to act properly in a social context. Social

rules can be compared to formalized prescriptions of games (Giddens, 1984:19), although most of the rules implicated in the production and reproduction of social practices are only tacitly grasped by actors: they just know how to 'go on' with their own social intuition (Giddens, 1984: 23). Here, Giddens aligns with Sen and his account of commitment as behavior expected from good players. Actors intuitively know how to 'go on', because rules exist also as internal forces of their agentic capabilities.

Cudd (2014, 46-47) suggests few different strategies to explain the role that commitment plays in social thinking and behavior. For instance, she suggests that commitment can be seen as a means of building a reputation or as identity formation. In both contexts, the motivation derives from social group norms. Furthermore, agents make choices based on principles that are recognized in their communities but they also recognize them as beneficial or morally good.

To understand the possible background of that reasoning, let's look at the Prisoner's Dilemma.

Figure 4: The Prisoner's Dilemma

The Prisoner's Dilemma		
	B stays silent (cooperates)	B betrays A (defects)
A stays silent (cooperates)	Both serve 1 year	A serves 3 years, B goes free
A betrays B (defects)	A goes free, B serves 3 years	Both serve 2 years

The solution for the Prisoner's Dilemma lies in the commitment to cooperate. Despite the fact that betraying can give freedom to an individual, that choice is risky, because if both take into account only one's own goals, in this case: A betrays B, and B betrays A, both will serve 2 years. In the case of cooperation, both will serve 1 year. The conclusion that commitment to cooperate gives the best results indicates a kind of social thinking, as a perception of "being part of life in the community" (Sen 1985:212). Thus, according to Sen, persons can act rationally on group-based preferences that are not their own but from which they rationally act as if they were. According to evolutionary theory, long-term survival might be enhanced by the ability to

cooperate and follow rules. Commitment to community, thus act as embodiment of social thinking and present how accepting rules benefit actors.

2.3. Third part: Expression of agency : Collective action

The missing piece, that I believe will both clarify completely the role which commitment plays in agentic endeavors and how agentic capabilities are expressed in Nairobi slums, is Bandura's differentiation of the agency by its forms. Although the conceptions of the human agency have been essentially limited to personal agency conducted individually, that is not the only form of agency people can express navigating their lives. Many actions depend on the efforts achievable only collectively. People are united to work together to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own. Thus, social cognitive theory extends the conception of human agency to collective agency. Social cognitive theory distinguishes three different forms of agency - personal, proxy and collective (Bandura, 2000: 75).

Bandura extended his concept of self-efficacy on collective efficacy that is perceived in the mind of group members as group act through the behavior of its members. Following his logic, people's shared beliefs in their collective efficacy influence the types of future they aim to accomplish through collective action, and level of the effort they will put into the group endeavor, as well as resilience or vulnerability to the discouragement when collective efforts fail (ibid:76). In the article *Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing society* Bandura states :

“Many of the challenges of life center on common problems that require people working together to change their lives for the better. The strength of families, communities, social institutions, and even nations lies partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort. People's beliefs in their collective efficacy influence the type of social future they seek to achieve, how much effort they put into it, and their endurance when collective efforts fail to produce quick results. The stronger they believe in their capabilities to effect to alter national policies and practices (Marsh, 1977; Muller, 1972; Wiegman, Taal, Van den Bogaard & Gutteling, 1992; Wollman & Stouder, 1991)” (Bandura, 1995: 35).

Problems that youth in Nairobi slums face are problems that are common to their whole community and giving support to each other is the glue that unified them. Changes that are already made through the collective efforts enhance further their collective efficacy, and encourage them to continue improving living conditions around them. Additionally, being committed to community work, and helping others gives meaning to their everyday life. The

positive strength they find in a collective, enhance their individual agency and encourage them to improve their own life.

Similar to Sen, Bandura points out that self-efficacy is “misconstrued as self-centred individualism and selfishness, against communal attachments and civic responsibility”. Full actualization of agency does not necessarily create an individualistic lifestyle. Rather, Bandura indicates that a high sense of efficacy promotes a prosocial orientation characterized by cooperativeness, helpfulness and sharing (ibid: 77, Bandura, 1995: 34).

2.3.1. Enhancing agency: high sense of self-efficacy and routinization of action

There are a few points I would like to repeat here. Culturally universal, self-efficacy has the ability to be expressed in different degrees. First, having a low sense of efficacy, or expressing limited agency does not imply that someone has no agency. Second, the degree of actualization of agency depends on different factors and can be enhanced or hindered by different factors.

According to Bandura, people can improve their lives by exercising influence in areas over which they have some control. The more people practice control to changeable conditions that affect their lives, the more they contribute to their own futures. (Bandura, 1995: 32) That proposition aligns with Giddens. Agency can be expanded, simply by having control upon daily routines, and then further to the influence on social change in communities.

Further, low sense of efficacy is not exclusively a problem of an individual. In societies that undermine personal development, collective efforts can change institutional practices and create environments that encourage individuals to develop a higher sense of efficacy. Personal and social change complement each other in improving the quality of life (Bandura, 1995:35). That is shown in the case of youth.

3 Methods

I started to work with the data from Safe and Inclusive Cities during my last semester in autumn 2019. As I mentioned before, my colleague and I got the task to estimate how migration influences violence in the african slums. The Safe and Inclusive Cities is an initiative organized by Planbørnefonden aiming to reduce violence in the urban slums. The programme applies a “with and by youth” approach that intends to encourage young people to drive changes in their own communities. It is focused on the youth in urban slums of East and Southern Africa; in major cities of Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. As a part of the initial phase of the programme, in the year 2018, Planbørnefonden conducted an extensive number of quantitative interviews, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. In total, 4,889 survey interviews and 46 focus group discussions (FGDs) targeting the youth aged 15—25, and 81 key informant interviews (KIIs). That data was the starting point of my analysis. Considering that I narrowed down my target group for the purpose of more detailed research for this paper and focused only on Nairobi slums, I was left with 1,201 survey interviews, 12 FGDs and 20 KIIs from Kenya.

3.1 The Data Set and Interview Guide

In detail, that data includes:

- 1) *Surveys*, targeted youth aged 15—25 in settlements in Nairobi and Kisumu, cities in Kenya. The survey tools covered the following six modules;
 - a. Mobility;
 - b. Decent work and opportunities;
 - c. Safety in the community, the city and during public transportation;
 - d. Knowledge of local duty bearers and exercising civic duty & linking social capital;

- e. Active participation & social capital; and
- f. Experience with harassment and violence

2) *Focus Group Discussions*, targeted youth aged 15—25 from the aforementioned cities covering the following seven modules;

- a. Defining your community;
- b. Mobility;
- c. Working opportunities and conditions;
- d. Participation;
- e. Speaking up & influencing local authorities;
- f. Feeling safe in public spaces and public transportation; and
- g. Violence in public spaces

3) *Key Informant Interviews*, targeted relevant stakeholders from government, civil society organizational and community leadership. The KII guides covered the following three modules:

- a. Decent work and economic opportunities;
- b. Active citizenship by young women and men; and
- c. Violence

Since my research question asked about choices and decisions of individuals, it was necessary to supplement the survey results with qualitative data. The qualitative data contributed to look into the reasoning behind results found in the surveys. The data I had access to already was designed by a mixed methods approach, and provided qualitative data in terms of focus group discussions and key informant interviews. However, I extended the existing data with five semi-structured interviews to gain more personal insight in the conducted research. Although five interviews is not a significant amount of interviews, in combination with FDGs, KIIs, and survey results, they complemented the data set I had, and contributed to better understanding of

the overall picture. Similarly, findings from FDGs and KIIs provided the link between survey results and the five interviews, and also gave more validity to the interview findings.

I conducted the interviews online using different communication technologies, such as FaceTime, Skype, and WhatsUp for the first two interviews and recorded them with an application LydOptager. Later, for the last three interviews I was using Zoom, both for recording and conducting interviews. Zoom provided much better sound and connection quality and that consequently improved the conditions for conducting the interviews.

I found the first respondents on Facebook, and he introduced me to his friend for the second interview. Later, Planbørnefonden connected me with S. in Nairobi. He sent me a list of the people who participated in the baseline study, and then I found other respondents. Considering that I chose to conduct the interviews from Denmark to Kenya online, I was to some extent limited to determine how representative the respondents were. Before I conducted the interview I did not realize that, I could expect my interviewees to be more active members of the community than the sample represented in the survey. All five respondents represent the target group considering their age years and connection to the survey. However, all of them are connected to development programs and community work. That created bias, both in comparing the results of the survey (According to the survey, 37% of Kenyans were active members of the community in 2018), and regarding the research question that is focused on activity of individuals. With unexpected bias, the interviews of active members of a community brought a good insight in reasoning of the youths that already express their agency to a higher degree. In combination with FDGs, they showed plausible patterns of agentive expressions that can be observed in many more cases in African slums. Interviews are presented by initial letter of person, and time, for instance (N: 12:12). The interviews varied in the length from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Following a mixed-methods approach, I integrated questions from surveys into an interview guide.

I divided the interview into 4 topics, that later will be analyzed following the criteria:

1. Reasoning own action: in terms of participation in community, job and education
2. External factors: perception of conditions in community
3. Perception of own future and values

4. Daily routines

Full Interview Guide is attached in Appendix 1.

I analyzed interviews together with the survey by following criteria:

External factors. For instance, the environment as an external structural factor has an impact on agency via *resources*. Availability of resources indicates the amount of options that agents has in their environment. Thus, if agents are having an abundance of resources in their environment, agentive choices one can conduct will increase, and *vice versa*.

Internal factors. Through the *rules* (cultural capital and moral norms), structures as internal psychological factors supply individuals with a spark that initiates their actions. In the case of Nairobi slums, what are internal factors that interfere with the relation between agency and structure?

Expression of agency. According to Bandura, agency can be expressed in different forms: individual, collective or proxy. What type prevails, when analysis of interviews and surveys is conducted? And what that type reveals about the interrelation of agency and structure?

I used these three criteria, to structure the analysis and to evaluate the results. These criteria together are relevant to provide insight in causality of relation between agentive capabilities of youth in Nairobi slums and its structural hindrances or stimulants.

3.2. Research design: Benefits of Mixed-methods Approach

The use of both quantitative and qualitative data in this paper naturally led to a mixed-methods approach. The literature has been debating pros and cons of this approach for more than fifty years, (Bryman, Smith, Heshusius, Creswell & Plano Clark, Morgan, Tashakkori & Teddlie).

The mixed-methods approach in research design merges quantitative and qualitative research techniques into a single study. Its main hypothesis is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems that neither approach alone can answer. According to Kaur, mixed methods research is important today because of the complexity of problems that need to be addressed, the rise of interest in qualitative research and the practical need to gather multiple forms of data for diverse audiences (Kaur, 2015).

In addition, the reasons why the mixed-methods approach gained popularity through time are: reduces the biases associated with qualitative and quantitative approach alone, gives credibility to findings, and also allows the social phenomenon to be seen as a process, rather than staying static with quantitative approach only (Bryman, 2012: 637).

The restrictions I expected to encounter in my analysis of the quantitative data were mainly based on the design of the questionnaire, because it was made for more diverse purposes than those of my research. However, that diversity is minimized by the fact that the aim of the Planbørnefondens initiative, to encourage young people to be more active in their communities, is not far from my interest to research the agency of young people.

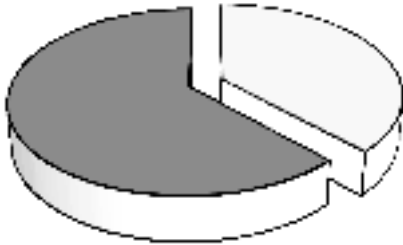
4 Analysis

4.1. Part 1: Impact of external factors on the relation between structures and agency in the case of youth in Nairobi slums

In the first part of analysis I focused upon the environment and other external factors that have an impact on the agentive endeavours of the youth. As it was mentioned before, the environment as an external structural factor impact agency via *resources*. Availability of resources indicates the amount of options that agent has in their environment. Thus, if agents have an abundance of resources in their environment, agentive choices one can conduct will increase, and *vice versa*. Resources, in the Giddens terminology, include material resources, such as income, and institutional resources such as educational institutions, governmental institutions, and so on. Thus, to understand the availability of resources that youth can utilize in their agentive endeavours I looked into the following factors: income, job and educational opportunities. Further, I looked into violence and lack of institutional trust as psychological and external factors that have a strong impact on the youth in the slum environment.

Survey findings confirmed that youth in Nairobi slums face various challenges when they seek job opportunities. Lack of job opportunities is one of the main resources for the high number of unemployed youth. That is due to the fast-growing population in the urban settlements. Along with the fact that the available opportunities in the professional job market require a level of skills and education which is lacking among the majority of the youth living in the slums (Baseline report, 184).

Are you currently involved in any work/activity that brings you income? 62 % no, 38% yes



62% of respondents answered that they had some income. In addition to the Q: *To what extent are you satisfied with your current work situation..?*, 91% answered that they are not satisfied with their income. The number of people who had some income, during the time when I conducted the interviews (due to the Covid19 lockdown) tremendously decreased. That also shows the fragility of the youth's position.

According to Planbørnefonden data, in 2018, 1% had none education, 7% some primary education, 13% completed primary education, 28% had some secondary education, 34% completed secondary education, 11 % attended some college or higher education, while 6% completed college of higher education. Further, at the settlement level, approximately 32% of the youth in Kibera, 33% in Mukuru, 34% in Mathare reported that they had completed vocational training. However, when I asked N., girl from Kibera, about her job and why she does not work in the IT-sector when she is having finished IT education, her answer pointed out complexity and obstacles in seeking jobs for youth in the slums:

“Personally, I do not have a job. And I have never been employed. I studied IT in college, but when I was looking for a job it was very difficult for me to find one, and I started community work... Only job that I did was house help for 6 months, and then I quit my job. Payment was 2000 kenian shillings (\approx 18,5 USD). Then I took the scholarship for college. I finished college but I never got a job. I looked for a job, I dropped CVs everywhere but nobody called me for an interview.

I think in Kenya, what happens. If you don't have connections, finding a job becomes very difficult, and again if you are from a poor background, it becomes difficult to get a job. It is a very small percentage that can get a job, but in most cases you must have connections to get a job.

So what happens is that NGOs, they are our savers, organizations accommodate some of us. We have so many graduates from the universities, but they do not have a job, simply because they do not have connections, they do not have someone to hold their hand, take them to a certain office to get a job. If you find your talent, there is no need for you to go to university. ...If you go to university, you spend 4 years, and never get employed because you are not the son of the rich man or a daughter of a rich man, so there is no need for me to go to university. And universities are very very expensive.” (N. 5:39-11:20)

Despite the critique towards development aid and western programs in Africa in many publications, which is often given by justified purpose, NGOs also play the role of savers when it comes to questions of given opportunities to youth. Conducting the interviews, I met smart and talented young individuals who had opportunities to study only by taking scholarships for education (C:25:01, N, 8:01). Further, all of them are included in some type of community work, organized or inspired by international NGOs. The youth is addressing different issues that communities of slums are facing, for instance. data collection on gender based violence (N 6:59), crimes around water and electricity (A: 21:18), gang violence (J.18:30) and so on. Often as a part of several organizations, larger such as Ghetto Foundation or PlanInternational, and their own initiatives, for instance Community Mappers or one woman initiative in Kibera. Further, according to N.'s words, being a part of community work, sometimes is not the first choice, but due to the lack of other job opportunities for educated youth, becomes an important part in expressing their agency. In the absence of other resources, some of the youth in Nairobi slums, through development programs, find a place to earn enough money to support the whole family. That position not only brings some income, but gives them a sense of purpose.

Structures of development are knitted in a slum environment as allocative resources in the form of humanitarian aid and material goods, and as authoritative resources in educational programs, and participatory development programs. As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, authoritative resources bring the generation of power, deriving from the capability of influencing the activities of human beings. Due to the lack of other job opportunities, participating in community work, for the youth in Nairobi slums, presents their way to generate power. Unfortunately, that generation of power is limited only to these few options. Lack of material resources, job opportunities and sufficient income, does not provide youth in Nairobi slums with plenty of power to support their agentic endeavours.

The analysis of external factors grants a few conjectures. Recalling Giddens, regulation of social practices across extended time and space generate durable social forms, institutions, and eventually systems. Slums are easily influenced by external factors and also changeable, because they lack continuity in the terms of regulation of social practices. Considering that social

practices are based upon face-to-face interactions, individual action can with less effort produce social change. Thus, agentic endeavours in slum environments, even without a lot of available resources and generated power, in a shorter time-span can drive changes in the structures of their communities.

4.1.1 Violence as a structural factor in slum environments

Discussion on environments that have an impact on the agency of youth, can not be spared of one of the biggest issues that slums are facing, crime and violence. Conducting the interviews I noticed that people define and experience violence quite differently. I heard stories about post-election violence, gang violence, rape and gender-based violence that women often experience in slums. Some of them feel safe because they know the people who live around them, or because they know the area. Some talked about an atmosphere that is never peaceful, and that violence can happen any time. One of the young guys directed perspective on the other side of the story and told me how he “terrorized people” (J. 11:41).

Approximately 97% of all surveyed youth believe that violence is manifested in their community. It comprises near equal proportions of male (97%) and female (96%) youth and youth aged 15—17 years (95%) and 18—25 years (97%) (Baseline report, 177). That indicates, to start with, how the perception of living in a violent environment is deeply integrated in the mind of youth. Since the perception of the violent environment is subjective, even when it is collectively perceived, conclusions regarding the manifestation of violence can not be directly extracted from the perception only. Still, recalling Giddens definition of structure which exists as a memory trace, I suggest that violence is one of the elements that reproduces the social system of slums. That is supported by the following statement:

“The existence of the informal settlements in itself shows that we accept and normalize crime and insecurity because in a slum, due to its setup, anything can happen and nobody can be held accountable. It shows that the government has neglected the rule of law and safety with the people living in the slum. So, it promotes because it becomes a breeding ground for violence and conflict due to its set-up.” Key informant, community leader, Nairobi (Baseline report, 174)

Another serious issue related to crime in slums is the huge amount of gender-based violence. The Kenyan news portal Capital News reported the increase of the cases of violence against women and girls from the period since the coronavirus outbreak in March till the date of 23. July. 2020. Health Chief Administrative Secretary Mercy Mwangangi said that at least 5,000

cases have been recorded since mid March, many of them involving girls aged under 18 years (Kihiu, 2020).

As a part of advocative calls for human rights protection, it is common to cross upon the information that one out of four teenage girls is raped each year in Nairobi slums. The problem of gender violence is addressed also by the Save and Inclusive Cities program. From the Baseline study, on the question “*Who are the single most common victims of violence in your community?*” 60% answered women, precisely 34% of young women aged 18-25, and 26% of girls aged less than 18.

Planbørnefonden data shows the number of 22% of woman who experience sexual exploitation, unpropriate touching, attempted rape, or being forced or pressured into sex. When it comes to reporting and collection of official data on cases of gender-based violence, the same counts for crimes in general, indications point out that many cases are not reported. Therefore, the data numbers are conflicted, and unfortunately can be expected to be even much higher.

4.1.2. Underreporting of violence and position of trust: youth groups and expression of agency in safe environment

Underreporting of gender based violence is certainly connected with the sensitivity of the question, and a general perception that this type of violence is “normal” (Baseline report, 21), but not exclusively. Some of the street violence will not end up reported because it is “not ok to be a snitch” (J 15:35). According to Giddens, modern individuals possess institutional reflexivity and will question institutions and systems. As it is mentioned before, trust is not given directly to knowledgeable experts and institutions. Actors in the modern era reflect upon it and decide if institutions deserve their trust. If the system is corrupted, what could be the purpose of reporting violence. The youth of the Nairobi slums are facing police brutality on a regular basis. For example, during the coronavirus curfew, according to the Independent Policing Oversight Authority, police officers killed at least 12 people, including a 13 year old boy who was just standing on the balcony during the curfew hours (Ombour & Bearak, 2020).

Similarly, in 2018, there was no significant difference in the proportion of reporting an issue either to authorities, NGOs or community leaders.

Q24. *In the last 12 months, have you reported a problem or talked with any of the following about problems in this community?*

	No	Yes
A.local/county authority	1079	122
B. non-governmental organization	1084	117
C.community elders/leaders	1001	200

According to the numbers above, the majority of youth do not report the problems they are facing in their community. However, trends show that youth are more keen to talk about problems with community leaders, although that applies only to 7% more than in other shown cases.

Answers are quite different when similar questions are asked to active members of communities. 439 of 1201, which is approximately 40% of respondents, are members of some group.

To the Q30. *From each group(s) that you are a member of, did you receive any emotional help/counselling, economic help or assistance in helping you know or do things in the last 12 months?*

The answer was the following:

	Yes	No
Work related union or trade union		76
19		
Community based organization	128	32
Peer group. i.e. men or women or youth group	170	34
Political group	23	19
Religious group	198	39
Savings group	175	25
Sports group	104	35
Other	21	13

Compared to Q24, that indicates that active members, those who express more agency, are more keen to talk about their problems and address them in communication with some sort of authorities. A community based organization, youth groups, religious groups, savings and sport groups provide a safe environment to young Kenyans. Further, considering that on Q24 only

10-13% of young people showed the willingness to report violence or talk with institutions about their problems, the likeliness that active members of some groups will do the same rise to 88%.

Lack of trust in institutions, though feeling comfortable around your social group can be again interpreted through Giddens conceptualizations. Ontological security is a concept that describes “confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity” (Giddens, 1984:375). According to Giddens theory, ontological security is guaranteed in a safe net of daily routines, familiar patterns that one can easily rely on, and count on. Being an active member of some group gives an individual a safe place to address their problems. Ontological security and institutional reflexivity combined, explain behavior and actions that people are conducting. Analysis of external factors suggest that youth in Nairobi slums do not trust major institutions of society, but inside smaller community based groups as youth groups, religious or sports one.

In that way, to some extent, that trust is given to NGO- institutions, because NGOs through participation programs, inspire youth to organize themselves in youth groups. The following presentation of findings will show that trust, which is important for a person's agentive capabilities, is not only based on external factors, or just institutions, but more likely on closer relations in the community and our internal value systems.

The presence of NGOs, indicates one more aspect, and to mention, only in Kibera, are sometimes more than 500 active organizations (Vo, 2019). The youth of Nairobi slums are grown up in modern times and in the globalized world. Giddens argues in his book *Modernity and Self-Identity* that issues of class and inequality closely mesh with his arguments and that he is not attempting to discuss those inequalities, stating also that modernity produces difference, exclusion and marginalisation (Giddens, 1991:6). His remarks on modernity, however, apply in the case of Nairobi slums, because being young nowadays entails sharing some of the same value systems as youth in the other part of the world. Due to the presence of international NGOs and modern technologies at least, social relations are instantly extended across wide spans of time-space. The same reasons nurture the reflexivity and criticism upon the institutional organization in the surroundings of the modern slums (ibid:20).

On question 39. *In general, do you feel that the majority of local authorities/ politicians/ local influencers in this city can be trusted?*

The survey results show next :

	Yes	No
Ethiopia		247
1011		
Kenya	179	1022
Uganda	522	670
Zimbabwe	338	860

Taking into consideration that youth in the Nairobi slums experience marginalisation and exclusion, the data above shows also that they highly express criticism towards authorities. Modern people reflect upon the organizations, tend to question authorities and validate these actions. If there are not enough results to justify the trust to institutions, people will not give them trust.

When that data is compared with the results regarding trust given to the community, trends are distinctly different.

Response to Q38. *In general, do you feel that the majority of people in this community can be trusted?* show that 16% more kenyans trust people in their communities than the local governance. That seems unexpected considering the high rate of crime in informal settlements.

	Yes	No
Ethiopia	585	673
Kenya	371	830
Uganda	501	691
Zimbabwe	462	736

The analysis of external factors showed some obvious facts regarding the slum conditions that we are already familiar with. Youth in Nairobi slums do not have an abundance of resources available to express their agency, but they anyway find a way to navigate through daily life. From the findings, it is possible to observe how development as a resource assists the youth in finding their ways. Moreover, the notion that a safe environment exists in youth and other

groups, indicates that collectivistic structures enhance agency. That notion will become more clear in the following analysis.

4.2. Part 2: Internal factors: Importance of internal aspects of agency

As a second criterion of analysis I focused upon the internal factors that have an impact on youth and their agentive capabilities. Internal factors consist of psychological and biological factors, and they are highly manifested in social rules. Moral norms are rules that represent cultural capital and by impacting social thinking consequently shape actions. Main findings in this part of analysis, unfortunately, I could not extract from quantitative data, because quantitative data did not contain material to analyze internal factors, so this part of the analysis is mainly based on FGDs, KIIs, and five interviews.

Internal factors represent a crucial aspect of agency. No matter how external factors could restrict agentive capabilities, agency can be carried on by internal factors. To draw that point, Giddens gave Bettelheim's example regarding the life conditions of the contraction camp prisoners. Bettelheim shared that only prisoners who managed to maintain some small sphere of control in their daily lives, which they still regarded as their 'own', were able to survive (Giddens, 1984:63). Control of the action in daily life and belief in own capacities; both a sense of agency and practicing the agency, creates a solid base necessary to expand the field of own actions. That base, similarly to defining the action through monitoring, reflexivity and rationalization, comes almost analytically. Analytically, because it is hard to imagine starting any conversation without assuming that your interlocutor has reasons to claim what is being claimed.

Behaviorists with their concept of routinization, as well as cognitive psychologists emphasizing the importance of self-efficacy beliefs, argue more about the amplification of agency than just strictly about the agency. Expending the awareness of action, monitoring the action, and clearly presenting the reasons for action, will psychologically enhance agentive capabilities and thus open at least some room for action, regardless of the barriers that environment places.

4.2.1. High level of self-efficacy and moral values

All youth I had the opportunity to talk to, shared a high level of self-efficacy. When I asked them: *Do you think that you can make changes in your community and how?* I got an straightforward answer, such as: “Yes” or “I already made some changes” (Jo 15:08). They strongly believe in their self-efficacy, both in the power of individual and collective action. They also share ideas about how social change can be manifested, and that is, similar to Giddens and Bandura conclusions, through the amplification of individual agency. For instance, J.A. answered that he can make changes in the community “by ensuring that youths know their rights and stand up for what is right” (Ja). Similarly, N. believes that change in society occurs “by making people understand that problems that affect them they can solve themselves, and that united they can make Kibera better.” (N. 35:10). She also added that, “in fact I need to change myself first before I start to change my community.” (N. 48. 02). Both J.A. and N. pointed out that individual expression of agency is a result of one’s knowledgeability and awareness of possible choices.

Further, while belief in self-efficacy creates a fundament for an action, the action itself is propelled by the motives one has for conducting the action. Motives vary and overlap, and as Giddens pointed out, most of the daily actions are often unconsciously motivated, so it is not often clear what exactly motivated some action. However, by the analysis of responses regarding the motives for actions of the youth in slums it is clear that they follow similar patterns. Some of them are motivated directly as a reaction to their own life experiences. N. was raped when she was 16, and after the struggles and traumatic years that followed she started a woman initiative focusing on the importance of data collection and psychological support for young girls that are facing the same reality as she once did.

J. O. who was a member of a gang and the perpetrator himself, today educates and mobilizes young boys to advocate for human rights.

Some of the motivation comes as an outcome of a slum environment, as being an active member of youth groups is often a rare option for youth to be productive in daily life. When I asked C. why he is a member of a youth group he told me that being associated with youth groups makes you do something positive for the community. As youth in slums is often associated with crime and drugs, youth groups offer different perspectives. “It is a place where you can learn from each other, exchange skills and pass time”, he said, “There is no time to be in the wrong places.” (C: 29:00).

Similar answers can be found in focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The construction: “An idle mind is the devil's workshop” I have read on several places in

different interviews, for instance by Annesta Wambui Mwangi, Secretary Nyumba Kumi Mathare. Both, C. and A. answers implicate how rules, in this case moral norms, are embodied in the human being. Choosing between two moral poles - being in the wrong place vs. being in the right place, represents how agents decide upon the action they choose considering their moral beliefs. That is both an example of interrelation between structure and agency, and also how rational action can be the outcome of group-based preferences. In this case, structure and agency are interrelated in that manner that structural domain of moral beliefs is incorporated in the social practices in the way that by following rules of some groups, the agent will improve his/her position in the group, and thus have more control on the other segments in the life. Reasoning behind is explained by Prisoner's Dilemma and the importance of group-based preferences in individual action.

As I mentioned above, internal factors were unfortunately difficult to analyze from surveys, FDGs, and KIIs, because they do not directly ask about rationalization of action or motivation behind. What I found relatively related was answered in the Q41 *Do you feel as though you are really a part of this community?*. In Kenya, 957 out of 1201 answer affirmatively, ergo 80% feel belonging to a community. To some extent that indicates commitment, or tendency towards commitment to community, as a feeling of belonging is not synonymous with commitment. However, since the aim of this inquiry was to understand the reasons and motives for action, conducting the interviews I asked more precise questions regarding it, and in the answers dominated the patterns that can be described as commitment and passion to contribute to the community. The tone of each story shared the passion for community work and in return the sense of meaning that community work gives them back. They are motivated to improve the conditions of others to an extent that drives their other actions. For example, when I asked about plans for the next five years, C. answered me:

“I have passion for the stories in my community, so I am thinking about continuing filming work and also doing community work as a social worker mostly. It is already, I am like a social worker, because I am doing a lot of community work. And also I want to go back to school and study law so that I can defend people from my community. Sometimes I come across those violations and I do not know how to address them and legal reachness in my community it is on the lower sight - people get away with human rights violations, and apart from telling these stories I feel these stories need legal interest, so I am going to in future, want to be familiar with law.... What I value most in my life is dignity. Because so many people live undignified here.. Most undignified wake is when you cannot put food on the table, you cannot access clean drinking water, the housing ____, children cannot get to school ...All of this summarized into what we call - lack of dignity. My goal is to make people live a dignified life. Dignity is something that really matters. “ (C. 31:02)

Community work plays such a huge role in their lives, that C. later said that also he “feel(s) very dark” without daily visiting others as a part of his social worker duties (C2 12:00).

More, when I asked about routines, N. showed her devotion to the girls and shared her motto “When I wake up I must like reaching out to 10 young women in the community. That is what I do, whether I am easy, whether I am not, whether I am like, do not want to do anything , I have to reach 10 young girls”. (N, 53:00)

Commitment towards community gives us an example of how agency and structure can be related so closely that it is hard to divide when structure stops and when agency starts. The feeling of commitment to the community is integrated into a human being by shared reality, moral norms, and cultural capital. In the context of the stories from the slums, commitment offers to youth also a survival drive. Where there are not a lot of options given by surroundings, people can unite to improve their conditions together. Experiencing changes in the community due to the collective efforts and believing that the efforts can bring more positive results are ways for youth to stay socially active and respectful members of the community.

4.3. Part 3: Expression of agency: Collective action

After analyzing this phenomenon from its external and internal factors, I ended the analysis by figuring out what the type of agency prevails in the case of Nairobi youth. I followed Bandura’s suggestions that agency can be expressed in different forms: individually, collectively and proxy. My findings point out that in Nairobi slums dominantes a collective agency. Further, that shows how structures of common language, shared values and collectivism strengthen both an individual and collective agency.

By the time of conducting the last interview, I already started to notice the patterns of shared values and collectivistic spirit. The respondents shared the stories of collective initiatives, violent structures, lack of collective dignity, supporting others. They share knowledge, and their own experiences, for the benefit of the community. Therefore in the last interview I opened that topic straightforwardly and asked T. what makes the people in slums so united. He answered me extensively:

“What makes that people unite ... so is that, you find out that challenge that I am facing is same, same challenge that my neighbor somewhere, and also other people somewhere in our hood are facing, so when you come and sit together, spend some time together, and trying to discuss and also try to brainstorm how I am going to get solution and face the issues we are facing in our communities, because we find out that when I sleeping hungry, and also your neighbor sleeping hungry, and also someone somewhere sleeping hungry, if you can't come together and speak

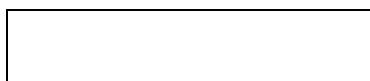
out. If you speak alone, other people will just take it for granted, and say bla bla . This is just a complaint. If you can organize for today, let's say, a press conference, and you speak like alone, and say, I am suffering, I need help, I need the government to help me with something, like provide me with food, or clean water, they can't take you seriously. But you know, if you organize a press conference, and you are let's say, like 30 people. I say that, we are 30 families that stay in Mukuru kwa Njenga, we are starving, we don't have food, we don't have clean water. We need the government to take urgent action, help us. The government will take you seriously. But when you try to walk alone and talk alone, as an individual, it becomes hard for you, for someone also to help you. Let's say maybe we have civil society, becomes hard for them to also help you. We are a group of people, we are facing the same same challenge and you want to come with the solution, you must unite and also speak with your own voice.” (T. 34:00- 38:55)

T. holds that individual protest in the slum environment would hardly be heard. The youth in informal settlements unite due to the nature of the problems they are facing. Many of the challenges that slum inhabitants have are common problems that everybody shares. That requires people to work together to change their lives for better. As Bandura conceptualized, common problems ask to approach with collective efforts, and that is expressed through collective efficacy. People are united in collective action to secure what they cannot accomplish on their own. T. thoughts complement also the reasons that motivates youth. As it is presented in the second part, commitment to community as a product of moral norms as social thinking, contributes to collective action.

Further, the collective action that I encountered in slum areas, is primarily characterized by passionate engagement of the youth. The youth is organized in smaller groups, and often an active member of one group, participates on the several different projects with other groups. Electa Opar, Youth Officer In charge of Kibra Sub County (KII), described youth in informal settlements as a vibrant and engaging group. She also emphasised that youth are familiar with political participation and their rights:

“These are youth that know their rights and they participate so much in political forums. For example there is an area called Kamukunji in Kibera whereby at least every Sunday you will find these young groups meeting there to talk about their political issues within the community, and when it comes to political engagement, like during the time before elections, you'll find the young people between 18 to 35, they'll want someone representing them, to view as a political representative. They believe that person will articulate their issues, and when it comes to voting, the youth actually come out in large numbers meaning they know how important politics is in their lives.”

As I already mentioned above, youth in informal settlements organize themselves in the youth groups. According to the data, on the Q27 *In the last 12 months, have you been an active member of any group in your community?* Kenyans are most active among 4 countries.



	No	Yes
Ethiopia	1099	159
Kenya	762	439
Uganda	849	343
Zimbabwe	973	225

Thus, in 2018, 37% of Kenyan youth actively participated in some groups. Further, on the following Q28 *In the last 12 months, have you been an active member of any of the following types of groups in your community?* (more than one answer is possible) Kenyans answered:

	Yes	No
Work related union or trade union	95	344
Community based organization	160	279
Peer group. Ie. men or women or youth group	204	235
Political group	42	397
Religious group	237	202
Savings group	200	239
Sports group	139	300
Other	34	405

The most popular groups are religious, youth and savings groups. Regarding the lack of job opportunities, the youth started to support each other in their entrepreneurial ventures. NGOs programs, such as Safe and Inclusive Cities encourage that approach. For instance, savings groups represent such micro-financial model, where small groups of individuals save together and take small loans from common savings. That gives the opportunity to start a small business or pay a rent. Key informant interviews acquaint about the increase of small agriculture businesses in Nairobi slums.

Youth groups usually gather around some specific issues, which can be gender-based violence, waste issues or scholarship. For instance, in a focus group discussion girls age 15-17 in Kibera answered:

M: how many of you have joined or are in youth groups?

R: MYM, meaning Missionary Youth Movement. It helps the church bring the youth back to the church. I am the chairlady and we are about 255 youth.

R: green bells, it was created to help ladies who have misused their lives

R: our group name is called project elimu. It promotes dancing and helps orphans by offering school fees or scholarships and other needs. We are about 200 people.

R: project elimu gives us with school shoes and bags

There is also a broad spectrum of problems that youth believe they could address with collective efforts. That confirms shared beliefs in collective efficacy, and according to Bandura, increases the possibility of addressing their problems. To have a closer look at, the table that represents the types of issues that can be addressed by youth groups is attached in Appendix 2.

4.3.1. Overcoming Tribalism

In Nairobi slums, while the youth is becoming more united, determined to challenge their common issues together, tribalism can present an obstacle to collective action. The reasons behind the violence, to some extent, are related to tribalism. After the post-election violence 2007 in Kenya, where 1,500 died, and 600,000 got displaced, tensions between tribes remain to recent time (BBC, 2008). Reasons behind the gang violence could also be traced by tribe separation. However, the data shows that in Nairobi slums can be encountered both social harmony and tribalism.

When asked in the focus group discussion, M: *What one word would you say is related to safety?*, one group answered: R: Love. R: Good interactions. R: Unity., and another: R: Unity, Peace, abstain, love, trust, patience.

That Q was followed by: M: *What one word would you say is related to unsafety?*, first group answered: R: Crime. R: Corruption. R: Tribalism., and second group: R: Hatred, rape, disrespect, tribalism, dishonest, corruption

The analysis of tribalism as first word related to unsafety to some, indicates the tensions between tribes still remain. On the other hand, unity as a word related to safety, together with peace, love and good interactions, indicates how collectivism is perceived as a source of safety. Further, according to the survey, on question 40. *Do the majority of people in this community generally get along with each other(social harmony)?* 60% of young Kenyans answered affirmatively.

	Yes	No
Ethiopia	878	380
Kenya	724	477
Uganda	790	402
Zimbabwe	615	583

It will be interesting to have an answer on the same question from 2008, and 2020, to compare the results. However, the survey results from 2018 indicates that the majority (60%) of the community get along with each other. Also, all five stories I heard were telling me about the positive changes that are happening in informal settlements of Nairobi. N. talked about the changes in relation to tribalism:

“Things are changing. In Kibera, in terms of positive changes, I’ve seen a lot of change in Kibera...when we had post election violence 2007/2008, by the mention of my name people think that I am Kikuyu (37.35), and I do not have anything to do with Kikuyu. I am from Embu community. You couldn't myself stand in front of people to address them because I was shouted at. I was like.. You are Kikuyu, such kind of things ... But since transition, the communities now are embracing other tribes and I’ve seen myself personally, even working in the hotspot areas in Kibera.. and other tribes embracing me, and embracing my work, and having good team-work with other members of community...being able to recognize what I am doing. I think that is a good marriage. That has been very positive to me. Not just me, even with other people now, working in Kibera from other tribes. And being a young woman in Kibera from another tribe and working in Kibera..it is just so good.” (N, 37.35:40:01)

N. experience of positive changes in Kibera, and tendency that youth started to work together despite the tribal differences, narrate about the social change that occurs in more peaceful and cooperative circumstances. The stories about positive changes of conditions in slums can be followed years back. For instance, Bird, Montebruno and Regan (2017), analysed the data from 1999 and 2009 population censuses, and concluded that over the ten year period Kenya and Nariobi experienced major changes. That decade was considered to be the decade of upheaval. For instance, the adult population in informal settlements has a 51% rate of some secondary education in 2009 compared to over 71% in formal areas. This share has increased

rapidly over the preceding decade, by 11% in slum areas and 14% in formal areas. Compared to an increase of just 3% in rural areas, where the secondary education rate was just 12% in 2009. (ibid: 13)

As I already mentioned, social change in a slum environment, due to the lack of institutional stability, occurs rapidly. The slums are constantly changing: in the latest years that occurs in the direction of progress. Buildings in slums are improving. Access to electricity, and to the lesser extent sanitation, rose (ibid: 28). And, according to the findings in this paper, agentive capabilities of young generations are becoming more expressed.

4.4. Limitations and final remarks

While I was writing this paper, I encountered several obstacles. First, the choice of theory came with shortcomings. I chose Giddens structuration theory because of his approach towards agency. He balances the relation between agency and structure in the way that neither agency nor structure has a dominant position in explaining social life. However, his concepts are abstract and difficult to apply in empirical research, and for that reason it was challenging to make the integration of theory and the data. Especially, because the structure as a concept in social sciences comes ambiguously. Structures describe phenomena that are undeniable but almost impossible to empirically prove. Therefore, I tried to implement Bandura's suggestion to design analysis by external and internal factors and expression of agency. I intended that organization of analysis in that manner, minimized the ambiguity of conceptualization.

Second, the choice of methods also came with shortcomings. Due to the decision to use a mixed-methods approach, and to conduct interviews online, I could not have a clear insight into the choice of respondents I interviewed, and use selection criteria. Although that resulted in bias, the opportunity to talk with the productive and active members of communities, revealed the social patterns of the youths who are active members. I believe that these patterns are not unique only for these five individuals, rather, I believe they are applicable for the wider number of youth in slum areas.

In the analysis I uncovered the patterns that capture agentive endeavours of youth in slums. First, that pattern can be represented by a committed and passionate agency. Young

people in slums are motivated by a strong desire to improve the living conditions of the whole community, not just to improve their own position. They express the full potential of agency through community work and collective actions, encouraged by moral structures and united efforts. The obstacles of the slum environment that discourage people overcome by following the motto: “An idle mind is the devil's workshop”. Young people in the slums, facing the lack of job and other opportunities, perceive that once they found meaning in community activities and safe surroundings of youth groups, the choice that they could make was between being a member of a gang or being engaged in contributing to the social change in slums. These findings were complemented with the alignment of Giddens’ rationalization and Sen’s ethical focus. According to the findings of this paper, the expression of agency truly can be the result of well reasoned social thinking at the same time as an expression of the moral choices made out of principles. Both eventually show that sometimes the relation between agency and structure can be so close that it is difficult to separate one from the other. That said, it does not imply that agency is overshadowed by structures, but instead often empowered by them.

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