EDUCATING TO LEAVE

THE MIGRATION-EDUCATION NEXUS & TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN JINJA, UGANDA

By

STEPHEN MURPHY

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ABSTRACT

The links between migration, education and development are oft-cited yet under-researched. This thesis uses aspirations and capabilities to locate the processes of education and (im)mobility within the rural livelihood transformations of Jinja, Uganda. In so doing, the thesis examines the migration-education nexus in three ways: first, it explores how formal and non-formal educational experience informs the imagined futures of youth in rural Jinja; second, it analyses the spatial aspirations that arise from these educational processes; and third, it locates the migration-education nexus within community-wide narratives and broader processes of social transformation. The central claim of the thesis is that while many often migrate *for* education, the dynamics of rural educational experience can mean that youth also migrate *through* education. As such, the placelessness often associated with modern education has implications for the realities of rural life. When combined with broader narratives on the diminishing role of the village, youth face the potential of being 'educated to leave', as their uncertain futures are appropriated by a mobility imperative embedded in their experience of formal education. Through interviews, focus groups, transect walks, and social mapping, the study illustrates how the heterogeneous experiences of education influence the aspirations and capabilities of youth in rural Jinja to migrate, to stay, and in varying degrees, to develop capabilities that they have reason to value. In addition to examining the mobility imperative in formal educational experience, the study also includes an analysis of two non-formal approaches to education, that are focused on context-sensitive programmes of education. Taken together, this thesis suggests that meaningful discourse concerned with sustainable rural livelihoods should account for (i) varying forms of education that are relevant to rural livelihoods; (ii) the diverse (im)mobility patterns present in any given rural setting, both temporally and spatially; and (iii) the dynamic relationship between structural factors and expressions of individual agency.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“They say in the villages there is no future.”

Sanyu

1.1 Introduction

When I arrive at Sanyu’s home, he greets me with a warm smile and a welcoming handshake, inviting me to sit with him on plastic chairs arranged on the dusty patio outside his house. He is kind and asks me about my work. As our conversation delves into life in rural Jinja, Sanyu’s frustration gradually becomes apparent. He speaks of perceptions of the “good life”, particularly amongst the young people in the village. “You know, I feel it's very bad,” he says. “Schools only say, ‘Please after here, you should run outside for a job.’ They have never told us, ‘Please after here, go and set up a job (in the village).’”

As a father, farmer and community educator, Sanyu describes the fading hope amongst youth in the village as the reason for “running” to towns in search of jobs. His frustration is not so much with the long-established arguments associated with “brain-drain” theories (Bhagwati and Hamada 1974), but rather with the chimerical portrayal of the city. Over the years Sanyu learned that while life in the village has its own challenges, so too does life in the city: “People in the villages have the mentality that those in town are rich, but to our dismay when they return, they have nothing,” he explains.

Over the course of our conversation, Sanyu struggled to pinpoint the origin of this internalised rural inferiority. Nuanced and complex, it is an impasse that researchers, development scholars, and policymakers continue to face, with oversimplified, top-down approaches often becoming the ‘bottom line’ in rural development. However, Sanyu’s perspective is just one example from my fieldwork that laid bare a deceptively simple point: rural development policies should both listen to and incorporate, the lived realities of rural inhabitants. Despite the simplicity of this statement, the issue is complex. To begin, I suggest that Sanyu’s introduction to this thesis offers a helpful direction for examining the dynamic at play: “Youth are running to towns. *They* say in the villages there is no future.”

Thus, the central query of this thesis is why youth in rural Jinja see their future in the city. More specifically, it considers who “they” are that say there is “no future” in the village, how normative perspectives about the future of rural and urban life spread, and the ways in which these ideas inform the future-making endeavours of Ugandan youth. Drawing on fieldwork research in rural Uganda, I investigate these questions by more specifically exploring the educational experiences and mobility aspirations of young adults in two adjoining villages of rural Jinja, a district located in south-eastern Uganda.

My own position in this enquiry bears relevance. Growing up in Ireland, the rural-urban dynamic has persisted in the context of the pursuit of modernisation. With Ireland aggressively pursuing a neoliberal agenda in the ‘Celtic Tiger’, my own youth was characterised by discussion of the tensions between a set of apparently competing dualities: tradition vs. modernity, economic growth vs. sustainable progress, and individual aspirations vs. collective prosperity. As I entered university and post-graduate studies (having migrated), I came to examine the intersection of migration, identity, and progress, with an interest in both *why* people move and *what happens* when people move. Having examined both sides of the ‘mobility coin’, I visited Kenya for a tertiary education programme with youth from across East Africa, meeting some Ugandan colleagues who had posed similar questions. Struck by the similarity of questioning from undeniably different contexts, I began to ask myself: *what is the fate of the village? Who is part of this conversation? What forces and actors are relevant? What mechanisms and ideas are present?* This conversation with Ugandan colleagues was maintained long after my trip, where it became clear that my questions were not just personal curiosities. In particular, the conversations I would have with these colleagues would persistently highlight the contested role of education in development, with competing ideas about whose futures are valued, and the spatial implications that arise for young people in particular. To understand the formation of these experiences and perceptions in the context of the rural setting, I conducted a scoping trip in 2018, where it became clear that two villages in rural Jinja, Kyabirwa and Bujagali, represented a relevant locus of enquiry, and one in which I would need to immerse myself for a period of time.

1.2 Theoretical Contributions

It is a counter-intuitive reality that development tends to stimulate migration, where the social changes associated with ‘development’ – expanding education, incomes, and increased life expectancies – are connected to higher volumes of emigration from low-income settings.

Applying this macro-level perspective to Uganda, I am particularly interested in interrogating the perceptions and decision-making processes underlying why young adults aspire to migrate from the village to the city.

The central argument that runs through this thesis is that formal education has a significant role to play in the future-making endeavours of youth in two rural villages in Jinja. In particular, I argue that formal education in Jinja has been interpreted and experienced by youth in a way that dislocates their connection to the village and enhances migration aspirations for life and livelihoods located in the city, and beyond. The impact of education on perceptions of the good life, and the associated spatial imaginaries connected to such perceptions, is thus the pivot around which the dynamics of rural-urban migration are considered.

The theoretical thrust of my enquiry is twofold. Firstly, I draw on aspirations to understand youth future-making endeavours in the context of rural livelihoods. This derives inspiration from Appadurai's work on cultural globalisation and the capacity to aspire (2004), who illustrates the mechanisms through which individual aspirations reflect broader cultural contexts and ideas. This concept holds relevance for how varying forms of education shape the broader aspirations of young people in different ways and the potentialities associated with youth migration. Secondly, I utilise the capability approach, as originally conceived by Sen (2001) and Nussbaum (2003), to analyse the educational experience in rural Jinja. By combining aspirations and capabilities, I explore the ways in which individuals are able "to do" and "to be" in villages rooted in a broader ideological and cultural context and utilise the nexus between migration and education to examine the dynamic between rural and urban livelihoods.

While considerable attention has been given to migration and education in several contexts (Stark 1991; Dustmann and Glitz 2011; Datta 2022; Dyer 2022), there is comparatively less research on how the educational experiences of rural youth shape their migration hopes, aspirations and plans (Corbett 2007; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Rao and Patil 2022). In response, this thesis looks at the connection between education and rural out-migration by studying the aspirations that formulate within formal and non-formal education in rural Jinja and their spatial implications. The aim of this in-depth, qualitative approach is to contribute to the broader debate on the nexus between migration, education and development, arguing that beyond a simplistic conception of education as an automatic good of inputs and outputs, this nexus should provide greater insight into how varying experiences of education can influence the aspirations and capabilities of rural youth to migrate, to stay, and to develop capabilities

that they have reason to value. By describing how the 'urban bias' associated with modernisation is evident in the formal educational experiences of youth in rural Jinja, this thesis considers the relationship of these experiences to the formation of migratory aspirations, the enhancement of capabilities, the structural – and cultural – characteristics of livelihoods in rural Jinja and the broader effort to establish sustainable rural futures.

By placing the analysis of migration within broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010) in rural Jinja, this thesis is concerned with integrating insights from diverse fields and contexts to understand the variations of migration processes within the socio-cultural context of south-eastern Uganda.

With diverse views on the role of education in development (Levinson and Holland 1996; Verger et al. 2018; Leicht, Heiss, and Byun 2018), the multiple links between education and migration in a more generalised sense are well-established yet under-researched. As North and Chase describe (2022), understanding the role of education in a world where processes of mobility and immobility are present is essential when considering the structure of the internal and international movements across the world. In particular, this research seeks to answer the question posed by North and Chase on what theoretical frameworks and approaches are useful for understanding the intersection between education, migration and development.

This research is concerned with how formal and non-formal education shapes the 'imagined futures' (Beckert 2016; Engwicht 2018) of rural youth (18-30-year-olds) and the spatial implications that arise from these educational pathways. To address this, the central contribution of this project is the use of *aspirations* and *capabilities* to form a theoretical framework that analyses the transformation of rural livelihoods alongside the processes of education and migration in rural Uganda.

In the past two decades, the effort to understand aspirations alongside the capability to "lead the kind of lives [one] values" (Sen 2001: p. 18) has emerged in the fields of migration (Carling 2001; de Haas 2010) and education (Walker and Unterhalter 2007; Hart 2016; Unterhalter 2016). In both fields, the incorporation of aspirations and capabilities has brought a greater sensitivity to the relationship between structure and agency, supporting normative approaches to educational quality (Nussbaum 2003; Walker and Unterhalter 2007) and generating coherent insights relating to the drivers of migration (Carling and Schewel 2018). However, there remains a paucity of research on the use of aspirations and capabilities to examine the role of

education as one driver – amongst others – of human migration (Crivello 2015; Corbett and Forsey 2017; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Corbett and Roberts 2017)

This project examines how aspirations and capabilities are continually reshaped in various spaces of education (formal and non-formal) and the relationship this holds to migratory aspirations in two adjoining villages in rural Jinja. To do this, education and migration are placed within the broader context of the transformation of rural livelihoods, accounting for the mechanisms through which (im)mobility patterns have changed and the relationship of these patterns to the processes of education taking place in rural settings. As aspirations and capabilities are formed in the thick of social life (Appadurai 2004), utilising aspirations and capabilities establishes a strong conceptual framework for understanding the influence of structure and agency in the lives of rural youth (Heinz 2009).

By grounding the use of aspirations and capabilities in a particular context, this thesis seeks to transcend theoretical ossification often associated with research agendas that utilise analytical concepts. Indeed, conscious that aspirations-capabilities are increasingly incorporated into different research agendas, I argue that one key theoretical contribution of this thesis is the textured incorporation of aspirations and capabilities to rural Jinja. More specifically, by examining the conditions through which the aspirations and capabilities associated with staying and leaving (or both) ferment in the context of educational experience in Budondo, my research contributes empirical nuance to the theoretical view that freedom is the capability to choose "to do" and "to be" and engages consciously with the individual and collective tensions of this analysis.

Amartya Sen defines a capability as "a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being" (Sen 1993, p. 30). From one perspective, the view that human freedom is to be weighed in terms of people being able to make decisions in isolation from the collective has been a tension between the work of Sen and Nussbaum. For Nussbaum, widely defining a set of capabilities has resolved this, while Sen has suggested the need for capabilities to be determined by what an individual has reason to value.

Interpretations of the capabilities approach can be susceptible to methodological individualism as it pertains to social enquiry and cultural relativism as it pertains to a wider sociological imaginary. However, this thesis challenges these interpretations, locating its analysis of

individual aspirations and capabilities within the context of two rural villages, accounting for the familial values, community norms and institutional dynamics that permeate individual decision-making in rural Jinja. This perspective allows for the expression of individual wants and aspirations while paying close analytical attention to the ways in which these are formed.

While there remains much interest in the intersection between migration, education and development, the precise nature of the relationship between education and migration has historically been a contradictory theme in migration research. Czaika and Vothknecht (2012), for example, have found that the aspiration to migrate increases with one's educational level, while Carling (2001) found that each additional year of education decreases the aspiration to migrate from Cape Verde. More recently, Schewel and Fransen (2018; 2022) demonstrate how, in the Ethiopian context, higher levels of schooling, wealth, feelings of self-efficacy and paid employment are consistently associated with an increase in the likelihood of migration. Expanding the boundaries of this analysis, I argue that different *forms* of education influence conclusions about the nature of the relationship between education and migration. This ambiguity and nuance demonstrate the need to further unpack the migration-education nexus by examining the nature of education itself, analysing its socio-economic context, and understanding how this interacts with the aspirations and capabilities of young people (Boyden 2018; Crivello 2015).

This project does not claim that the use of these concepts explains the migration-education nexus in its entirety, but it does contribute to a growing body of research that is increasingly concerned with the complex drivers of migration processes. In 2011, Gina Crivello proposed that migration-for-education can be used as a conceptual tool to describe the movement of those who intend to fulfil their educational aspirations elsewhere (be it internal or international) (Crivello 2011). To complement this idea, this project suggests that migration can also be stimulated by forms of education in rural settings that are *decontextualised* from the setting in which the students are immersed and influenced by narrow approaches to learning where the locus of activity is the urban centre (Freire 1970; Corbett 2007; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Rao and Patil 2022). In this way, it is suggested, through the context of rural Jinja, that migration-through-education constitutes another important dimension of the migration-education nexus when grappling with the question of youth aspirations, the transformation of rural livelihoods and the multiple drivers of human migration.

Incorporating origin perspectives

Migration and education are two important, interrelated processes that challenge our conceptions of identity (Banks 2014), belonging, (Geddes and Favell 1999) and formal schooling (Dyer 2001; 2016), and have vast policy and practical implications in both 'sending' and 'receiving' societies. While there are many ways to examine the migration-education nexus, this thesis emphasises the value of 'origin' perspectives to detail elements of migration theory, thereby setting the groundwork for examining the relationship between migration, education and the transformation of rural livelihoods through *aspirations* and *capabilities* later in the thesis.

The interplay of migration and development is a well-established area of research that receives continued attention in many ways, including areas such as policy coherence (Nyberg–Sørensen 2002); remittance flows (Ratha 2003; Ratha et al 2011); socio-economic development processes (Bakewell 2008; de Haas 2008; Skeldon 2008; 2014); political discourse (Geiger and Pécoud 2013); the capabilities approach (Preibisch, Dodd, and Su 2016); and methodological innovations (Czaika and Godin 2022). Largely, this interest has been fuelled by the striking increase in remittance flows to 'developing' regions from $31.1 billion in 1990 (de Haas 2008) to $441 billion in 2015 (Ratha et al. 2016). Thus, although development has always been part of the debate, the last two decades have seen migration become a phenomenon that can be "managed" to promote development (Skeldon 2008).

In the context of migration and development, there is a political tension between the costs and benefits that migration brings to both 'sending' and 'receiving' contexts (Dustmann et al. 2010; IOM 2006; Freeman 1986). On the one hand, migration is seen as the result of powerful economic and demographic factors in both the Global South and Global North, which are consequences of neoliberal forms of globalisation (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1996). On the other, migrants from the South are seen as a threat to security, stability and public services in the North. If migration cannot be prevented, policy-makers have committed to "migration management" as a way to control movements, minimise loss and maximise benefits (Bakewell 2008; Geiger and Pécoud 2010). Castles and Delgado (2008) point out that this debate on migration and development has been dominated by a simplistic vision, which reduces migration to questions around security, controlling migration flows, integration, and remittances. In the political discourse on migration management, the vision of the South has been largely absent

– leading to a form of deterministic development whereby ‘origin’ societies are left out of the conversation on the drivers and impacts of migration processes that are of global significance.

This thesis argues that incorporating ‘origin’ perspectives means much more than simply focusing on the situation of ‘emigration’ countries in the context of the migration and development discourse. Rather, it implies a comprehensive look at the overall dynamics of global relationships, the operation of human agency and the interactions of various ‘spatial levels’ (local, regional, transnational) across different ‘societal areas’ (economy, politics, culture) (Castles and Delgado 2008). As such, drawing on ‘origin’ perspectives in Uganda, the thesis seeks to contribute further to understanding migration not in isolation, but as an integral aspect of the complex challenges posed by the arrangements of the social, political and economic order in so-called ‘developing’ regions (Castles and Delgado 2008; Castles 2010; Van Hear 2010; Portes 2010).

Additionally, incorporating origin perspectives on the migration-development relationship necessitates questioning the “dominant” understanding of what constitutes development, which implies that southern countries must traverse the same trajectory as today’s rich countries through the invisible hand of market-driven forces (Simon 2006). As such, perspectives from ‘origin’ regions imply the need to interrogate unequal global relations, in which the mobilisation of labour and resources from the South has constituted an important pre-condition for capital accumulation and industrialization in the North (Castles and Delgado 2008). This approach challenges the conventional measures of development, such as GDP per capita, which can often hide the rise of inequality (Costanza et al. 2009). By incorporating the voices of migrants and communities, the goals and indicators of development are thus redefined to focus on human capabilities, community aspirations and establishing equality (Sen 2001; Nussbaum 2007).

While it is commonly acknowledged that migration and development are intimately connected, one conceptual obstacle is the claim that they are, in the final analysis, distinct features of the socio-political order (Skeldon 1997). Such a perspective has given rise to attempts in policy to extract migration and manage it separately to “produce benefits” for development. This instrumentalised approach has proven ineffective and is based largely on a deficient understanding of the forces that impact movement (de Haas 2008; Castles 2013). As such, the need to appreciate migration as an integral component of development and social

transformation (Skeldon 1997; Castles 2010) necessitates a sophisticated approach that places the *specific* debate on migration and development in the *larger* context of migration theory (de Haas 2008). According to Massey et al. (1999):

> "For most of the last two decades... theory has been inadequate to the task of identifying and understanding the multiple means by which international migration influences economic development" (p. 272).

It is clear, then, that any meaningful exploration of migration must consider processes that impact individual and collective life and integrate the theoretical and empirical accounts of migration processes into a body of knowledge with tangible implications. Through research on the experiences of education amongst youth in rural Jinja, this thesis focuses on one such account and delineates the tensions and opportunities that emerge for rural youth – and their families – as they seek to make the most of their lives.

1.3 Research Context

The research context of this study is Jinja, Uganda where the divide between rural and urban life has continued to grow as young people move to the city in search of better livelihoods (Elkan 1960; Binaisa 2013). Uganda represents an interesting context in which to conduct this research for a variety of reasons.

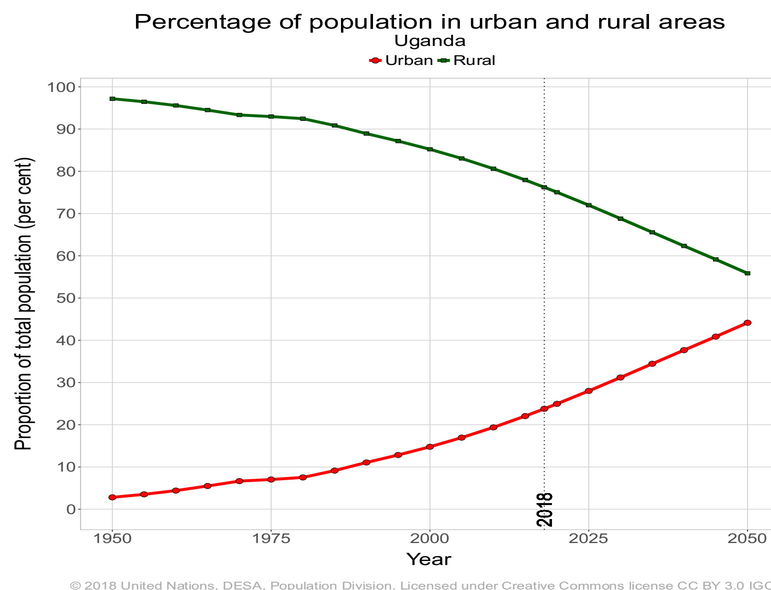

Figure 4: UNDESA projections of population demographics in rural & urban Uganda

As a predominantly agrarian-based and rural economy, as of 2020 75% of Uganda's 47.5 million population continued to reside in rural settings (World Bank 2022). Despite growing urbanisation, Uganda offers an alternative vantage point on narratives of an 'urban' future that views rural livelihoods as increasingly irrelevant to economic prosperity (Farrugia 2014). However, this is rapidly shifting, and Uganda's incorporation of neoliberal reforms has begun to alter the social, economic and political landscape of the country (Wiegratz 2016), with its urban population rising from 7.5% in 1980 to 25% in 2018, and projections that it will reach more than 44% by 2050 (UNDESA 2018 - see Figure 4).

Despite these stark figures, there is limited insight into the impact of this changing reality, the tension between rural and urban life, and in particular the development of aspirations and capabilities of the youth that lies at its heart (Mukwaya and Bamutaze 2012). This tension is magnified by the country's efforts to establish increasingly transnational, global linkages through the internationalisation of markets and the legal pressures of trade agreements (Wiegratz 2016), all of which promote the growth and development of cities. Uganda continues to be characterised by increasing regional inequality, the marginalisation of youth populations, and persistent constraints on social mobility (Ssewanyana et al. 2004).

The emergence of a market-based society holds implications for youth in rural settings, who continue to constitute a large proportion of the workforce for such development (Cieslik and Pollock 2017). To understand these implications with the requisite depth, this research confines its unit of analysis to Bujagali and Kyabirwa, two intersecting villages in the Budondo sub-county of Jinja district, where some 3,000 inhabitants reside. In so doing, it will seek to offer insight into the transformations that have taken place in the last decade, the interlocking experiences of education, labour and mobility, and the imagined futures that are formed by youth in the context of their households and the wider community.

In addition to the above, it is worth noting that Uganda, largely due to high fertility rates and declining mortality rates, is one of the world's youngest countries in terms of population age structure. According to the World Bank (2020), approximately 78% of the population is under 30 years old. As such, understanding the changing aspirations and capabilities youth develop in rural Jinja represents an ongoing question for the reality of Uganda.

This demographic reality is relevant due to the commonly accepted idea that young adults are the most likely to hold migration aspirations and to carry out their plans (De Jong and Fawcett

1981; Esipova, Ray and Pugliese 2011; Schewel and Fransen 2022), as they find themselves actively engaged in the process of exploring their own agency in the face of structural challenges. For youth, the important considerations regarding their future trajectories, the opportunities for entering the labour market, and particular narratives around what constitutes a 'good life' all relate to the main question of this thesis – to better understand the aspirations and capabilities youth develop in rural Jinja. As it pertains to work, with limited opportunities in the formal sector, the informal sector—and its associated temporality—has become increasingly important for rural youth, who seeking out innovative ways to express their talents in agricultural and household enterprises (Fox, Senbet and Simbanegavi 2016). These day-to-day realities are faced by millions of youth in diverse settings in Uganda alone, and as such represent an important context for the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis.

1.4 Empirical Contributions

Given the centrality of the migration-education nexus to rural transformations, the overarching research question of this project is:

- How are the aspirations and capabilities of young adults shaped by their educational experiences, migration prospects and the broader transformation of rural livelihoods?

The supporting questions of this research focus on three related dimensions of the migration-education nexus, namely:

- How do educational experiences and migration aspirations interact in rural Jinja?
- In what ways are rural education and rural-urban migration connected to broader processes of community life in rural Jinja?
- What is the relationship between diverse forms of education, capabilities and labour opportunities in this rural setting?

Drawing on in-depth interviews with 78 participants, two focus groups with 15 participants, and additional ethnographic methods (wealth ranking, participant observation and transect walks), this research illustrates the perceptions and experiences of education held by rural youth as they navigate their imagined futures. For many, their aspirations to leave are rooted in the perception that there is no future in the villages, a belief underpinned by a deficit discourse that views rural livelihoods as inherently disadvantaged. Correspondingly, the idea

that rural life has a diminishing role in the modern world is strengthened by the portrayal of the city as the standard of achievement for many rural youth. These dual discourses express themselves – often implicitly – within rural communities and, as this research argues, formal school is one site for the fermentation of these ideas.

Thus, while it is important to consider the structural determinants of migration[1], this thesis illustrates – through the lens of educational experience in rural settings – the importance of accounting for the transformation of the social imaginary and the changing aspirations amongst youth in rural settings. The thesis suggests, as illustrated by the following diagram (see Figure 5), that meaningful discourse concerned with sustainable approaches to rural livelihoods must account for three critical dimensions:

(i) Varying forms of education that are sensitive to the rural context (be they formal, non-formal or informal approaches to education)

(ii) The diverse mobility patterns present in any given rural setting, both temporally (e.g. short-term, circular, seasonal, long-term); and geographically (e.g. rural-rural, rural to urban, peri-urban to urban, international)

(iii) The expression of agency via individual, family and group decision-making that overcomes the false dichotomy of individual freedom and structural determinacy and seeks to understand the environments that shape – and are shaped by – their aspirations and capabilities

[1] e.g. population growth, climate change, labour shortage, and access to services

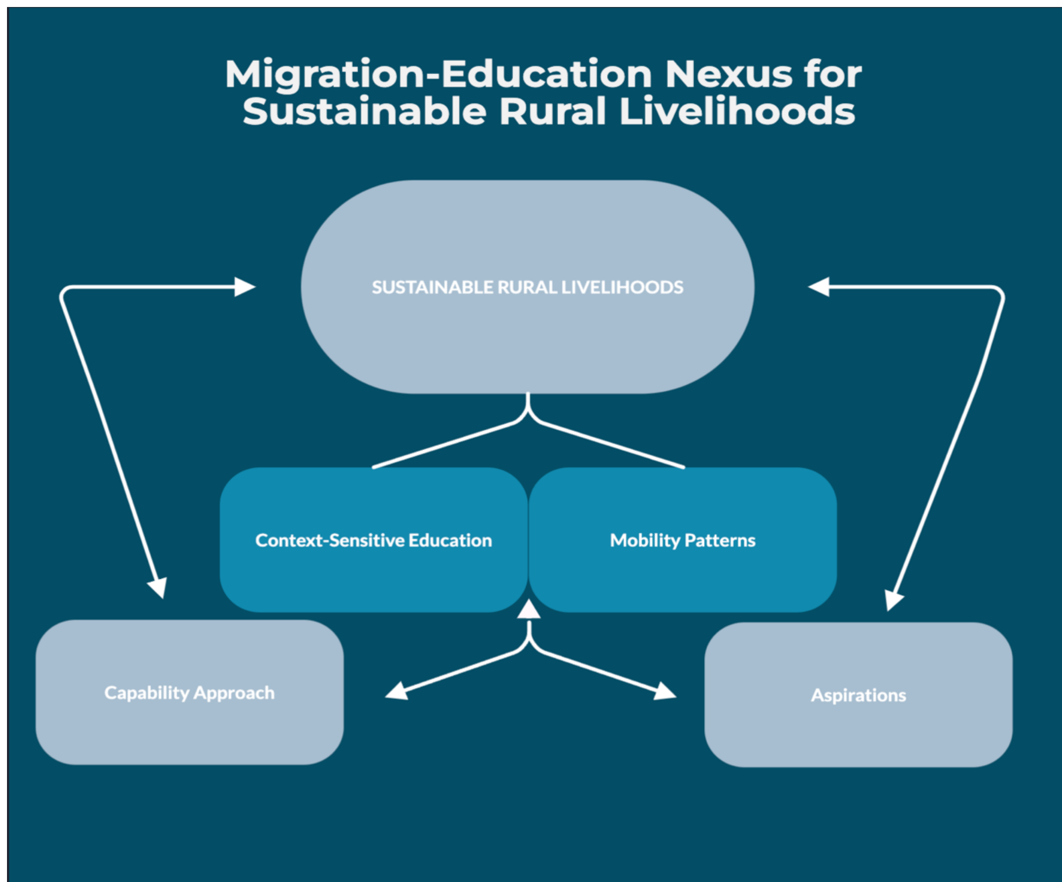

Figure 5: Framework to outline the relationship between migration, education and sustainable livelihoods

The empirical contributions of this thesis are summarised as follows:

(i) Decontextualised Education as a Potential Driver of Migration

In addressing the interaction between rural educational experience and the formation of migration aspirations in rural Jinja, the thesis describes the textured ways in which experiences of decontextualised education heighten migration aspirations and serve as a potential driver of migration.

Understanding migration as both a cause and consequence of broader processes of social transformation implies embedding migration trajectories within particular economic, social and cultural contexts. By exploring *how* the experiences of education interact with the migration aspirations and capabilities of youth in Budondo, Jinja this research contributes to a body of literature concerned with the migration process along two dimensions: the evaluation of

migration as a potential course of action and the realisation of actual mobility or immobility at a given moment. The research also makes clear that migration trajectories are not linear insofar as processes of (im)mobility seek to understand migration that is aspirational, short-term, long-term, circular, and seasonal.

It is advanced that the de-contextualised nature of formal education, that is, the separation of formal education from the reality of rural livelihoods, contributes to disconnecting youth from the rural context in at least two ways: (i) aspirationally, insofar as what youth come to view as a good life, good work, and the expectations about where this can be achieved are linked to formal schooling that promotes urban lifestyles in both rural and urban settings; and (ii) capability expansion that is limited and irrelevant to their local surroundings, with access to knowledge and skills that are overly theoretical or overly practical, as well as taking little to no account of local context.

Through ethnographic methods (interviews, participant observation & transect walks) with two organisations delivering rural educational programmes in Budondo, the research offers some additional considerations for context-sensitive programmes that seek to develop aspirations and capabilities that are relevant to rural livelihoods in Budondo. It considers why and how these additional educational experiences have, in many instances, strengthened the relationship youth have with their rural surroundings. While it is suggested that this could impact the extent and patterns of mobility amongst rural youth, it does not make the simplistic claim that such programmes should have as their sole aim the cessation of out-migration. This is for at least two reasons: 1) there are broader structural considerations that cannot be explained away solely by education, and 2) such sedentary biased perspectives fail to acknowledge the complex relationship between migration and development. These reasons are given due weight by considering the transformation of rural livelihoods more broadly.

Education for Rural Settings

This research seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of education amongst youth, families and community leaders in Budondo. In so doing, it offers insight into educational perceptions, quality and opportunity in rural settings from the critical perspective of its current and former students. Analysing the experience of both formal and non-formal education in Budondo and its relationship to place offers a nuanced perspective on education as a contested

resource in rural settings, an area that is often oversimplified in policies for rural development. It is argued that there is a need to explore the characteristics of rural educational processes that nurture students' connection to their locality and empower them to work for its advancement. Importantly, it maintains that while education has an important role in contributing to sustainable rural livelihoods, it is not a catch-all solution for the economic, demographic and social dimensions of rural development.

For Budondo, it is argued that a central implication of considering education that is sensitive to rural settings is its relationship with agriculture and business. With the expansion of formal schooling becoming an emblem of modernity, for many youth in Budondo agriculture stands in direct contrast because it is considered a failed pathway to livelihoods that replicate the past. The research demonstrates the experience of rural youth in relation to agricultural education – an experience that is often theoretical and largely concerned with the technology transfer initiatives associated with the Green Revolution (e.g. mechanisation, chemical fertilizers, monocropping). The bifurcation of agricultural processes into two extremes: large, mechanised farming or smallholder subsistence farming shapes the perception of youth that agriculture is not a viable future. Other experiences of education that portray agriculture as a 'failure' and 'punishment' are discussed and offer insight into the considerations for educational efforts that are sensitive to the rural context. The research draws on the aspiration-capability framework in order to examine reasonable expectations of education and the orientation of youth toward agricultural activity. Examination of non-formal programmes in Budondo offers interesting alternative approaches to agricultural education, most critically in how they view agriculture as overcoming the aforementioned extremes and rural youth as contributing to the application and generation of new knowledge related to agricultural progress.

The Migration-Education Nexus and Sustainable Rural Livelihoods

This thesis relates the migration-education nexus to broader perspectives on the transformation of livelihoods in Uganda. By considering how education shapes the imagined futures of youth in Budondo and the spatial implications that arise from these experiences, the research examines narratives of prosperity that exist in village life in Budondo. It is argued that beyond structural adjustments for rural development policies, the examination of the migration-education nexus provides insight into the socio-cultural transformations associated with the

migration process, thereby reimagining the conditions, aspirations and capabilities associated with rural-urban livelihoods and the future of rural Jinja.

Taken together, the thesis suggests that viewing migration as part of broader processes of social transformation – with a particular focus on rural educational experience as one example – assists in overcoming rigid conceptions of population movement. Rather than placing movement into distinct categories, migration is best seen as shaped by the interaction of structure and agency in a given political, economic, social and cultural context.

In other words, this perspective helps to show that migration encompasses more than linear movement between rural and urban regions (local and global) and shows it as a complex system of movements. This thesis is concerned with investigating variations and types of this (im)mobility in the context of diverse experiences of education amongst youth in rural Jinja.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

To accomplish the above aims, this study is organised into eight chapters, the first of which is this introduction, which seeks to contextualise the research and illustrate its theoretical and empirical significance.

Chapter Two sets out the theoretical framework for the migration-education nexus. It outlines the ways in which understanding human migration as a cause – and consequence – of broader processes of social transformation enables a deeper understanding of the contextuality of migratory patterns and their connectedness to other economic, social, and cultural processes. In providing an overview of dominant theoretical perspectives in relation to both migration and education, the chapter illustrates the various implications that different frameworks have on the migration-education nexus in the context of rural livelihoods. Having described the role of aspirations and capabilities as a promising approach for conceptualising the migration-education nexus, the chapter articulates a perspective on mobility that is dynamic and fluid and subsequently contextualises this theoretical context within migration processes and patterns connected to rural-urban livelihoods in Uganda. By locating the examination of migration, education and social transformation in the context of rural livelihoods in Uganda, it argues for a more thorough reading of rural realities, and in particular concerns itself with the key challenges and contributions facing rural youth. In so doing, it considers the relevance of Uganda's social, economic and cultural circumstances to broader theoretical debates within

migration and education in the context of development, providing depth and nuance to its consideration of the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja.

Chapter Three builds on the discussion on migration and education nexus, turning its attention to the. In so doing, it seeks to weave together theoretical concepts and the contextual realities relevant to understanding educational experiences and rural livelihoods in Uganda. The chapter goes on to describe the emergence of literature and research that views aspirations and capabilities as a promising way to understand and express the role of migration and education in rural settings. Highlighting the migration and educational context of Uganda, the question of context-sensitive education and agriculture for rural livelihoods, the chapter suggests that understanding the (im)mobility and educational experiences of young adults is not only a contribution to migration and education theory but opens the possibility to understand the characteristics of rural environments that empower young adults and the resources that are necessary to facilitate this.

Chapter Four outlines the ontological and epistemological approach of the thesis while clarifying certain concepts as they pertain to migration and education. After setting out the ontological framework in the form of critical realism (Bhaskar 1997), it articulates the participatory turn in social scientific research and describes the considerations for the qualitative design of the study, paying particular attention to how aspirations and capabilities are conceptualised and practically researched. It then goes on to detail the main aspects of my methodological approach: the justification for the research design, the role of 'participation' in rural research that emphasises focused ethnographic immersion and the place of participatory approaches, the utilisation of social mapping, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, information about my local 'gatekeepers', and the incorporation of reflexive practice, positionality and ethical considerations relevant to the project.

The following three chapters discuss the empirical data of the thesis. Chapter Five adds further insight into the idea that education should be viewed as a contested resource in the context of rural livelihoods. It centres its argument around a common feeling amongst participants in the research: namely, that young adults' educational experience, its apparent irrelevancy and the resulting scepticism associated with *decontextualised* educational settings leads them to believe that moving to the city is the proof of living a 'successful' life. Here, obtaining a white-collar job is considered a litmus test of success in a labour market that is volatile and deregulated.

Participants' voices and experiences are centralised in this chapter, depicting their concerns, aspirations, and questions as they navigate their own decisions for the future.

It also advances the central argument that migration and education represent an important intersection for understanding why a growing number of youth desire to move from rural to urban settings, using aspirations to reach a better understanding of the thought processes of aspiring migrants, and the changing processes of rural life from the perspective of its young adults.

It concludes by directly addressing the migration-education nexus from an alternative (yet complementary) perspective that has received comparably little attention: that of 'migration-through-education'. While many approaches view the nexus through the lens of "migration-for-education", this chapter outlines how formal education in rural settings can – through its content, portrayal and promises – result in the heightening of migration aspirations.

Chapter Six describes, from the perspective of its inhabitants, the broader processes of development underway in rural Jinja and its relevance to the migration-education nexus. This is accomplished in two ways. Firstly, an initial typology is suggested to understand the 'narratives of prosperity' that were present during my fieldwork research in Budondo. Based on a range of qualitative methods employed in this research (interviews, focus groups, transect walks, and social mapping), four narratives are identified, substantiated, and explored in this chapter. Secondly, qualitative research is used to inform how these narratives interact with and inform a perspective on livelihoods in rural settings that relate to capability expansion and development.

As a means for understanding the spatial implications associated with education and migration, the four key constructs outlined are (i) the identity narrative; (ii) the development narrative; (iii) the agrarian narrative; and (iv) the modernity narrative.

In addition to drawing on participants' perspectives relating to these four broad narratives, the chapter considers the context, resources, strategies and outcomes of the research participants, drawing on wealth ranking, focus groups and ethnographic/participant observation notes. Here, considerable attention is given to the tensions and debates concerning agriculture, its current and future role, and the connection of the younger generations to this central activity in Uganda.

Having considered the critique of decontextualised education throughout the thesis, Chapter Seven considers some pertinent characteristics of educational delivery that seek to build its approach on sensitivity to rural livelihoods. By drawing on the research into the experiences of participants and coordinators connected to two educational non-governmental organisations operating in rural Jinja, the chapter begins to consider the features of rural educational processes that seek to explicitly nurture students' connection to sustaining and transforming their rural surroundings. Two overarching themes are highlighted as (i) conceptions of transformation; and (ii) orientations toward knowledge, with the claim advanced that foundational principles as these come to shape the pedagogical practices employed in Budondo. The chapter also considers the relevance of these emerging insights to the capability to choose where to live, and the relationship with rural space that such an educational approach can nurture in youth.

Chapter Eight integrates the theoretical contribution and empirical findings of the thesis, highlighting the pattern and processes of rural transformation underway in rural Jinja. Fundamentally, it considers the overall contribution of the project to understanding the transformation of rural livelihoods by focusing on the educational experiences and mobility trajectories of young people in the context of rural Jinja. Its focus on two key components of that transformation – education and migration – are increasingly seen as two vital dimensions of human development (Sen 2001; Chabbot 2013; Skeldon 2014). To a considerable extent, the rise in global interest regarding migration and education has been contentious and overshadowed by political interests that perceive movement as aberrational or a burden on the political, social and economic fabric of society (Gungwu 2018; Massey et al. 1999). As such, the concluding chapter offers some final thoughts on how this research project aims to contribute to the discussion that migration and education are most meaningfully conceptualised as part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010). By transcending 'for' or 'against' perspectives and examining these patterns as part of the transformation of the rural livelihoods of two adjoining villages in rural Jinja, it suggests it is part of a larger – and growing – body of research concerned with understanding the patterns and processes of human migration within the broader context of a just and equitable society. It is in this light that the thesis is committed to contributing to a better understanding of the migration-education nexus in development.

CHAPTER 2

The Migration-Education Nexus:
Conceptualising Aspirations & Capabilities

2.1 Introduction

It is widely accepted that our age is one of increasing global interdependence (Scholte 2017), where varying social and economic forces unearth tensions and possibilities, and impact the inter and intra-national flows of finance, trade, culture and ideology (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1996; Amin 2014; Sachs 2019). Human migration has arguably become one of the clearest and most politicised of these flows and, in recent years, has come to be regarded as one of the defining features of 'modern' society (Betts 2011; De Haas, Castles and Miller 2020).

It is now well-established that, rather than treating migration as an isolated set of policies and processes, meaningfully understanding the drivers of movement is only possible when they are contextualised within broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010). It is in this way that diverse forms of education are incorporated into the analysis of this thesis, paying particular attention to the various ways in which education can be conceptualised. Indeed, a thread that runs throughout this thesis is that while the intersection of migration and education presents novel ways of evaluating the opportunities for youth in the context of changing rural-urban livelihoods, not all conceptions of migration and education are compatible or indeed helpful in fostering deeper analysis of the experience of youth. As such, while the various frameworks are evaluated, it is through the use of aspirations and capabilities that the point of harmony is defined.

This chapter provides a more rigorous exploration of these ideas, outlining the strengths and shortcomings of various concepts and frameworks for analysing the migration-education nexus. Throughout, it argues for context and nuance to the relationship between migration and education, moving beyond *'for'* or *'against'* perspectives, challenging oversimplifications of

migration or education as *purely* agentic or structurally determined, and locating (im)mobility within the context of changing rural-urban livelihoods.

To accomplish this task, the chapter has three main aims:

(i) To establish a clear theoretical basis for critical engagement with both migration and education as contested features of development, thereby setting out the importance of interrogating the specifics of the migration-education nexus for Jinja, Uganda.
(ii) to outline the implications of incorporating *aspirations* and *capabilities* into the examination of the dynamics of the migration-education nexus;
(iii) to challenge the oversimplified narrative that education is an 'automatic' good that, regardless of its pedagogy and content, enhances human capabilities;

The chapter first sets out examples of theories and frameworks that have been developed to understand migration processes and education within society. By examining push-pull models, neoclassical economic theory, human capital theory, dual labour market theory and world system theory for migration, and theories of social reproduction for education, the chapter considers foundational commentaries on human migration and education, analyses the fundamental assumptions each approach makes about the individual and society, and considers their potential implications for understanding the migration-education nexus.

While empirically innovative accounts of migration trajectories abound (for examples, see Adepoju 2006; Schewel 2019; Tumwesigye et al. 2021; North and Joshi 2022; Rao and Patil 2022; Carling and Hagen-Zanker 2022), these themes are picked up more explicitly in chapter 3. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the assumptions, nuances and contexts of theoretical frameworks in the fields of migration and education, to justify the use of aspirations and capabilities in this thesis. It seeks to accomplish this task by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of foundational theoretical accounts -- and their relevant commentaries – for examining the workings of the migration-education nexus.

In search of meaningful ways to conceptualise the relationship between migration and education, the chapter demonstrates how aspirations and capabilities offer a conceptually generative approach to studying processes of education and (im)mobility and connects this to the view that migration is meaningfully understood as part of broader processes of social

transformation (Castles 2010). Having considered this in some detail, as well as other approaches to mobility that avoid rigid categorisation, the chapter goes on to describe how migration patterns have unfolded in the context of Uganda's socio-economic circumstances, and highlights a few key thinkers that demonstrate its role in the context of the transformation of rural-urban livelihoods in Uganda.

As such, the overarching argument advanced in this chapter is that migration, as a textured and contextualised pattern, is best understood as intrinsic to processes of social, economic and political transformation (Castles 2013). Such a perspective allows for the use of seemingly opposing theoretical perspectives under differing circumstances, incorporates agentic definitions of mobility into structural considerations, and opens new lines of inquiry into how migration decisions interact with the foundational experiences of education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR MIGRATION & EDUCATION

2.2 Why do People Move?

Migration Theories & the Role of Education

Despite taking centre stage in political discourse, the movement of populations has always been a feature of our society (Bakewell 2008). In response, empirical accounts and theoretical frameworks have emerged historically as attempts to better understand the various processes that interact at the local, national and international level and explain the reasons underlying why some people move, and others do not. Some of the earliest attempts to explain population movement emerged in the nineteenth century through the work of Ravenstein who, with the analysis of census data, suggested eleven laws of migration relating to distance, direction and opportunity (Ravenstein 1889; Grigg 1977) and are considered the bedrock of the field of migration. Each theoretical framework rests on particular assumptions about the nature of the individual, the structures of society, and the operation of its relevant institutions including, most notably for this thesis, education.

It is important to remember that migration is not an isolated act, but a series of collective steps that are bound to social, cultural, and economic change. It is a process that impacts both 'sending' and 'receiving' regions in different ways (Joly 2000; Castles et al. 2013; Rogers

2019). For ‘receiving’ regions, their diverse forms are still poorly understood, with much of migration policy formed based on narrow reasoning about why people move (Schewel 2020; De Haas, Castles and Miller 2020). Political commentary often simplifies these reasons, focusing on the primacy of economic decision-making, the desire to exploit welfare benefits, that migration should only attract the “best and brightest” (Rayp et al. 2023, p. 1) or the politically charged red herring that smugglers recruit individuals to make perilous journeys (Van Liempt and Doomernik 2006). Even humanitarian responses to refugees and the “two kinds of people” rhetoric that distinguishes refugees from migrants (Carling 2015) expose limited theoretical engagement, thereby exacerbating a politically charged debate and casting migrants as the undesirable residue of the refugee movement (Bakewell 2021).

This section examines some central theoretical viewpoints that developed in different social science disciplines with the aim of understanding the forces driving migration processes. While important detail is outlined to reinforce the theoretical direction of the thesis, the key argument advanced is that migration is not a problem to be solved. Rather, efforts to gain a deeper understanding of migration must see it as part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010), where structure and agency interact (Bakewell 2010; de Haas 2014), the dynamic of inter-generational livelihoods adapts, and institutional governance evolves. In this light, migration theories may differ regarding their assumptions, thematic focus, and level of analysis, but are not as mutually exclusive as is often portrayed (Massey et al. 1993). Thus, this chapter treats various migration theories as sources of insight into understanding migration as both a *cause* and *consequence* of broader processes of social transformation.

This perspective on migration theory is central to the analysis of the migration-education nexus that is advanced in this thesis. Although research into the relationship between migration and education has been growing in recent years (Corbett 2007; Crivello 2011; Robertson 2013; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Semela and Cochrane 2019), assumptions about who should move and why are the backdrop against which normative debates unfold. This chapter intervenes in this debate by building on the original work of Carling (2002) and de Haas (2003) on aspirations and capabilities to approach the migration-education nexus with a fundamental question: *how* does educational experience inform the spatial aspirations and capabilities of youth in rural settings?

Migration theories are commonly grouped into two main paradigms: ‘functionalist’ and ‘historical-structural’ theories (de Haas, Castles and Miller 2019). Functionalist social theory views society as a system and is concerned with the functioning of its constituent elements. Similar to the functioning of an organism, it believes society possesses a tendency toward equilibrium. Functionalist migration theory generally treats migration as a positive phenomenon that serves the interests of most people and establishes greater equality within society (de Haas et al. 2019; King 2013).

Contrastingly, historical-structural theories are more concerned with how social, cultural and political structures influence individuals in ways that reinforce inequality and difference. This set of theories tends to view migration as providing a cheap labour force that benefits the wealthy, leads to a ‘brain drain’, and exacerbates social and geographical disparities (Castles et al. 2013; Wood 1982).

Neither paradigm has been able to explain the diverse migration trends occurring across the globe. As such, this chapter maintains that one ‘grand theory’ has not been achieved but that precise goal should be consigned to oblivion. As opposed to seeking one *way* of explaining migration, it is argued that any contribution to migration theory should seek to accurately depict when – and how – structural forces interact with human agency in the process of population movement at the local, regional, national and international level. In the case of this thesis, examining the migration-education nexus in the context of youth livelihoods in rural Jinja, Uganda facilitates this measured contribution.

2.2.1 Functionalist Theories

Push-pull models

A prevalent and widely taught perception of migration is that it occurs due to factors that **push** people away from their ‘origin’ setting and factors that **pull** people towards a ‘destination’ setting. While taught in schools, it is also the foundation of many policy and research circles and is an important context for consideration of the migration-education nexus.

Historically, this perspective on *why people move* rests on Ravenstein’s ‘laws of migration’ (1885; 1889), often seen as the first milestone in the development of migration theory (Passaris

1989; King 2013). Based on analysis of census data, his two seminal articles sought to explain migration patterns through the analysis of economic factors in destination and origin regions (Ravenstein 1885). These 'laws' have been simplified and summarized as follows (King 2013):

(i) Migrants move mainly over short distances; if longer distances, they aim for large centres of industry and commerce, with economics the main cause
(ii) Most migration has been from agriculture to industry and commerce
(iii) Large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase
(iv) Migration increases along with the development of industry, commerce and transport
(v) Each migration stream produces a counter-stream
(vi) Females are more migratory than males for shorter distances. Vice-versa for longer distances

Many of these generalisations remain the object of modern-day research (Skeldon 2014; de Haas 2014). Prefiguring the popularity of 'gravity' models, migration studies thus sought to predict the volume of migration between places and countries based on *distance*, *population size* and *economic opportunities* in destination and origin areas (Castles et al. 2013). Along similar lines, Lee (1966) argued that migration decisions are determined by 'plus' and 'minus' factors; intervening obstacles (distance, immigration laws, cost of the journey, etc); and personal factors outlining how different people react differently to external factors based on economic status, life-stage and personality (Lee 1966; King 2013; Castles et al. 2013).

These analytical frameworks, commonly referred to as 'push-pull' models (Passaris 1989; Dorigo and Tobler 1983; Hagen-Zanker 2008), dominated migration studies during the mid-twentieth century and are rooted in neoclassical economic principles of utility maximization, rational choice, factor-price differentials and labour mobility (King 2013). Push-pull models identify economic, environmental and demographic factors, which are assumed to 'push' people out of places of origin and 'pull' them into destination places (Castles et al. 2013). 'Push factors' generally include population growth, lack of economic opportunities, poor education systems, and political repression, while 'pull factors' usually include demand for labour, economic opportunities, better education and political freedoms (King 2013; Castles et al. 2013).

Although the push-pull framework sheds light on the diverse factors involved in migration processes (Passaris 1989), the purely descriptive nature fails to account for the precise role of each factor and its interactions. According to Skeldon (1990), such analysis results in "*a list of factors, all of which can clearly contribute to migration, but which lack a framework to bring them together in an explanatory system…*" (p. 125-6).

By emphasizing external factors, push-pull models have continued to face difficulties in explaining return migration and explaining instances in which *both* emigration and immigration occur in one region. Perhaps the most crucial of all limitations, however, is that the simplistic approach of these models generally fails to account for human agency in the migration process in any meaningful way (Castles et al. 2013). Although the debate continues over the degree to which external forces (structure) and human volition (agency) shape migration patterns, the application of push-pull models to understanding the interaction of migration and education is severely limited as it does not help us understand the *processes* and *experiences* of education and the mechanisms through which they shape – and are shaped by -- the agency of individuals. This is crucial, given the rising acknowledgement that any framework aiming to explain human mobility must account for the dynamic conditions in which individual agency is formed, shaped and exercised (Bakewell 2010; Arango 2004).

Neoclassical & Human Capital Theory

Similar to push-pull theories, neoclassical approaches to migration are based on the assumption that social forces tend towards equilibrium (Massey et al. 1993; O'Reilly 2022). Rooted in modernisation theory (Rostow 1990), historically migration has come to be seen as the result of surplus labour in rural contexts supplying the workforce for the industrial economy of the urban sector (Lewis 1954; Fei and Ranis 1961). Neoclassical theory, which sees migration as a function of geographical differences in the supply and demand for labour, has diverged into micro-level and macro-level approaches (Castles et al. 2013).

Macro theory

The oldest and best-known theory of international migration, this neoclassical economic theory is drawn upon to explain labour migration in the process of economic development (Massey et

al. 1993; Porumbescu 2018). It argues that internal and international migration is caused by geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labour. Countries with a large endowment of labour relative to capital have a low equilibrium market wage, while countries with limited labour relative to capital have a high market wage. This resulting differential in wages causes workers from the low-wage country to move to the high-wage country (Massey et al. 1993).

Alongside the movement of workers from labour-abundant to labour-scarce countries, there also exists the flow of investment capital from capital-rich to capital-poor countries, accompanied by the parallel flow of highly skilled workers (Castles et al. 2013).

The explanation of international migration offered by neoclassical macroeconomics has come to shape public thinking and provided the intellectual foundations for much of immigration policy. According to Massey et al (1993), this theoretical viewpoint is based on certain key assumptions:

(i) International migration of workers is caused by differences in wage rates between countries

(ii) The elimination of wage differentials will end the movement of labour. and migration will not occur in the absence of these differentials

(iii) Labour markets are the primary mechanisms by which international flows of labour occur; other kinds of markets do not have important effects on international migration

(iv) The way for governments to control migration flows is to regulate or influence labour markets in sending and/or receiving countries

Micro theory

Parallel to the macroeconomic model of migration is the microeconomic model of individual choice (Castles et al. 2013). According to this viewpoint, migratory patterns are driven by the decisions of rational actors through a cost-benefit calculation. From this perspective, international migration is seen as an investment in human capital whereby people choose to move where they can most utilise their skills productively. In this scheme, when the estimated benefits for a potential destination outweigh the estimated costs, the rational actor migrates. In

theory, this implies that a potential migrant will go to where the expected net returns to migration are the greatest, leading to several important conclusions that slightly differ from the macroeconomic model (Massey et al. 1993):

(1) Individual human capital characteristics that increase the likely rate of remuneration or the probability of employment in the destination relative to the ‘sending’ country (e.g. education, training, language skills) will increase the likelihood of movement, other things being equal

(2) Individual characteristics, social conditions or technologies that lower migration costs raise the probability of its occurrence (due to an increase in its net returns)

(3) Due to (1) and (2), individuals within the same country can display different tendencies to migrate

(4) Aggregate migration is a simple sum of individual moves undertaken on the basis of individual cost-benefit calculations

(5) Migration decisions stem from differences between labour markets; other markets do not directly influence the decision to migrate

Governments control immigration primarily through policies that affect expected earnings in sending and/or receiving countries – for example, lowering the likelihood of employment in destination areas, or through measures that increase the costs (psychological and material) of migration. Education, from this perspective, is for the sole purpose of the accumulation of human capital.

While neoclassical approaches offer the general truism that people have good reasons to move when they do, this fails to make any substantial contribution to understanding the geographical patterns and cultural factors that are part of migration decision-making. Crucially, with the view of a rational actor that calculates costs and benefits, these approaches also posit a linear movement from poorer to richer contexts. However, the empirical facts do not support this assertion (Hatton and Williamson 1998; Martin and Taylor 1996; de Haas 2007). As such, these approaches fail to meaningfully address the reasoning behind why more ‘developed’ societies tend to have *higher* levels of emigration than poorer, ‘underdeveloped’ societies (De Haas 2021).

With greater access to particular resources, such as capital and education, a migration 'hump' has been used to explain how past and present migration patterns witness accelerating out-migration in the process of development. Much political rhetoric on internal and international migration, largely informed by functionalist theories (Castles 2004; Campesi 2014), is unwilling to acknowledge the interconnection between (im)mobility and development, and frame migration as a problem to be fixed (De Haas, Castles, Miller, 2020; McMahon and Sigona 2021).

These tensions are particularly relevant to the intersection of migration and education. Often, simplistic interpretations of why movement occurs fail to consider the experiences and processes that shape migration decision-making in the face of broader political and economic structures. As such, the conception of education in the context of neoclassic economic theory emphasises the importance of individual choice, rational decision making and market dynamics. The view that education is primarily an investment to maximise future utility, enhance marketable skills and improve economic outcomes characterises a belief in conceptions of education and its relationship to youth aspirations.

In the context of this thesis, rather than reducing migration drivers to a few factors in a mathematical model, the research unpacks the thick descriptions of educational experiences in a rural setting to consider the diverse experiences of education, the varied perceptions and experiences that exist, and the diverse aspirations – including non-economic – that exist in rural Jinja. Such complexity, it is argued, is foundational to a more precise understanding of *how* aspirations and capabilities are formed amongst youth in rural Jinja and *why* many young futures are projected in the city.

2.2.2 Historical-Structural Theories

In contrast to neoclassical approaches, an alternative paradigm for the study of migration processes emerged between the 1970s and 1980s and came to be known as the *historical-structural* approach (Massey et al. 1993; Van Hear 2014). While neoclassical theories have tended to focus on particular patterns of migration, like that from Europe to the USA before 1914, historical-structural theories tend to focus on migration as a manifestation of capitalist

penetration and the unequal terms of trade between developed and 'less' developed countries (Castles et al. 2013; Massey et al. 1999). A key feature of this analytical framework is the focus on large-scale recruitment of labour, be it indentured Indians for railways in East Africa, Turks for factories and mines in Germany, or Mexicans for agribusiness in California (Castles et al. 2013). According to this perspective, the availability and control of labour is central to understanding population movement while undeniably being a legacy of colonialism and the result of international disequilibria (Emmer 1986).

Historical-structural theories argue that economic and political power is unequally distributed among wealthy and poor countries, with various classes and groups holding unequal access to resources (Wood 1982; de Haas 2014). Within this context, migration is viewed as a way of mobilizing cheap labour for capital, serving to boost economic growth in destination regions and depriving origin areas of valuable labour and skills. In contrast to neoclassical theory, historical structuralists argue that migration is the symptom of a deeply divided order (Castles et al. 2013; Cohen 2023. As will be discussed similarly for education in the next section, this family of theories are connected to neo-Marxist political theory and is concerned with mechanisms of migration as perpetuating inequalities (de Haas 2021). Two examples of these theories are discussed, as well as their implications for the migration-education nexus.

Dual-labour market theory

Although neoclassical human capital theory and the new economics of migration lead to divergent conclusions about the origins and nature of migration processes, both models rely on micro-level rational choice to predict the behaviour of different units (individual or household) (Castles et al. 2013). In contrast, dual labour market theory departs from decisions made by individuals and argues that migration stems from the intrinsic labour demands of modern industrial societies.

According to the historical work of Michael Piore (1980), immigration is caused by the unavoidable need for workers. This reliance on immigrant labour is argued to be inherent to the economic structure of developed nations. From this perspective, the bifurcation of the labour market into a stable, primary sector and an unstable secondary sector is a feature that has emerged from the labour-capital dualism that has come to characterize industrial

economies. Low wages, unstable conditions and limited prospects in the secondary sector are unattractive to native workers, who instead are drawn into the primary, capital-intensive sector. According to dual labour market theory, this segmented labour market structure is what causes employers to turn to immigrants.

As outlined by Massey et al (1993), some of the assumptions and implications emerging from dual labour market theory include:

(1) Labour migration is largely demand-based and initiated by recruitment on the part of employers in developed societies

(2) Due to the demand for immigrant workers emerging from the structural needs of the economy, international wage differentials are neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for labour migration to occur

(3) Governments are unlikely to influence migration through policies that produce small changes in wages or employment rates; immigrants fill a demand for labour that is built into post-industrial economies, and influencing this demand requires major shifts in political and economic functioning

World systems theory

Another example of how historical-structural approaches have sought to better understand the determinants of migration processes is through the work of Wallerstein (1974) and his articulation of the penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, non-capitalist societies. According to world systems theory, migration is a natural consequence of disruptions that 'inevitably' occur in the process of capitalist development (Robertson and Lechner 1985; Coccia 2019).

With emphasis on firms from core capitalist countries entering 'developing' regions, foreign-owned factories and employment opportunities in peripheral regions undermine the peasant economy by producing goods that compete with those made locally, by reshaping the workforce and by socialising populations for work and consumption. This theory states that such processes lead to the creation of a population that is socially and economically uprooted and prone to migration.

It is argued that the same economic processes that create migrants in peripheral regions simultaneously draw them to cities and other countries through the material and ideological links to the places where capital originates.

Thus, world systems theory argues that migration is driven by the social, economic and political landscape shaped by an expanding global market. This viewpoint, then, infers that (Massey et al. 1993):

(1) Migration is an inherent feature of capitalist market formation in the developing world; the penetration of the global economy into peripheral regions uproots previous livelihood patterns

(2) Migration is likely to develop between past colonial powers and their former colonies because cultural, linguistic, and communication links were formed early and developed free from outside competition during the colonial period

(3) With migration bound to the globalisation of the market economy, governments can influence migration by regulating the overseas investment activities of corporations and controlling international flows of capital and goods

(4) Migration has very little to do with wage rates or employment differentials but is tied more closely to market creation and the structure of the global economy

Several theorists have argued that historical-structural approaches are useful for understanding migration in the context of the historical analysis of broader structural transformations underway (Wood 1982; Balán 1983; Van Hear 2014). With compelling insight into the role of structural factors in explaining mobility patterns, these approaches have also been criticised for overemphasis of such approaches on structural constraints often ruling out human agency and portraying migrants as passive pawns manipulated by macros forces and the logic of capital accumulation (Arango 2004; King 2013; De Haas 2021). While offering important considerations, this form of historical determinism limits insight into the diversity of migration patterns that do emerge, and the fact that many people do make active choices in the context of admittedly strong structural factors (Castles et al. 2013; Nichols 2023b).

Furthermore, some theorists have argued that historical-structural views of migration as a manifestation of capital penetration are based on a romanticized view of the 'immobile peasant' (Skeldon 1997, p.7-8), which assumes that pre-modern societies consisted of isolated peasant communities. Indeed, historical research shows that peasant societies also experienced mobility (Moch 2003). As such, the view that migration is abnormal and that global capitalism is the chief culprit for the 'displacement' of populations is overly simplistic and fails to account for the complex interaction of macro, meso and micro level factors (Castles et al. 2013).

When considering the application of historical-structural approaches to the migration-education nexus, these theories demonstrate how education – particularly formal schooling – becomes one mechanism through which inequality is perpetuated and the complex ways in which individual migrants navigate educational and labour environments in both 'sending' and 'receiving' settings. However, by failing to provide meaningful insight into the different ways in which educational experience expresses itself, other than through the oversimplistic perpetuation of the current order, these theories are unable to provide insights the different processes and outcomes associated with the intersection between migration and education. Furthermore, the emphasis of historical-structural theories on the workings of structure and resulting power imbalances poses particular constraints on the expression of meaningful agency in the face of strong structural factors. Taken in isolation, the insightful critiques offered by these theories can perpetuate the overly simplistic dualism of structure and agency in educational settings, and fail to meaningfully account for the positive associations, productive tensions, and unpredictability of transformative agency with the work of classic theorists such as Arendt (1958) Giddens (1984) offering insight into the dynamic interplay between structure and agency. More recently, the work of Nichols (2023a) illustrates the ways in which agency can be expressed constructively, offering alternative visions of education and the future in the face of power imbalance contexts of formal education.

2.3 The Promises of Education: Migration, Inequality & Social Reproduction

In light of the analysis of relevant migration theories and their implications for the migration-education nexus, this chapter turns its attention to strand of educational theories concerned with social reproduction and the perpetuation of inequalities in different settings. It is intended that such analysis adds texture to the position advanced in this thesis that, far from an automatic

good, education should be considered as a complex and contested resource in the context of mobility aspirations and sustainable rural livelihoods. To do this, it draws attention to certain foundational works that continue to inform the argument that education should be considered a contested resource in the context of development.

In so doing, it is demonstrated that, in light of the historical developments in the field of migration and the field of education, the use of *aspirations* and *capabilities* provides analytical reciprocity when engaging rigorously with the migration-education nexus in any given setting, thereby providing a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach to describing the needs and dynamics of sustainable rural livelihoods.

Historically, notable theorists have endeavoured to explain the impact of education on the values, norms, and order of society (Dewey 1916; Durkheim 1925; Illich 1971). While each emphasised particular dimensions of the educational experience and articulated perspectives on meaningful educational outcomes, this thesis views the capability approach as an important way to build on these perspectives and explore analytical possibilities for understanding educational experience. Fundamentally, by highlighting the need to go beyond the question of *access* (Aikman and Unterhalter 2005), the capability approach provides constructive lines of enquiry regarding the quality, content, and outcomes of educational experience.

To explore the contours of the migration-education nexus, brief consideration of key socio-political thinkers concerned with the mechanisms through which educational institutions perpetuate inequality is instructive. This, perhaps most famously, is expressed vividly in Pierre Bourdieu and Passerons (1977) theory of cultural and social reproduction, but also finds expression in the critical theory work of Bowles and Gintis (1976), Willis (1977), and Freire (1970), amongst others.

From the perspective of Bourdieu, education is one of the primary social institutions that perpetuate imbalances between class and act as mechanisms of social reproduction (1977; 1990). Utilising the concept of social and cultural capital, Bourdieu famously argued that educational systems, far from being neutral, place emphasis and importance on cultural norms dominant in a given society and as a result enable people from privileged backgrounds to gain forms of social advantage over individuals from a lower class. Pertinent to the social context of this research project, Bourdieu classifies different sections of class around three main

positions, placing agricultural workers in the lowest position and describing how they become excluded from participation in “higher” forms of culture. Such categorisation, albeit from a ‘Western’ vantage point, offers incisive commentary on the clear limitations faced by education in any society. Although agricultural engagement is more widespread in the Ugandan context, Bourdieu’s argument that social hierarchies become converted into academic hierarchies bears relevance to rural Jinja, where those from the ‘city’ were in better positions to receive their qualifications than those from the village. To combat this uneven playing field, the market value of ‘qualifications’ often results in panic and struggle amongst youth and their families and narrows the intention and purpose of schooling for all involved – the students, the families, the teachers, and the administrators. That is to say, rather than education becoming intrinsically valuable, the perceptions of its role in overcoming inequality is instrumentalised as a tool out of poverty.

What is more, the valorisation of lifestyles, cultural knowledge, social connections, and linguistic style within educational systems not only perpetuate those beginning in higher positions being able to navigate social systems and access resources, but also presents a set of ideals that are internalised by all students of this system of education. From this perspective, not only does education perpetuate social structures, but perhaps more worryingly comes to define what young students ought to value and aspire toward for their own lives – even if it is unachievable (1990). This concern was not confined to Bourdieu, and the internalisation of the logic that sustains unequal relations amongst students of formal education is a foundational concern of critical pedagogy.

For instance, the work of Willis’ Learning to Labour (1977), Bowles and Gintis’ Schooling in Capitalist America (1976), and Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), each speak to the fundamental question of why greater access to education and schooling does not necessarily address the levels of inequality and poverty in society. Although varied in their analysis, the limitations of political power, the extension of an economic logic to the rights and liberties of individuals in society, and the use of education as a tool to maintain influence over disadvantaged groups, are three overarching themes that run through these theoretical frameworks.

From the perspective of Freire (1970), the view that education is a neutral and value-free process holds limitations in at least three ways, and fails to acknowledge that: a) educational systems built in oppressive systems have (and can) become a tool that benefits some and

perpetuates inequality; b) the one-way transfer of knowledge that occurs in educational settings constrains the creativity and transformative agency of individuals; and c) the failure to meaningfully integrate theory and practice fails to cultivate meaningful connection to the social context in which participants find themselves. Bounded to this socio-cultural context, Freire maintains that educational systems often propagate and reinforce ideologies about what constitutes 'progress', and the skills, abilities and knowledge that reinforce dominant narratives and perpetuate social hierarchies.

The ways in which dominant narratives are perpetuated through a "banking model" of education (p. 72) holds particular importance to Freire's concept of "conscientization", a process Freire describes as raising consciousness about oppressive systems and encouraging critical engagement amongst students. Rather than education and school being creative engagement with the production and generation of relevant knowledge, Freire uses the banking model to argue that many educational systems view students as the "depositories" of information and learning, and teachers as the "depositors". However well-intentioned, this foundational pedagogical principle, argues Freire, imposes constraints on possibility, social liberation, and fundamental transformation of the sociocultural context of that educational system. Put simply, Freire suggests that sub-systems in any given society (e.g education) are likely to maintain the current order when they have been created – and structured – by a larger socio-economic system of inequality.

Working from a similar theoretical impetus, in their analysis on the relationship between capitalism and schooling, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that educational reforms occurring in 1970s America were undeniably bound to a neoliberal ideological belief in the market as the primary mechanism for achieving social and economic priorities. They argue that excessive emphasis on market-oriented approaches, policy reforms that encouraged competition, and the instrumentalization of skills training for the benefit of the labour market revealed four critical contradictions of economic life and impact on educational reform.

(a) Contradiction between labour and capital: while labour is the source of value creation through the production of goods and services, those who already own capital appropriate a disproportionate share of the generated wealth. This contradiction of economic life results in foundational tensions between the working people and the various loci of capital accumulation, thereby casting doubt on the intentions of the educational project itself

(b) Contradiction between economic efficiency and human development: While capitalist economies prioritise maximising profit and productivity, this is often at the expense of workers' well-being and genuine realisation of their full potential. With levels of productivity shaping the "bottom-line", individuals who participate in education and enter the workforce become part of the factory line that fill vacancies

(c) Contradiction between meritocracy and structural inequality: It is argued that the educational system seeks to legitimise structural inequality by appearing to provide an open and "objective" (p. 103) way to assign individual to unequal economic positions. By equating economic success with technical or cognitive mastery – measured through competitive grading and test scores – it is argued, much like Bourdieu, that the real determinants of economic success are via social class. Such structural inequalities that go beyond "access" to schooling and, far from a level-playing field, undermines the meritocratic "ideal" on which the educational system is built

(d) Contradiction between equality of opportunity and social reproduction: The veneer of "equality of opportunity", a phrase often used as the crowning jewel of liberal education, is at odds with the reality of social reproduction, with social and economic advantage disproportionately inherited across generations due to an educational system that privileges certain groups over others, places weight on the cultural capital of the higher class and, in the final analysis, perpetuates the social inequalities that it purports to address

These contradictions faced by systems pursuing capitalist ideals, it is argued impact several on individual life opportunities and reduce the likelihood of any meaningful social mobility. As such, they illustrate the structural inequalities and power imbalances that shape economic life and educational systems, complicating the view on what role education can and should play in modern society.

Similarly, Paul Willis' (1977) ethnographic research in a Midlands school in England focused on the social mechanisms through "working-class kids gets working-class jobs". In an attempt to understand how the "lads" of his research develop identities that align with their expected social positions, Willis concluded that their experiences in the educational system contributed to the reproduction of class divisions. By challenging the meritocratic ideals often advertised through education, Willis' research highlights in very practical ways how it is that social class is reproduced within the education system. For example, by examining the concept of the

"hidden curriculum", Willis unpacks the implicit and unstated lessons, values, and social expectations that are transmitted through the educational environment but are not part of the formal curriculum. Willis argues that hidden messages and norms such as these – be they through teacher-student relationships, peer-to-peer relationships, or institutional-individual relationships – shape students attitudes, behaviours, and orientations towards education, work and society in general.

Far from being a comprehensive account on the nuances of the work of these educational theorists, the purpose of this section is to illustrate that the simple question *"education for what?"* becomes increasingly complex when placed in the wider social, economic and political processes that enshroud that educational system. Critical pedagogy is well-known for its critique of broader economic structures on the functioning of institutions in society. The intellectual focus that is afforded to the impact of structure on the real opportunities (or lack thereof) before individuals who participate in educational systems that have their roots in the broader economic project of neoliberalism offers a compelling case for moving beyond the view that *accessing* education is the pinnacle of development endeavour. It is, as the name would imply, only the beginning and scrutinising the educational experience of those who participate in formal systems of education is essential if we are to understand the knowledge, skills, abilities and values that are formed in this setting and inform conceptions of what it means to live a good and meaningful life.

Despite this, the traditional challenges associated with theory derived from Marxist thought persists when it comes to the above theorists. Far from offering a complete view, the insistence on structural inequality and the view that individual agency is *entirely* determined by systems of injustice does not account for the heterogeneity of student experience, nor the possibility that the individual has the possibility to impact the collective. While the relationship between structure and agency has deep philosophical roots (Weber 1922; Giddens 1984), this thesis argues that educational theories on social reproduction offer a powerful critique into the limitations of schooling systems in broader economic, social and cultural contexts. However, discovering a new type of language to explore and articulate more precisely the workings of agency is insufficiently developed in this set of theories and, as a result, partially incomplete in its possibilities for conceptualising alternative conceptions of education and schooling.

2.4 Understanding the Migration-Education Nexus

Aspirations & Capabilities

The overarching research question of this thesis considers the relationship between migration prospects, educational experiences, and the transformation of rural livelihoods. To understand how migration patterns have been conceptualised and its implications for the relationship between educational experience in shaping potential migration, the above sections outline the contours of paradigms that have guided migration and education in diverse contexts.

While a number of macro-structural accounts correctly argue that migration patterns experience change as regions experience 'development' (Skeldon 1997), the main criticisms they receive are that: (i) they are largely deterministic in their conclusions; and (ii) they fail to account for how migrants exert agency within broader structural constraints (de Haas 2014; Castles et al. 2013). In fact, while functionalist and historical-structural theories seem fundamentally divergent from one another, they share in common a limited ability to explain the expression – and impact – of human agency on undeniably strong structural factors (de Haas 2021). By portraying individuals as rational utilitarians on one side, or victims of capital forces on the other, they both essentially offer a particular view of human nature and action that is at odds with empirical accounts that illustrate individuals role in shaping communities (Scoones et al 2020), local asset-based structures (Mathie and Cunningham 2005) and educational institutions (Correa and Murphy-Graham 2019; Pavel and Isak 2022).

In light of this perspective on the role of 'transformative agency' as it relates to broader structural factors (Bajaj 2009), this thesis builds on the efforts to conceptualise the migration process as a function of *aspirations* and *capabilities* as first delineated by Jorgen Carling (2002) and Hein De Haas (2003), thus drawing upon insights that enhance our understanding of contemporary and diverse forms of mobility and immobility (de Haas 2003; Carling 2002; Timmerman et al. 2010; Carling and Collins 2018; Schewel 2019; O'Reilly 2022).

With historical-structuralist and functionalist approaches towards migration and development focusing primarily on income indicators, key scholars have claimed that conceptualising development through expanding an individuals "substantive freedoms" opens fruitful paths of inquiry into the migration-development nexus (Carling 2002; 2014; de Haas 2003; 2014; Castles 2013). It is argued that evaluating migration-development interactions against the broader conceptual background of the capability approach (Sen 2001; 2009) allows us to

understand (i) the direct impact of migration on individual well-being; (ii) its relationship with socio-economic processes in any given setting, and (iii) the ways in which migration both causes and is caused by processes of social transformation (Castles 2010; de Haas 2014; Carling and Collins 2018; De Haas 2020).

Similarly, for education there has been growing interest in the ways in which aspirations and capabilities provide conceptually and empirically generative approaches to understanding diverse livelihood strategies. This thesis thus argues that the use of aspirations and capabilities offers a promising development for nuanced analysis on the perpetuation of inequality in formal education, and enables important points of focus for examining the role of education in rural settings. In other words, by providing critical analysis into the cultural dimensions and structural constraints associated with the "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai 2013, pp. 67), such a framework seeks to address the concerns of critical pedagogy about making education more than a mechanism for social reproduction. Going further, the use of aspirations and capabilities as a framework centralises the individual actor and their relationships with the collective in a way that accommodates the heterogeneity of individual preferences, abilities and responses, and provides ensures the importance of individuality doesn't collapse into a 'suffocating collectivism' -- a criticism often raised against critical Marxist theory (Laszlo 2013). Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, strengthening the agency dimension of educational experience, and beginning to penetrate its relationship to structure, provides constructive opportunity to meaningfully articulate the relationship between education and mobility in rural Jinja, Uganda.

There exists a significant body of literature that explores the role of education in development (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1993; Chabbott 2013; Kopnina 2020; Shaturaev 2021). Despite this multifaceted and nuanced work, it is frequently the case that the inclusion of education into development and mobility agendas simplifies education as a catholicon for the problems of poverty. As it pertains to mobile populations, some have described modern education as finding itself in an ontological crisis due to persistent exclusion, limitation, and fixed conceptions of schooling (Dyer and Rajan 2023). As such, with the policy discourse becoming stuck on the – albeit important – theme of *access* to education (Unterhalter 2009), oftentimes what actually *happens* in education is treated as a black box.

The foundational perspective of this thesis is that the *pedagogy, experiences,* and *approaches* that take place *within* formal and non-formal spaces of education are essential to understanding

the *potential* role it can play in the context of development more generally. As argued more specifically, this perspective is essential to establishing an informed and nuanced understanding of the relationship between education and rural-urban migration processes.

Taken together, a framework that utilises aspirations and capabilities provides a fruitful approach for understanding the interaction of migration and education in the context of development. The chapter will consider how capabilities are understood and explored in both migration and education.

2.4.1 Capabilities

Although often treated instrumentally in migration theory as the literal "ability" to make a move, the use of the wider theoretical perspective on capabilities in development (Sen 1999) for migration and education illustrates the ways in which migration can be seen as an intrinsic process of social transformation (de Haas 2021). To appreciate the significance of this approach for the overall research question of understanding migration prospects in the context of educational experience, this section expands further on the capability approach.

The capability approach is a broader normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, with a focus on what people are able to *do* and to *be* (Sen 2001; Robeyns 2003). For the two main founders of this approach, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, development ought to be concerned with the expansion of valuable capabilities and the promotion of valuable functionings (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 1997).

Sen defines a capability as "a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; [it] represents the alternative combinations of things a person is *able* to *do* or *be*" (Sen 1993, p. 30). The strength of this approach lies in the conviction that human freedoms must be evaluated in terms of people being able to make decisions they value and work to remove obstacles to those freedoms.

This point touches on a core idea of the capability approach: that is, the distinction made between *capabilities* and *functionings* (Sen 1980). Functionings are achieved outcomes, such as reading, talking to children, moving, or being involved in one's community. Capabilities are

the potential to achieve these functionings; having been taught to read, to have books or text available to read, or living in a society where adults of your gender, race, or class are permitted to talk to children. As such, the difference is between the opportunity to achieve (capability) and the actual achievement. Such a distinction is crucial because solely evaluating functionings or outcomes provides limited information about the nature of opportunity, the nuances of individual and collective experience, and how well people are actually doing in the context of wider development efforts.

In the context of the migration-education nexus, the distinction between functionings and capabilities is critical for the purpose of understanding migration prospects – both potential and realised – in a way that questions the idea that migration is an automatic positive good. According to Sen, capabilities are real freedoms or opportunities to *achieve* functionings (Sen 1993). Thus, while the act of migrating may be a functioning, the opportunity to choose to stay *or* to move is the corresponding capability. The argument advanced throughout this thesis is that, similar to Sen's critique of development thought in general, functionings and capabilities are often conflated in the context of migration and result in the polarization of perspectives. As previously outlined, on one end, 'sedentary biased' perspectives (Bakewell 2010) view those who *stay* in their communities as the fullest expression of human freedom. On the other end, 'mobility biased' perspectives pivot the development of the field around the mobility turn (Urry 2007) and argue that those who migrate in search of better opportunities are – a priori – giving expression to their human freedoms. Both extremes have been challenged within migration research as failing to capture the circumstances under which migration prospects are an expression of human development on the one hand, or the result of wider socio-economic transformations that conflate the aspirations to leave with individual ambition or structural opportunity, thereby limiting the genuine enhancement of human freedoms (Faist 2013; Schewel 2020). Ultimately, this thesis seeks to build on the incorporation of nuance and the elimination of extremities, arguing that by conflating functionings and capabilities, these perspectives oversimplify the drivers of migration processes and in particular, instrumentalise the role of education as a tool that either 'helps people to stay' or 'helps people to move'. From this perspective the role of education in development is superficial, in that it is simply *access* or *years of schooling* that are believed to achieve a particular end (be it to stay *or* to move). It is argued in this thesis that unpacking the lived *experiences* of education, in its diverse forms, amongst youth in rural Jinja assists in better understanding the operation of educational

environments, the impact of the explicit and implicit curriculum being taught, and broader perceptions on the place of the rural setting in modern society. Taken together, it is argued that we begin to consider whether this experience truly nurtures, as described by De Haas, the capability to choose where to live (De Haas 2014; 2021).

As described by Robeyns (2017), capabilities are real freedoms or real opportunities to achieve functionings. In this sense, while the act of migrating is a functioning, the opportunity to choose to stay or to leave is the corresponding capability. While many normative positions are advanced in the context of migration theory, this thesis pursues a suggested strand of the work of Ingrid Robeyns (2017) that the use of a capability approach can also be used to provide "explanatory application" (Robeyns 2017) for understanding the extent to which certain capabilities are cultivated. Rather than advancing a normative claim as such, the use of the capability approach in this way provides empirical rigour and conceptual space to consider the nuances of experience and the potential pitfalls that fail to nurture the capabilities that are intended. In the case of this project, exploring the *capability to choose where to live* and how it is shaped by diverse educational experience (both formal and non-formal) provides space to consider the process of decision making, suggesting that there is more to the process than the established neoclassical economic belief that individuals are rational self-interested actors and make decisions solely to maximise their own economic benefit (Friedman 1962; Becker 1976).

When it comes to treating migration as part of broader processes of social transformation, it has been described that migration has bifurcated into a "for" or "against" debate (Benhabib 1996). Adopting a *capabilities* approach does not mean that migration becomes constrained by a crude "negative-versus-positive" debate but rather, it is an approach that assists us to understand the reciprocally related social and economic dimensions of development (de Haas 2010; 2014).

When it comes to the education side of the migration-education nexus, the relationship between education and capabilities is important in at least two ways: first, proper education is crucial in the enhancement of capabilities (Sen 2001; Nussbaum 1997; Walker and Unterhalter 2007) and second, the capability approach provides a promising framework for analysing the experiences of educational processes in more meaningful ways.

Taking this exploration further, Walker and Unterhalter (2007) argue that the capability approach holds high value in evaluating education due to its accommodation of distributional, recognitional, and process elements of justice. Each person should have the prospect of a good life, and should be able to make genuine *choices* among alternatives of similar worth. The strength of the capability approach in and through education is that it does not prescribe one version of the good life and promotes capability over functioning – that is, not a single idea of human flourishing, but a range of possibilities that unfold in a given cultural context.

Working from this foundational perspective on the capability approach in education, there is a growing body of research concerned with identifying the multiplicity of ways in which education shapes capabilities.

The role of education in expanding capabilities is complex, given that simplistic approaches such as access to education (Saito 2003), the amount of resources spent on education, or even the years of schooling completed (Terzi 2007) are insufficient indicators for whether or not education truly leads to the expansion of human capabilities that enable people to lead flourishing lives (Sen 2001). As outlined previously in the context of social reproduction, although education holds the potentiality to (at least in part) reach this standard, it is often the case that educational curricula and practices reflect the socio-political structures of deeper inequalities (Aikman and Dyer 2012). As such, the capability approach has sought to build on these concerns, with key theorists examining various ways operationalising the capability approach under conditions of inequality (Cin and Walker 2013; Unterhalter, Heslop and Mamedu 2013; Dejaeghere and Wiger 2013). Thus while education is often assumed to be empowering, transformative, and considered an unqualified good for the expansion of human capabilities and human freedom (Sen 2001), these theorists demonstrate how education often does not fulfil this vision and poor quality education may actually act as a disadvantage in the expansion of capabilities.

Despite the potential of education in expanding capabilities, these critical theorists have observed that it is a double-edged sword. This key limitation to theorising the relationship between education and capabilities is the assumption that education is an "unqualified good" for the expansion of human capabilities and human freedoms (Sen 1999). In the capability approach, education is assumed (and expected) to be empowering and transformative but in many instances, education often does not fulfil this vision. Indeed poor quality education may

act as a disadvantage in the expansion of capabilities (Unterhalter 1999). Crucially, then, it is important to acknowledge that capabilities can be diminished as well as enhanced by education. If we are to argue that proper education expands human freedoms, agency and leads to empowerment, meaningful analysis into education must see it as a contested resource; one that potentially increases or potentially limits human freedoms. From this perspective, the experiences of formal and non-formal spaces of education need to be considered and shed light on the nuances of the capability to choose where to live (De Haas 2014).

One notable example of this critical engagement has been the growing body of theoretical and empirical literature on the intersection between feminist social theory, the capability approach and education (Cin and Walker 2013; Unterhalter, Heslop and Mamedu 2013; Dejaeghere and Wiger 2013). By dealing with ideas about enhancing capabilities whilst addressing the unequal gender relations facing teachers, non-governmental organisations and school communities, it is illustrates how examining ways of operationalising the capability approach under conditions of inequality is central to robust understanding of the relationship between education and capabilities in any given setting. Importantly, this body of research challenges the capability approach in its portrayal of education as an automatic good (Sen 2001). Thus, it is argued that rather than thinking of capabilities as magical educational outputs, seeking to understand how capabilities are enhanced or constrained in the practices of education is important for determining pathways to equity and justice.

Another example that utilises the capability approach for understanding educational well-being explores how the reasoning of girls and boys in a rural district in Bangladesh affects their educational well-being and empowerment (DeJaeghere and Lee 2011). In the context of this study, educational well-being and empowerment depend on the social and educational conditions of young people, and a capability approach provides the opportunity to examine how the process and practices of education have the potential to foster well-being. The authors describe capabilities that matter for boys and girls' well-being as they go through education. While safety and support are two clear requirements of education if it is to genuinely cultivate capabilities that lead to the empowerment for girls and boys, an additional concept is the perceived (ir)relevancy of when considering its potential for enhancing human freedoms. As argued, this *relevancy* must address: (1) the social conditions that enable girls and boys to exercise agency freedom; and (2) the aspirations and capabilities that youth have reason to

value. Far more than education simply supporting individuals – the analysis advanced outlines the importance of the societal structures and conditions that either constrain or foster collective well-being, and points to the importance of specifying the social conditions that are relevant to the educational experiences in a rural district of Bangladesh. Such an approach, while necessarily specific, illustrates the importance of context-sensitive approaches for informing the discourse on relevant education to any given rural setting (or otherwise).

As mentioned, the capability approach is a key analytical framework that has sought to address this need in education. Extending this framework to understanding the influence of formal and non-formal education on both aspirations and capabilities in the context of mobility requires breaking the analysis into two interrelated components: (i) how education interacts with the *capability* to stay *or* to migrate and (ii) how education interacts with the *aspiration* to stay *or* to migrate. In this analysis, it is important to note that the aspiration and capability to migrate are seen as part of the broader life aspirations and capabilities that an individual may possess in the context of a wider cultural context.

When it comes to choosing capabilities for the migration-education nexus, it is worth stating that a notable point of departure between Sen and Nussbaum is the question of selecting specific capabilities as markers for development. Sen has repeatedly argued for the importance of public participation and dialogue in arriving at valued capabilities for each situation and context (Sen 2001; 2004). From this perspective, this means that a final list of capabilities in education should not be predetermined but emerge from the experience, perceptions and realities of a given population (Walker and Unterhalter 2007).

That is not the case for Nussbaum (1993), who states that true human functioning should "make available to each and every member of the community the basic necessary conditions of the capability to choose and live a fully human good life, with respect to each of the major human functions included in that fully good life" (Nussbaum 1993, p. 265). The core capabilities Nussbaum argues should be supported by all democracies are: (1) life; (2) bodily health; (3) bodily integrity; (4) senses, imagination and thought; (5) emotions; (6) practical reason; (7) affiliation; (8) other species; (9) play; (10) control over one's environment. Nussbaum's list has received criticism for the way in which it runs counter to the main premise of the capability approach which has sought to "redirect development theory away from a reductive focus on a

minimally decent life towards a more holistic account of human well-being for all people" (Alkire 2005).

In addition to the question of determining specific lists of capabilities, the question of what capabilities matter in education and migration is important. To begin, to state that education and capabilities seeks to enhance what 'one has reason to value' is not the same as endorsing all versions of the 'good life'. The key point is that if something is to count as *proper* education, processes and outcomes ought to enhance freedom, agency and well-being through the development of capabilities. As previously mentioned in the context of migration, functionings are often treated as a proxy for evaluating the presence of a human capability (Gasper and Van Staveren 2003; Robeyns 2005). That is to say, the agentic choice a young adult makes to either *stay* in their rural community, or to *migrate* elsewhere can be treated as indicators of the existence of the *capability to choose where to live*, so long as the decision made was a genuine choice. This debate is fuelled by a broader discussion on the relationship between structure and agency, and rests on additional theoretical concepts that begin to incorporate normative perspectives so as to ensure the capability to choose where to live is genuinely cultivated. Thus, evaluating functionings needs to be done in a way that challenges whether structures prescribe to individuals the choices they *should* make about their lives (in this case, whether or not to stay or to migrate).

Thus, as mentioned, for the migration-education nexus, the capability associated with mobility can be considered as a fundamental human freedom, and has been described as *people's capability to choose where to live* (De Haas 2014). In this sense, a truly agentic view of human mobility includes non-migratory and migratory behaviour as two sides of the same 'freedom-of-mobility' coin.

Such a perspective is intrinsically related to capabilities in two ways: (1) first, the individuals access to social, economic, and human resources shapes the possibilities of human agency. Under highly constrained conditions, people often lack these resources to migrate; (2) second, if people face intense external pressures to leave (e.g. through war, persecution, pressure, economic displacement, oppression, poverty, etc) they are deprived of an essential part of their human capability freedoms – namely, the capability to stay.

Taken together, the migration-education nexus is considerably enriched by the theoretical framework of the capability approach, ensuring that assumptions that either migration or education are automatic indicators of progress is avoided, instead providing an analytical framework to understand the conditions that either enhance and inhibit the capabilities

2.4.2 Aspirations

Complementary to the capability approach, the concept of aspirations expands our notion of migratory agency and addresses the central shortcoming of functionalist and historical-structural theories, which assume that people passively respond to external 'stimuli' in a uniform manner. Furthermore, the analysis of (im)mobility processes as a 'two-step' approach that considers migration as a potential course of action and the actual choice—where present—of mobility or immobility (Carling and Schewel 2020). Rather than seeing them as distinct components of the migration and development nexus, this analytical framework binds perceptions of mobility and immobility with the choices of individuals to move or to stay in any given circumstance. In the context of this thesis, utilising aspirations to examine the ways in which educational experiences in rural Jinja shape the feelings or thoughts youth incorporate as they enact (im)mobility outcomes offers further insight into the sub-question of how educational experiences and migration aspirations interact.

According to Callard (2018) "aspiration… is the distinctive form of agency directed at the acquisition of values" (p. 4). Consequently, migration aspirations relate to people's life preferences, their values and perceptions of opportunities locally and further afield (de Haas 2003). In this sense, migration aspirations are rooted in an 'emigration environment' made up of culture, education, individual traits, information and images (Carling 2002).

Aspirations and capabilities are two distinct yet overlapping concepts (de Haas 2014). The question of this thesis – the role of education in migration decision making – illustrates this interdependence. With education serving to expand knowledge and skills, it can also shape people's awareness of alternative, consumerist, and urban lifestyles, determining what people come to value and subsequently nurturing the aspiration to migrate. This aspiration is a function of the broader life aspirations of the individual as well as a possible result of increased capabilities (de Haas 2014). This view that the 'capacity to aspire' is a capability enhanced alongside development sheds light onto this relationship between aspirations and capabilities

(Appadurai 2004). Crucially, however, it also outlines the importance of accounting for the ethical and metaphysical ideas connected to cultural norms. Rather than being equated with the neoclassical interpretation of choices and calculations (Massey et al. 1993), aspirations are more meaningfully conceptualised as being connected to systems of ideas about life and death, worldly possessions, material assets, and the value of peace or warfare (Appadurai 2004). While the outer expressions of these normative contexts are often decontextualised and interpreted through individual calculations and market-economics, Appadurai argues that aspirations – and the capacity to aspire – are tied up with norms, assumptions (both traditional and modern), and general ideas about what constitutes the 'good life'. Furthermore, expanding aspirations beyond an economic logic overcomes the type of paternalism that views 'the poor' as helpless individuals with little to no aspirations for their life, and reintroduces the ways in which individual agency shapes – and is shaped by – structural factors.

Incorporating aspirations as a key concept alongside capabilities (Carling 2001; de Haas 2003; de Haas 2014) has represented an important development in the field of migration. For Carling (2001), migration aspirations capture the idea that people in places of origin have the active desire to migrate, defined by a belief that migration is preferable to non-migration. This aspiration can vary in degree and in the balance between choice and coercion. In the original case for an "aspiration-ability" model, Carling outlined the importance of distinguishing between people's aspiration to migrate and their ability to do so, thereby highlighting the importance of nuance and context to the question of *why people move*.

As such, taking aspirations and capabilities together has assisted in identifying new typologies of movement and non-movement:

(a) **Voluntary mobility** describes those who *both* aspire to migrate *and* have the capability to do so – often leading to internal and/or international migration

(b) **Involuntary immobility** describes those who have the aspiration to migrate but do not have the capability to do so

(c) **Involuntary mobility** may describe those who do not have the aspiration to migrate, but do have the capability – a category that could be applied to forced migration

(d) **Voluntary immobility** describes those for whom non-migration is preferable to migration (more recently termed as the aspiration to stay), yet have the mobility capability

(e) In recent years, a fifth category has been added to those delineated above. Termed **acquiescent immobility** (Schewel 2015), this additional category can be utilised to describe – and understand – the circumstances of those who do not have the capability to migrate but neither do they desire to do so. This fifth dimension is valuable insofar as it challenges the idea that those who do not have the capability to migrate -- generally 'poor' people from 'poor' countries -- are implicitly considered *involuntary non-migrants*. Similarly, it assists us to counteract the assumption that all 'poor' people aspire to leave their home community (thus challenging the homo-economicus narrative).

Rational-choice models are often sceptical against the importance of aspirations in development due to the fact that they are poor predictors of outcomes (Morgan 2005; Gabay-Egozi et al 2010). However, it is argued this perspective is limited in its temporal stasis and fails to appreciate the implications of considering migration as part of broader processes of social transformation.

Rather than a sharp duality, aspirations are best conceived along a continuum, fundamentally bound to a wider cultural context, and formed in "the thick of social life" (Appadurai 2004, p. 10). As such, in addition to providing insight into future-making (Appadurai 2013; Crivello 2015; Boccagni 2017; Wu 2022), aspirations shed light on how individuals and families make sense of their past and present experiences to imagine the possibilities of the future, regardless of their eventual realisation. Frye's (2012) assessment of the "ample evidence that aspirations are often uncorrelated with available opportunities" makes clear that aspirations as *outcomes* offers little analytical meaning. Rather, consideration of alternative outlooks than the rational choice approach and using aspirations as a key is a conceptually generative mechanism for understanding the individual and collective values of the present.

In the context of migration, Carling (2014) outlines three processes for understanding the relevance of aspirations to diverse mobility and immobility outcomes, namely: (i) the formation of aspirations; (ii) the realization of aspirations; and (iii) the repression of aspirations. As such, better understanding the various processes and formations that influence aspirations to leave and aspirations to stay can advance our understanding of the dynamic interplay between

individual agency and structural factors, and understand patterns of movement within particular historical and social contexts.

Although the intrinsic dimensions of migration capabilities and aspirations are frequently ignored in predominantly 'functionalist' migration literature (Castles et al. 2013), this oversight points to the importance of simultaneously capturing movement *and* non-movement in an agentic definition of mobility. By considering the very capability to move as a fundamental human freedom, de Haas (2014; 2021) defines human mobility as *people's capability to choose where to live*. In this sense, a truly agentic view of human mobility includes non-migratory and migratory behaviour as two sides of the same 'freedom-of-mobility' coin.

Such a perspective is intrinsically related to capabilities in two ways: (1) first, the individual's access to social, economic, and human resources shapes the possibilities of human agency. Under highly constrained conditions, people often lack these resources to migrate; (2) second, if people face intense external pressures to leave (e.g. through war, persecution, pressure, etc) they are deprived of an essential part of their human capability freedoms – namely, the capability to stay.

It is clear that aspirations and capabilities shed light on why people move, thus adding texture to the migration component of the migration-education nexus. When it comes to drivers of migration, however, the role of rural education in *shaping* the aspirations of young people (and vice versa) has received little attention, with some notable exceptions (e.g. Corbett 2007; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Rao and Patil 2022).

While the capability approach enables sharper insight into people's ability to achieve what they have reason to value, its initial conceptualization does not make normative claims. However, the approach provides space to utilize capabilities for varied purposes, and in the case of this thesis, to expand on what leads to the formation of these values in the context of education. Thus, alongside *what* someone is able to do and to be as a result of their education, then, comes the question of *why* and *how* someone expresses his or her agency in a particular way in relation to their educational experience. Aspirations have been used as one analytical concept to systematise this area of inquiry in the field of education, carving out new possibilities for understanding the interaction of structure and agency in educational settings.

Incorporating aspirations as a way to understand educational experience is not to advance rational calculations, but are best conceived as 'assertions of a virtuous identity' (Frye 2012 p. 1565). In this context, Frye (2012) has challenges the dominance of rational-choice models, which posit that individuals choose goals that will limit their cost and maximise their chances of success. Indeed, if viewed through the rational choice framework, imagined futures could be considered irrational. Rather than conceptualising aspirations as the individual's ability to accurately predict future outcomes, this project views aspirations as central to human agency, and intimately bound to the present (Frye 2012). Thus, although aspirations are not predictors of future goals, they are crucial to understanding how individuals think about their educational, mobility, and life opportunities as well as providing insight into individual's intellectual and moral commitment to improving social conditions (Crivello 2015).

Thus, while this research draws on the theoretical view that aspirations and capabilities are interlinked, it also seeks to avoid two extremes: (i) conflating broader life aspirations (or the capacity to aspire) with migration aspirations – that is to say, whether or not someone holds migration aspirations does not constitute the 'litmus test' of whether or not the cultural context has nurtured the capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004); and (ii) treating the expansion of human capabilities as a value-free process. Regarding the latter, it is clear that what one considers to be the expansion of substantive freedoms (i.e. to become educated and live abroad) may actually shape both aspirations and capabilities along pre-defined ideological paths (Schewel 2015). In this case, this research utilises an *aspiration-capability* framework in a manner that addresses how formal and non-formal educational processes shape aspirations and capabilities in varying ways. It is argued that examination of these two features unpacks the relationship between structure and agency in rural Jinja, and contributes to a deeper analysis of how rural-urban migration processes are part broader processes social transformation (Castles 2013), with particular emphasis on the educational experience in rural Jinja.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has considered the theoretical frameworks relevant to the claim that migration is an intrinsic part of social transformation processes (Castles 2010) and sought to provide theoretical justification for utilising aspirations and capabilities in the context of the migration-education nexus. To address the overarching research question of migration prospects and

educational experiences, it has demonstrated how the drivers of migration requires analysis of how these broader processes shape the geographical direction, timing, internal composition and volume of internal and international migration (De Haas 2014). Similarly, it has shown how education has the potential to shape aspirations and capabilities, but there is important nuance required to ensure that both concepts inform meaningful analysis of individual and collective livelihoods (Nussbaum 1997; Sen 2001; Appadurai 2004). Taken together, the overlapping of frameworks and questions for the migration-education nexus illustrate the context, justification, and main principles through which aspirations and capabilities can be used as a meaningful approach to understanding the educational experience – and its mobility implications – of youth in rural Jinja.

In this light, the key assertion advanced is that an adequate understanding of migration processes in any given setting requires a careful analysis of the changing structures of society and how they interact with individual, institutional, and community life (Castles 2010; de Haas 2021). Examining the complex and dynamic relationship between migration and education in rural Jinja is of critical importance, with the intention of using aspirations and capabilities to better understand the operation of structure, agency and migration processes in the context of youth livelihoods in rural Jinja. To this end, the next chapter will consider relevant empirical literature that have considered the relationship between education and migration, and the specific implications of the migration-education nexus in the context of Uganda.

The central scholarly contribution of this project is the use of aspirations and capabilities (Carling 2002; De Haas 2014; Hart 2012; Appadurai 2013) across three interconnected realms: (i) the transformation of rural-urban livelihoods; (ii) the educational experiences of rural youth, and (iii) the formation of migration aspirations amongst youth in rural settings. In the past decade, despite considerable attention being given to understanding aspirations alongside the capability to "lead the kind of lives [one] values" (Sen 2001, p. 18) for migration (Carling 2002; de Haas 2010; de Haas 2021) and education (Hart 2012; Farid-Arbab 2012; Nussbaum 2007; Rao and Patil 2022; North and Chase 2022), there remains a comparatively limited body of research on the role of *aspirations* and *capabilities* for in-depth analysis into the relationship between education, mobility, immobility and local opportunities. To address this lacuna, this research is focused on examining the migration-education nexus by analysing the function of education in shaping the aspirations and capabilities of rural youth in Jinja, Uganda.

CHAPTER 3

Migration & Education for Rural Livelihoods: Contextual Realities, Empirical Insights & Emerging Tensions

3.1 Introduction

The dynamics and tensions between diverse migration theories, educational frameworks and rural-urban livelihoods were illustrated in the previous chapter, with the suggestion that through historical nuance, empirical grounding and theoretical scrutiny, the key argument advanced is that *aspirations* and *capabilities* are the basis of a meaningful framework for understanding the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja. Having elaborated this perspective for migration and education in the context of youth livelihoods, the following chapter will examine the empirical realities of this nexus against the backdrop of migration processes, educational landscapes, and rural-urban dynamics in Uganda.

One central pivot of this thesis is concerned with exploring how and why a mobility imperative (Corbett 2007) has shaped the experience of formal education amongst youth in rural Jinja. Historically, several notable scholars, including Illich (1971), Giddens (1990) and Freire (1970), have critiqued industrialised conceptions of education that emerged in the 19th century, and rest on the essential view that industrialisation and urbanisation represented the inevitable path of any modern nation-state (Rostow 1959;1990), and therefore an expected outcome of education. Primarily, this study is concerned with the spatial implications of these developments. Be it via intentional or uninterrogated views of education, it is argued that the formal and non-formal educational experiences of youth in rural settings have a tangible impact on their aspirations and capabilities, often re-constituting their connection with their surroundings and, in the instances of decontextualisation, leading to rising migration aspirations.

Dominant discourse on education in development is often susceptible to the pendulum of extremity. On one side, rooted in neoliberal visions of globalisation, education has been championed as a global entity that sustains a global labour force (Coulby 2011). Through socio-political concepts such as convergence (Martell 2007), this perspective relegates the local, regional and even national to peripheral analytical importance, arguing that global forces and processes assert common pressures, resulting in common approaches and, ultimately, common, easily standardised outcomes or transnational isomorphisms (Lample 2018). As discussed in chapter 1, this perspective adopted by various neoliberal actors has also championed its own interpretation of aspiration discourse to mean ambition for middle-class urban livelihoods (Corbett and Forsey 2017). On the other side, education, in the name of preserving tradition and local sovereignty, argues for divergence, with the view that the complexities of institutional

arrangements vary dramatically across contexts, and as such require different responses to global forces (Weiss 1997; Spicer 2006). Such a perspective is often criticised for being ahistoric in its sense of 'pure tradition' and failing to consider the relevance of experience elsewhere. Simplistic claims for either extreme fail to do justice to the role of education in development. More than ever before, the tendencies toward polarising perspectives in the current political climate illustrates the need to critically examine the place and function of the migration-nexus for better understanding the pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

In this context, this chapter seeks to highlight relevant empirical literature in which aspirations and capabilities have been considered in relation to migration and education. Highlighting the various ways in which aspirations and capabilities are conceptualised and researched will provide clearer context for the scholarly contribution of this thesis. In this light, the chapter will then illustrate relevant contextual realities and institutional features of Uganda that bear relevance to the empirical enquiry advanced by the thesis.

3.2 Mobilities, Typologies & Education

The mobilities paradigm represents a crucial addition to understanding the practical expression and diverse typologies of the migration-education nexus in diverse livelihood contexts (Sheller and Urry 2006). While expansive in nature, such an approach enables a more nuanced overview of the contested *forms* of movement relevant to understanding migration as both a *cause* and *consequence* of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010) and explores the relationship it holds with educational experiences amongst youth in rural settings. In response to the changing nature of economic, social and political relations, this conception of mobility—and immobility—has sought to reorient social inquiry to address the historic and contemporary importance of movement on individuals and society (Urry 2007).

Commonly referred to as a 'mobility turn', this arose in response to the static nature of social science, whereby movement was frequently seen as a black box to explanations of economic, social and political life. Importantly, the mobilities paradigm emerged in response to two opposing theoretical viewpoints present in theories of movement.

Firstly, it questions the validity of sedentarism, which claims fixity, stability and location as the natural units of analysis. According to Bakewell (2008), this 'sedentary bias' is connected

to deep historical and colonial ties that viewed existence as based around stable villages in fixed locations, populated by static tribes. This was due to the notion that colonial systems for collecting taxes, imposing law, and service provision all relied on a clear understanding of who lived where. Sedentary views interpret bounded locations (local, regional, national) as the fundamental basis of human identity and the basic units of social research (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013), a perception that poses fundamental challenges for how education in development is conceptualised for pastoral communities (Dyer 2001) and more generally more fluid processes of internal migration (Dyer and Rajan 2023). In outlining the mobilities paradigm, Sheller and Urry (2006) challenge this static form of social inquiry and emphasise that all places are tied into networks of connections that stretch beyond each place. As such, mobilities approaches claim that to view the world as static is to capture a mere snapshot of a complex picture of movement and relationality.

Secondly, the mobilities paradigm departs from concentration on *post*-national processes (Sheller and Urry 2006). Whilst incorporating theories of 'liquid modernity' that view social entities as made up of people, technology and images in systems of movement (Bauman 2000), this approach does not erase the role of space and place, thus avoiding the "romanticizing" of movement that often underpins nomadic theorization (Sheller and Urry 2006), of which a mobility bias shapes conceptions of education in development that ought to facilitate migration (Corbett 2007; Schewel 2020). Rather than a grand narrative of mobility or fluidity, the approach categorises various lines of inquiry into forms of mobility, their relations to power, and the inequality that may be latent within these patterns (Urry 2007). Drawing on these insights, the arguments advanced in this thesis suggest that transcending the sedentary-nomadic dichotomy in migration theory adds conceptual weight to the view that migration – or 'corporeal' movement (Urry 2007) – is intrinsically linked to diverse educational experience and part of wider processes of social transformation (Castles 2010).

Importantly, this addition to conceptualising the migration-education nexus ensures that empirical analysis overcomes rigid definitions of what does or does not constitute 'movement' (King and Skeldon 2010), a key concept that enables the thesis to analyse migration prospects that may—or may not—be realised in light of educational experiences and rural livelihood prospects, rather than specific migration patterns. Rather than fixing processes of movement into discrete categories of forced/voluntary, permanent/temporary, internal/international and origin/destination, migration is thus conceptualised along a time-space continuum of

movement where structural conditions shape and are shaped by individual and collective agency (de Haas 2014)[2]. As such, the concept of (im)mobility serves as help mechanism for fostering coherence between divers forms of population movement – or processes of staying – by identifying their common characteristics, as well as understanding their differences.

It is with these conceptual clarifications that migration is considered to encompass more than a linear movement between rural and urban regions (local and global) and is viewed as a complex system of short-term, long-term, short-distance, and long-distance movements that is has been captured by the umbrella term of 'mobility' (Urry 2007; Skeldon 2014). In this light, this research thus seeks to investigate the variation in the forms and types of such patterns of movement and their relationship to education in development. To go further, the thesis incorporates immobility as an essential dimension of this analysis into understanding why, when and how people migrate (Schewel 2020), and drives the research agenda on the formation of aspirations and capabilities in rural Jinja.

3.2.1 Rural-Urban Dynamism: Temporary, Seasonal & Circular Migration

A common misconception about migration is that it is about the movement of people across international boundaries (King and Skeldon 2010). In fact, the UN has estimated that while there are roughly 232 million international migrants (UN DESA 2013), there are approximately 740 million internal migrants (UNDP 2009)[3], with a significant portion of internal migration accounted for by *rural-urban* trends across the globe (IOM 2015). Most crucially, this apparent rapid urbanisation (partly driven by migration) that is occurring raises pressing questions about how to achieve the operative word of the UN's SDG's – sustainability. The UN estimates that, over the next few decades, population growth of almost 2.5 billion will occur in urban areas of low- and middle- income countries (UN DESA 2014) and for many cities, migration has become a more important determinant of population growth than fertility and mortality (Skeldon 2013).

[2] To eliminate dichotomies and to view all movement as identical are not one and the same. Naturally, visa policies, borders and governance all impact movement within and between countries in different ways. What is argued, however, is that these forms of movement hold many common features and are not as disparate as often assumed (King and Skeldon 2010).
[3] This estimate is both dated and a rough approximation, with internal migration typically very difficult to measure due to its diverse expressions and the different interpretations adopted internationally (King and Skeldon 2010)

Considering the above insights from the mobilities paradigm, it is helpful to acknowledge that migration has not merely been the simple funnelling process of people to the cities of the world. Indeed, while the concentration of populations into urban centres has been accompanied by declining rural populations, it is neither precise nor accurate to describe it as a linear flow from villages to towns (Elkan 1967; Hugo 1982; Skeldon 2015). Rather, rural-urban mobility has consisted of *repeated* circular movements to engage in urban employment for short periods of time before returning to a rural area (Skeldon 2015). Indeed, according to Zelinsky (1971), all movements that are short-term, repetitive or periodic have the common characteristic of a temporary change of residence.

Although it does not seem necessary to rigidly define these forms into discrete categories of 'temporary', 'seasonal' or 'circular' migration, policy-makers have sought differentiation in the name of policy intervention (Newland 2009). Thus, temporary migration is the umbrella term that has been broadly understood as any short-term movement with the intention of returning to the place of usual residence (Keshri and Bhagat 2012). For the purpose of this research, circular migration may be understood as a fluid back-and-forth process, whereby its iterative dimension distinguishes it from regular 'return' migration (Newland 2009); while seasonal migration may be viewed as a distinct category of temporary migration whereby patterns of movement are aligned with the demands of seasonal labour requirements (Keshri and Bhagat 2010). Although this categorisation remains somewhat arbitrary, the importance of adding nuance to research on internal migration is an additional aim of this thesis.

As such, this thesis claims that conceptualising mobility along a time-space continuum moves beyond *form* as the organising principle, and incorporates diverse patterns of movement into analysis of educational experiences and rural-urban livelihoods, thereby examining the key role of aspirations and capabilities in rural Jinja (de Haas 2003; Carling 2002). Research into these migration trends has demonstrated the key role temporary movement plays in urbanisation processes in Uganda (Elkan 1967), as well as its function in the lives of households and families (Keshri and Bhagat 2012; see NELM, Stark 1991).

3.3 Utilising Aspirations & Capabilities

In light of a more grounded conceptualisation of *how* movement is considered in the context of the migration-education nexus throughout this thesis, this section examines the ways in

which aspirations and capabilities are commonly drawn upon when it comes to the question of how migration and education interact. More general approaches to aspiration have utilised the status-attainment tradition and the blocked-opportunities framework (Kao and Tienda 1998). While the former emphasises the malleability of educational aspirations to one's environment (Sewell and Shah 1968; Campbell 1983) and the latter examines the structural and social barriers that account for the differences in educational aspirations (Kao and Tienda 1998), neither has been concerned with conceptualising the specific mobility aspirations that may emerge (Crivello 2011). However, an emerging body of research on youth transitions has identified certain aspirations that potential migrants hold for their education and future.

One such dimension to rural educational aspirations is the extent to which they are connected to prospects for future employment (Punch 2007). Related to the notion of employment prospects is the aspiration of *'becoming a professional'*, as termed by Gina Crivello, in order to confer a degree of social status (Crivello 2011).

When evaluating the cultivation of skills and abilities conducive to more productive lives, Crivello's study of rural Peru (2011) illustrates the educational aspirations that rural communities possess in relation to achieving inter-generational transformation. This desire for children and young adults to have better lives than their parents is best illustrated by the account of a father's expectation that: "I... walk in the field with sandals. At least he will go with shoes if he gets a good head with education." (Crivello 2011 p. 404). As such, by 'having eyes' to see the world, individuals aspire for standards of success that distinguish them from previous generations. This symbolic significance and social embeddedness of educational aspirations is central to understanding how individuals and communities make sense of their present and future lives (Frye 2012).

Other theorists have unpacked the relationship between aspirations, capabilities and social justice in education (Hart 2012; Hart 2016). According to Hart (2012), Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field add richness to the capability approach insofar as the agency of the individual is positioned within a wider socio-cultural context. Regarding the interaction between aspirations and capabilities, Hart (2012) that while a 'capability' is a useful way to conceptualise *the transition between aspirations and the realisation of related goals*, aspirations: (1) are not hierarchical, linear or constant; (2) represent a desire to achieve a particular valued functioning; (3) are dynamic and multi-dimensional—independent, shared, and guided; and that (4) the capability to aspire is a meta-capability.

Building on this work, Hart (2016) describes that aspirations are necessarily future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and that they represent an individual or groups commitment along a particular trajectory. As such, although aspirations enhance understanding about what an individual has reason to value, they do not necessarily say much about the roots of values, norms and principles that guide aspiration emergence.

Closely related to this relationship between aspirations and capabilities is the work of Arjun Appadurai (2004). Appadurai contends that it is in culture that ideas of the future are embedded and nurtured, and that through the development of the *'capacity to aspire'* individuals and groups can find the resources to address questions of poverty and development. He further suggests that developing the idea of aspiration – the ability to envision a future – as a cultural capacity assists the politics of dignity and well-being to be brought into a single framework.

While the 'capacity to aspire' has taken trend in development studies, a main limitation has been its focus on utility maximization and the rational choice assumption that non-material aspirations are inferior to maximizing economic gain (Frye 2012). This fails to capture the rich analysis of culture performed by Appadurai who suggests that 'exit' (employing Hirschman) is not a desirable response to discontent for all of the world's poor, and thus explores the political implications of developing their 'voice'—that is, the expression and inclusion of their views on the directions of social life. As it relates to the migration-education nexus, the role of educational experience in enabling or constraining this 'voice' opens enquiry into the nature of the educational experience, adapted to diverse cultural contexts and sensitive to any given setting.

Appadurai argues that aspirations are not individualized mental constructs but formed in "the thick of social life" (Appadurai 2004, p. 10). Aspirations about the good life exist in all societies and vary according to diverse social frames. Regardless of context, however, aspirations to the good life are part of a system of ideas that exist within a broader culture: e.g. life and death, worldly possessions, the role of education, the value of peace or warfare. Appadurai describes that these deep convictions are directed into two progressively narrowed expressions:

> (i) aspirations to the good life generally dissolve into local ideas concerning the role and place of marriage, work, education, friendship, health, virtue and community.

(ii) aspirations related to specific wants and choices that are enacted; for a piece of land, for familial progress, for the education of children, to live in one's home community or to move elsewhere.

As it relates to the migration-education nexus, the tendency to decontextualise decisions with regards to educational pathways or mobility trajectories oversimplifies the dynamics at play, with aspirations relegated to the expression of individual wants and preferences. In contrast, Appadurai's layered perspective provides a richer analysis into the relationality between norms, values and beliefs that are rooted in diverse cultures and, for the purpose of this thesis, provides important nuance for understanding the wider context in which the migration-education nexus operates. As it pertains to education, aspirations are more than the intention to achieve higher grades or work for a better job, but form parts of "wider ethical and metaphysical ideas which derive from cultural norms" (Appadurai 2004, p. 10). In this way, education is more than simply "training" in skills but a process concerned with raising consciousness, cultivating attitudes, shaping virtues and, as discussed, enhancing capabilities. This idea that education has an impact on the worldview of individuals is particularly pertinent to meaningful analysis of the migration-education nexus, insofar as it begins to unpack not only *what* one has reason to value but to begin considering the role of community narratives and educational experience in understanding *how* and *why* individuals and families form these values.

Another key dimension of the role of aspirations in the context of migration relates directly to education in rural settings. There are a growing number of empirical and theoretical accounts explicitly focused on the nature of rural education and its relation to aspirations. Tieken and San Antonio (2016), for instance, argue that development discourse focused on 'raising' rural aspirations is part of a deeper trend that has seen rural education as a bundle of problems and needs. Too often, consideration of how education shapes aspirations ignores the deeper normative questions and dilutes the role of the community needs that gives education – and aspirations – purpose and meaning. In this sense, it is argued that unpacking the rural context is vital for understanding the formation of rural aspirations (Tieken and San Antonio 2016). Such a perspective has far-reaching implications or policy formation, the most notable of which is that educational reforms for rural settings become more place-sensitive and no longer seek to make rural schooling more urban in the name of economic growth and progress.

When examining the potential vibrancy and vitality of rural life as it relates to aspirations, Michael Corbett (2007; 2016) has been a key voice in challenging the urban-centric vision of human development, which positions the city as the natural destination of modernity and promotes the view that the only value of rural life is found in what can fuel the city. In particular, Corbett's work has considered the educational implications of this strengthening trend along two lines;

(i) Central to the conversation on aspirations in rural settings is a wider "deficit discourse" (p. 270) on rural communities. Often the support and policy intervention for rural life frames the rural setting as anemic or lacking. It is suggested new language and approaches for viewing rural communities as vibrant spaces of potential advantage is within reach when accounting for context, structures, capabilities and aspirations to be more holistically nurtured in the educational (and other) processes of rural life. More specifically, this offers the perspective that formal and non-formal education can deepen attachments to rural places rather than weakening the relationship with rural place – be it explicit or implicit, an argument that is often documented in the migration and development literature.

(ii) Incorporating aspirations into rural education presents the possibility of centralizing the role of "place" in educational experience. A place-based rural pedagogy is environmentally sensitive and open to exploring the conditions under which rural youth might be *less* likely to leave their communities. Whilst neoliberal ideology seeks to make education decontextualized and placeless, place-sensitive education is necessarily rooted in the individual reality of each context. This is especially important for rural contexts and how we understand the formation of aspirations and capabilities relevant to where youth reside. Far from being a form of anti-global rural protectionism, Corbett has argued that such analysis must be done in a manner that is aware of the intricacies and interconnectedness of places in global flows of knowledge, information and resources, but allows for the histories, nuances and intricacies of local knowledge to have their proper place in the development process.

This emphasis on contextualised education is important for understanding the question of migration and how different educational pedagogies have the potential to shape aspirations and capabilities in different ways. However, while providing valuable insight into rural education and aspirations, one logical extension of place-sensitive approaches is that migration is a phenomenon solely driven by the penetration of capitalist economies into rural regions. While this is certainly one driver of mobility patterns, this sedentary bias is often a-historic and has

been criticised for reinforcing the 'myth of the immobile peasant' (Skeldon 1997, p. 7-8). Thus, the focus of this thesis on the spatial impact of education neither reinforces sedentary nor mobility biased perspectives, two extremes on a continuum of mobility, but rather is focused on examining under what circumstances education shapes – and is shaped by – the aspirations of rural youth and the capability to choose where to live.

In building on these foundational arguments regarding the role of education in the context of aspirations discourse, Corbett and Forsey (2017) demonstrate the subtle ways in which educational thought and policy normalise urban life, in particular through 'idealised aspirational values' (p. 429) that are imposed on young people and viewed as the obstacle to productivity and labour market issues.

This nuanced critique of neoliberal discourse on "raising" the aspirations of spatially marginalised populations is in important contrast to a discussion of aspirations rooted in culture and the thick of social life, as argued by key theorists such as Appadurai (2004) and Zipin, Sellar, Brennan and Gale (2015). Far from considering what youth have reason to value, this "prescription" (Zipin et al 2015, p. 227) that ferments in school environments and is transmitted via local institutions encourages youth to acquire credentials and skills that are often only needed or employable in the urban setting. Importantly, Corbett and Forsey (2017) outline the tangible impact this has on local youth navigating their social environments and making plans for their futures. These contradictory counsels to the youth mean that, on the one hand, they feel the pressure to be trained in a skill and become deployed to wherever capital resides. On the other, youth also navigate conversations about being loyal to their local community and their role in rebuilding struggling rural communities through the innovation and entrepreneurship. This matter is further complicated by the fact that youth often feel disillusioned that the formal education credentials they work toward and the employment opportunities in rural settings are disconnected and feel out of sync.

This critique of the instrumentalised use of aspirations in educational discourse is an important backdrop to the argument advanced in this thesis that views aspirations as rooted in culture and complementary to the capability approach. It is worth noting that much of this emerging research agenda is conducted in the context of 'developed' countries (US, Canada and Australia). Although it is argued that the exploration of migration-*through*-education extends to analysis of the global 'South' (Corbett 2016), much of the insights have been rooted in a 'developed' context. With place-sensitivity so crucial to any meaningful examination of rural

livelihoods, thoughtful engagement is needed in applying the insights and approaches of 'North' realities to the 'South', ensuring the research agenda accounts for the histories, cultures and possibilities present in these countries. Rooted in the socio-cultural reality of rural Jinja, this constitutes a key task of this thesis.

Others have also contributed to a growing body of literature on the role of aspirations and capabilities in the context of education and migration. Rahman and Fee (2016) demonstrate that higher levels of educational attainment impact upon the migration decision-making and integration processes, and contribute to an increased flow of remittances to their home communities, while Vargas-Valle and Glick (2021) demonstrate the interwoven nature of education and migration aspirations amongst Mexican migrants in a border context. While other empirical accounts are introduced later into this chapter, it is worth highlighting the work of Briana Nichols, who conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork between Guatemala and the United States, with a focus on the Maya Mam community in the northwest highlands of Guatemala. In her research, Nichols argues that immobility is often entangled in mobility, and that a culture of migration can, in contrast to the mainstream conclusions, also produce the aspiration and capability to stay (Nichols 2023a). According to Nichols, educational imaginaries reflect a configuration of values, and that the conceptualisation of future livelihoods resides and tangibly impacts upon the present day livelihoods of youth (Nichols 2023b). For this thesis, such a perspective represents an important exploration of the relevance and operation of aspirations and capabilities, not as mere 'predictors' of future pathways, but as offering insight into the nuanced dynamics of structure and agency in the context of rural Jinja.

3.4 Migration, Education & Rural Livelihoods in Uganda

This chapter has examined relevant concepts and research that grounds exploration of the migration-education nexus in the context of sustainable rural livelihoods. This examination is part of the wider argument that (i) migration is most meaningfully understood as part of broader processes of social transformation; and (ii) the migration-education nexus represents one especially fruitful interaction to better understand the emergence of aspirations and capabilities in the context of rural Jinja.

Migration is thus best understood as part of broader processes of social transformation. One implication woven through this argument that increasingly grounded, contextually driven approaches are required to meaningfully conceptualise the emergence of migration aspirations and capabilities in any given setting. While the thesis seeks to do this through its empirical chapters, the remaining section of this chapter outlines details and historical circumstances relevant to conceptualising migration, education and rural livelihoods more specifically in Uganda.

3.4.1 Migration & Rural-Urban Livelihoods

Uganda has experienced increasing urbanisation over several decades, with a growing trend of rural-urban migration amongst its youth (Tulibaleka and Katunze 2023). Migration processes within the country encompass both internal and international dimensions, influenced by various economic, social, and political factors. As has been argued, understanding these migration patterns, as well as the forces impacting them, facilitates a deeper understanding of the demographic shifts, economic impacts, and social transformations unfolding in rural-urban settings across the country.

The most significant trend is the migration of youth from rural areas to urban centres, with cities like Kampala, Jinja, Wakiso, and Mukono seeing substantial population increases and the urban population growth rate being considerably higher than the national average. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), Uganda's urban population increased from 6.4 million in 2014 to 10.7 million in 2020, reflecting a growth rate of 4.5% per annum, and for Kampala, the capital city, its population grew from approximately 1.5 million in 2014 to over 1.8 million by 2020 (UBOS 2020).

In addition to rural-urban migration, seasonal, circular and temporary migration rates demonstrate the various mobilities and typologies that characterise movement in modern-day Uganda. According to UBOS, approximately 25% of the population engages in this form of migration, and is shaped by land availability, planting or harvesting seasons, family networks, and school attendance.

More recently, a more controversial phenomenon associated with migration has been the work of 'recruitment' agencies based in Kampala that visit youth and local leaders in villages across

Uganda and are searching for construction workers, manual labourers, and house maids for families and industries in countries in the Persian Gulf. According to the Ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development, this trend has been rising rapidly, with the number increasing fourfold from an average of 24,086 between 2016 and 2021, to 84,966 in 2022. Most commonly moving to countries Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, many youth describe the process of receiving visits from these agencies, and being told there is nothing they can do in the village and the opportunities for them to realise new material opportunities elsewhere. Advertisements can be seen across Uganda, and increasingly youth are encouraged to 'take the risk' associated with such movement, with the hope of reinvesting some of the money that is made in acquiring land for their families in the village.

This is not a new phenomenon for Uganda. According to well-known development economist Walter Elkan and social anthropologist Caroline Hutton, contexts such as Uganda have for decades assisted social theorists to challenge simplistic conclusions about the processes of socio-economic development and migration (Elkan 1960; Hutton 1968). This is best illustrated by the Eurocentric view that migration is simply peasant families leaving their villages in poverty and going to the towns, a reality that stands in contrast to the historical relationship between migration, urbanisation, and development in the context of Uganda. As Elkan argued (1960), towns in Uganda – and East Africa more generally – are characterised by a circularity and rural-urban dynamism that has created diverse routes between the villages and growing towns in the country.

Rooted in the primacy of economic rationality, Elkan described how the circularity of labour migration, while demonstrating interlinks between rural and urban settings in Uganda (more so than in European settings) was seen as an obstacle in stabilising the labour market in Uganda, with dominant views expressing the need for intervention to generate "higher productivity" and "greater specialisation" (Elkan 1960, p. 193).

Thus, government officials and development economists in Uganda sought similar outcomes with the process of industrialisation and urbanisation of England (Elkan 1967). In response, Elkan explained the socio-cultural context of economic decisions in Uganda, articulating the ways in which the rise of the "urban industrial working class" (Elkan 1960, p. 191) as a new class of people in England was fundamentally different from those in Uganda. Primarily, he said, this revolved around the relationships prospective and temporary migrants held to their

rural homes. In Uganda, a migrant had his "own life as a whole and… his income consists not solely, or even necessarily mainly, of wages and other benefits of employment, but also of the income which his family draws from farming in the countryside" (Elkan 1960, p. 194). In contrast, although still agricultural labourers, migrant populations to English towns did not own any land and had become dependent on wages before they entered the urban industrial labour force. As such, Elkan argued that connection to rural place is, in both an economic and cultural sense, connected to land ownership and adds contextual nuance to the migration processes that have characterised 20th century Uganda.

Since then, new questions have naturally arisen, not least due to the changing economic landscape of Uganda (Wiegratz 2010), limitations in young people's access to land due to patriarchal structures, the "squeeze" on farmland (White 2012, p. 12), and the increasing global scepticism toward rural life (Corbett 2007) and agricultural practice (Biriwasha 2012).

Mukwaya et al. (2012) describe the ways in which rural-urban migration has been an integral part of Uganda's history. While sugarcane plantations in central and eastern Uganda attracted migrants from northwest and southwest Uganda, the burgeoning industrialisation processes in urban settings set in motion a rhythm of seasonal migrants who spend much of life on the move, returning to the village when practically possible and financially viable.

Similarly, in her study of northern Karamoja, Stites (2020) describes the growth of towns due to expanding commerce, the insecurity of livestock-based rural livelihoods and the "social appeal of urban life" (p. 32). As described by Elkan (1967) and Hutton (1968) several decades prior, Stites observed that mobile livelihoods in Uganda continue through ongoing links between rural and urban life. This connection with rural life, described as translocality in Chapter 5 of this thesis, is visible in the social and economic networks that are maintained. Ultimately, ongoing links with family, community and land ownership facilitate the regular flows of diverse capital and, as part of the household strategies described earlier in this chapter, diversify livelihoods and partially protect households against risks associated with weather unpredictability and seasonal patterns.

Barratt, Mbonye and Seeley (2012) offer a similar depiction of rural-urban migration in Uganda, describing how many of the participants in their research held continued contact

between the rural and the urban. While economic assets like land ownership and diversifying income are undeniably relevant to this connection, Barrat et al. argue that it is, foundationally, the sociocultural context of Uganda that promotes and reinforces an intergenerational connection that is rooted in the life of the village. This matter is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

These examples of migration research in Uganda all draw upon theoretical frameworks that prioritise different explanatory factors for why people move. At times, these theoretical or normative views are made explicit, but as is often the case with modern migration research, these normative perspectives are implicit to descriptive account of migration processes. As suggested at the outset, while it is possible to see how these perspectives offer different pieces of a jigsaw when trying to gain a full picture of (im)mobility processes in Uganda, one pitfall of extreme versions of theoretical eclecticism is that it unintentionally predetermines the direction of future research endeavours. To take an example, for Walter Elkan, although social factors were relevant to a more holistic understanding of a potential migrant, they were, through his economic lens, simply helpful details to the cost-benefit calculations and wage differentials being carried out by potential and temporary labour migrants. As he argued: "it is clear that, as conditions in town improve, more and more people will feel able to abandon their rural ties" (Elkan 1967, p. 589). From his perspective, meaningful research centred on such calculations. As such, the argument being made is that overreliance on neoclassical economic theories or historical-structural critiques of power not only limit insight into the current reality but also determine what is worthy of future enquiry.

This problematic provides further justification for the two broad perspectives being expressed in this thesis: (a) that migration is part of broader processes of social transformation; and (b) that aspirations and capabilities in the context of rural Jinja reveal contextualised insight into the lived experiences of youth livelihoods. While such a perspective places due weight on economic factors in the context of migration drivers, it also builds on several arguments that emphasise the role of non-economic factors for understanding the drivers of migration in a holistic sense. In 1968, while largely within the "push-pull" paradigm, Caroline Hutton's visionary review of the migration "stimulants" in Uganda sought to do just this. In describing the emergence of migration aspirations, she states:

> “Probably the most striking of stimulants to rising aspiration has been education… There has been a tendency to presume that the experience of education leads boys to regard village life as inferior and the town as possessed of a peculiar glamour or attraction, but this does not seem to be quite the case. Education does lead to rising aspirations but does not result in the town acquiring attraction as such. The school leaver will weigh the opportunities and rewards between the town and the village, and if the village can only offer traditional agriculture, the rewards of the town will almost always be higher. The attraction of the town, therefore, lies not in the “bright lights” but in the inability of the rural areas to satisfy the aspirations of their population at a given standard of living.” (Hutton 1968, p. 7)

While the “bright lights” of towns may have become considerably brighter in the 21st century, the insight offered by Hutton into the role of education in rural settings giving rise to migration aspirations is telling. As such, by describing some tentative ways in which migration-through-education can operate, Hutton offered novel foresight into the dynamics of development that have emerged in the context of modernity and the resulting implications for understanding the dynamics between migration, education and rural-urban livelihoods. This theme is expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

3.4.2 Education & Rural-Urban Livelihoods

Nuanced analysis of the migration-education nexus offers significant potential to enable more meaningful livelihoods in both rural and urban contexts. Throughout the thesis, it is suggested that aspirations and capabilities provide conceptually enriching approaches for considering the role of education in the context of rural livelihoods. To build on this perspective, this section seeks to describe the educational context in Uganda more explicitly, outline theoretical considerations for educational approaches that are sensitive to rural livelihoods, and to consider, given its central role in rural Jinja, the relationship between education, agriculture, and youth livelihood engagement.

Educational Context in Uganda

Despite securing its independence in 1962, Uganda's educational structure mirrored the British colonial model, as detailed by Ndawula and Ngobi (2014). The system spans from pre-primary

to tertiary education: two years in preprimary, seven in primary, six in secondary (split between 4 years of O-level and 2 of A-level), and three in university.

Notable shifts in primary education came with the launch of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, championed as a tool for literacy enhancement and poverty reduction. While initial enrolment surged from 2.8 million to 7.6 million by 2004, infrastructure and resources were not able to absorb such growth. This imbalance led to larger classes, diminished teacher quality, and increased workloads, thereby compromising education quality (Chapman, Burton, and Werner 2010).

Despite high primary enrolment, secondary school attendance continued to struggle. Responding in 2006, Uganda introduced free universal secondary education (USE). However, critics argue this policy repeated UPE's flaws, chiefly overlooking system capacity and neglecting the insights of educators (Chapman et al 2010).

Government-run schools are only a small part of this picture. The Ugandan private educational sector has been present for decades and is made up of individual investors, community groups, civil society organisations, international NGOs and faith-based organisations running for-profit and not-for-profit private schools. As of 2015, 27% of schools at primary level and 66% of schools at secondary level were private. The marked rise in private schools has been met with scepticism, in that it risks eroding the public provision that is so essential to ensuring the commitments of UPE and USE are enabling all children and youth to receive a formal education regardless of their socio-economic status.

In addition to primary and secondary schooling, technical and vocational skills are considered essential for individuals, enterprises and the economy in Uganda (Ministry of Education and Sports 2012). Largely underpinned by the human capital approach, (B)TVET seeks to address skill shortages, thereby strengthening the growth of the economy and its related industries. The ten year strategic plan titled ‘Skilling Uganda’ will last up until 2022 and is focused on establishing a comprehensive system of skills development for employment, enhanced productivity and growth. Indicative of the instrumentalisation of education, the overarching development objective of the plan is for “Ugandans and enterprises to acquire the skills they need to raise their productivity and incomes” (Ministry of Education and Sports 2012, p. 5). Although the plan has significant implications for the workings of the formal education sector, the central focus of the strategic plan relates to the shortage of appropriately skilled and qualified workers. As such, the commitment of Uganda to the ‘demand’ side means a focus on

'supply'. Although this economic logic for skills development is important, it is insufficient for thinking about the nature of TVET institutions and the quality of education afforded to the youth. As suggested earlier in this chapter, the capability approach provides a helpful normative lens through which to assess potential reforms to TVET.

In addition to the provision of formal education, there has been a significant rise in the number of NGOs concerned with complementing the current educational structures through sponsorship schemes, training programmes and community driven development. In 2007, Vision 2040 was launched by the Government of Uganda, expressing the development ambition to transform "Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years" (Uganda National Planning Authority, 2013, p. 13). Here, education is described as a catalyst for development to prepare a skilled and productive labour force but also as a "human right" for a dignified life. In response to the challenges faced by education, the Government of Uganda has welcomed the backing of development partners. In 2016 alone, over 180 national and international education NGOs were registered in the Uganda NGO directory, implementing a variety of formal and non-formal education interventions.

Levels of Formality & Continuum of Learning

This thesis has made explicit that education is not a homogenous entity. This examination of education in its different forms – be it formal, non-formal or informal – is essential to offer a more nuanced perspective on how different forms of education impact upon youth livelihoods and shape their aspirations and capabilities. However, this demarcation by formality is not sufficient. Today, educational systems have become highly diversified, with new approaches to teaching and learning emerging, making it harder to determine what should be included and what should be excluded from the definition of formal education. Here, there is a lot of debate as to what it is that *formalizes* education in the first place, be it the curriculum, parameters of delivery, the nature of examinations, the type of qualifications, or the involvement of the state (Rogers 2005).

Often ignoring this increased diversity, formal education is considered to consist of public and private primary and secondary schools that deliver a curriculum and focus on the basic general skills of language, science, mathematics, communications and the development of attitudes for the work place (Carr-Hill Kakooza, Katahoire, Ndidde, Okech, and Oxenham 2001). With pre-set curricula, formal education is generally standardised and de-contextualised (informal note

-- key critique for migration), with limited adaptation to local circumstances. It is intended to meet common needs of all students to acquire "accredited basic skills" (Moulton 2000, p. 2).

Taking into account the diversity that exists *within* formal schooling and across different cultural contexts, this thesis views formal education as primary and secondary schooling, as well as more formalised courses offered by technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes. Here, one key determining factor for this choice in the context of rural Jinja relates to the eagerness with which youth are told to pursue formal qualifications, or 'certificates', as the best means for acquiring financial security.

As outlined, non-formal education (NFE) is another important element to consider when examining the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja. In academic and policy spheres, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the meaning of 'non-formal education'. Again, it is important to acknowledge that NFE has become a catch-all terms to describe a wide range of programmes labelled 'non-formal education' and that its usage has become largely uncritical and unspecific (Rogers 2005).

At a basic level, NFE often represents an acknowledgement of the importance of alternative learning programmes outside of formal education in a given context, with particular support afforded to marginalised or excluded populations (Rogers 2005). This attempt to define NFE by what it wasn't – i.e. not formal education – was first established by Coombs and Ahmed in the early 1970's. They stated:

> "Nonformal education ... is any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children" (Coombs and Ahmed 1974, p. 8)

This 'outside formal' definition provided a broad – albeit imprecise – starting point from which to understand the role of NFE. Subsequently, as NFE grew in its standing it became clear that many questions remained unanswered. For some, NFE was all 'non-institutional' forms of education (IBE 1987, p.15); for others NFE was education that didn't have formally registered students (Bowers and Fisher 1972); it then became synonymous with NGOs, as distinct from state provided formal education (Krueger and Moulton 1981); and in some instances came to

be seen as all forms of education without formal credentials (LaBelle and Verhine 1975). For each rule, there were always examples of NFE programmes that didn't conform, partially due to international educational planners and donors carrying out comparative research and planning for forms of education across diverse cultural contexts (Rogers 2005). As such, these varied interpretations of NFE often disrupted the accumulation of experience and insight from different contexts into a consistent body of knowledge and subsequently caused many to question the usefulness of NFE in comparison to more fashionable discourses of 'continuing education' and 'lifelong learning' (Rogers 2019).

However, the discourse on NFE has had somewhat of a revival amongst educationalists and policymakers, with new attempts being made to outline some of the essential characteristics of NFE (UNESCO 2018)

This revival has repositioned the place of NFE in educational systems (Rogers 2019). Rather than being 'outside' formal education, NFE is now seen to reside along a continuum of learning, somewhere between formal learning on one side and informal learning on the other (UNESCO 2006). Additional layers to this continuum of learning are important here, ranging from decontextualised (formal) to highly contextualised (informal) learning programmes, and from the non-participatory (formal) to the participatory engagement (informal) (Rogers 2005). Working from this perspective, this thesis conceives of educational programmes along such a continuum, seeking to resolve the apparent dichotomy between relatedness and difference. Rather than determining arbitrary rules and discrete categories, such a continuum embraces the interconnectedness of different types of education whilst also adding greater nuance to purposes, processes and practices of education.

With these thoughts in mind, NFE has the potential as a tool of analysis and planning to embrace programmes that are modified to meet local circumstances (i.e. context-sensitive/context adjusted), incorporate elements of participatory educational activities, and also draw on previously established elements. In this thesis, two NFE programmes are considered in rural Jinja through the lens of the capability approach. While neither programmes leads to formal credentials, both NFE programmes are concerned with developing capabilities that are relevant to the economic, social, political and cultural processes of rural livelihoods. Analysing the experience of youth participating in these programmes will seek to illustrate the

ways in which contextualised education enhances, amongst others, the capability to choose where to live. These insights are explicitly considered in chapter 7 of this thesis.

Sensitivity to Livelihoods

Having considered the educational context of Uganda, and some key nuances in relation to educational delivery, this section highlights the relevance of research concerning the ability of education to be sensitive to the social and cultural context of a given setting. Such a perspective, informed by theoretical justification and empirical accounts, is essential to the examination of the migration-education nexus in the context of youth livelihoods in rural Jinja, with one of the main arguments advanced in this thesis that *decontextualised* forms of education are associated with heightened migration aspirations.

Efforts to make the educational experience, in diverse cultural contexts, suited to its student realities are not new. As discussed earlier, ongoing concerns around the reproduction of social inequity have led well-known pedagogical theorists to question a "banking model" of education (Freire 1970) which views students as empty receptacles by which the necessary skills, attitudes and abilities relevant the dominant system and workforce needs are input into students. To succeed in this system, argues Freire, is to subscribe to a set of defined criteria and fails to adopt an educational approach that is rooted in the experiences, cultures, and challenges of the learners. Similarly, in Ladson-Billings (1995; 2014; 2021), her well-known work on establishing culturally relevant pedagogy in the context of Black students in the United States has been foundational. Ladson-Billings argues that, rather than trying to fit students into a system that is not built for their social and cultural realities, educational pedagogy should focus on (i) nurturing student learning based on context; (ii) developing appreciation for one's local (or ethnic) culture; and (iii) enhancing critical consciousness to recognize social inequalities.

While the philosophical underpinnings of education adapting to social context are well-established, several policy-related considerations persist. As Dyer and Rose (2005) describe, one key question is that of decentralisation – a principle that acknowledges the value of consistency across contexts (be it nationally or globally) but seeks to ensure a governmental or non-governmental agency is knowledgeable of people's circumstances and can locate decision making about services closer to the community. While intuitively appealing, Dyer and Rose highlight how the positive impact of decentralisation is not automatic, with the potential pitfalls

of widening the quality of delivery and provision of services often structured by level of inequality that exist between localities. Far from concluding that it is impracticable, however, the ways in which effective decentralisation occurs is part of a broader perspective on the institutional mechanisms through which support is offered to local institutions and communities, acknowledging diversity and enhancing capacity. Thus, despite a degree of consensus on why decentralisation offers potential value, many challenges exist, not least with developments in technological innovation (Hendra et al. 2023) and both the opportunities and challenges this presents to educational delivery when uncritically adopted.

In addition to the question of governance structures that facilitate the ability of education to adapt to local realities, it has been argued that desire for diversity and innovation in the systems and structures of education rests on the willingness to examine cultural and contextual adaptation of curriculum content, pedagogical practice and the place of local knowledge (Crossley 2022).

Corbett (2009; 2016), whose work I discussed previously, locates this exercise within the pedagogical choices of education within a critique of neoliberal discourse on rural life. By suggesting the "typical rural deficit discourse" (Corbett 2016, p. 270) is not served by dominant educational approaches, Corbett describes the contours of place-based education for rural settings, and the need for a pedagogy and curriculum that emphasizes collective resources and public space. Along similar lines, Gallay et al. (2016) analyse the potential of place-based education in nurturing students attachment to their local community, suggesting that rural education has the responsibility to by enabling students to critically engage with their challenges, to devise solutions, to emphasise modes of learning, and to foster civic engagement. Here, by exploring place and context, and "learning to reinhabit" (p. 171), rural education can shape how young people view their communitie, the aspirations they hold for addressing issues, and the capabilities they develop to giving them a "voice", as Hirschman (1970) describes. This concept in considered in more depth in chapter 5.

Influenced by a colonial history, these concepts apply to Uganda more generally and to rural Jinja in particular, where myopic policies based on narrow conceptions of educational purpose have been implemented. Researchers have argued for alternative visions in this regard. For instance, Lample (2018) outlines the ways in which education requires alternative forms of knowledge and recontextualisation in the context of Uganda's rich and diverse heritage.

Drawing on the work of two Ugandan non-governmental organisations, Lample argues for careful adaptation to cultural context in an “era of transnational isomorphisms” (p. 71).

Similarly, Ngaka, Openjuru and Mazur (2012) argue that Uganda’s educational system is too theoretical for addressing people’s lived realities and real needs, with the suggestion that functional integration of formal and non-formal education represents a novel approach for establishing sustainable livelihoods in rural settings. While the input of rural inhabitants is so often neglected, integrating diverse learning experiences provides opportunity for learners to draw on their lived experiences to inform the planning, design and implementation of the context-relevant curriculum. Beyond merely accessing experiences, when embedded within formal and non-formal educational processes, the capabilities to identify the needs of their surroundings more effectively and to offer solutions grounded in their reality are significantly enhanced. In contrast, regardless of how elegant rural policy-making from a distance is, the development of these capabilities in rural inhabitants holds radical potentiality for devising relevant strategies and approaches that contribute to the vibrancy and promise of rural settings.

Agricultural Livelihoods

One clear example of how varying forms of education shape youth livelihoods in rural Jinja is the relationship between agricultural activity, the structure of the labour market and the experiences of formal schooling. Despite agriculture accounting for almost 25% of Uganda’s GDP in 2022 (World Bank 2022), this has more than halved since 1990 (53%), with the majority of youth expressing scepticism toward involvement with the agricultural – and aquacultural – industry. While the perspectives offered by youth are explored in more depth in chapter 6, this general trend is not unique to Uganda. In particular, some researchers have argued that how agriculture is taught and portrayed in schools has an impact on young people’s perceptions of agriculture as a viable livelihood strategy (Biriwasha 2012). In a study of how agriculture is taught in primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe, Biriwasha found that agriculture was presented as a profession for men and not women, that it was perceived as labour intensive and unsophisticated, and that it was increasingly difficult to find agriculture teachers for schools. Combined, Biriwasha argues that school plays an important role in the negstive attitudes youth develop toward agricultural livelihoods.

Cindi Katz, a notable geographer and feminist scholar, argues along similar lines based on research conducted in rural Sudan. In her research, Katz interrogates the ways in which social reproduction, environmental change, and political-economic process interact, and the influence

these processes have on the lives of children's lives, labour and schooling. With farming skills often neglected and agriculture downgraded in formal schooling, the irrelevance and pro-urban bias of education leaves youth in limbo: ill-equipped for life in the village and poorly trained for life in the city (Katz 2004).

With similar enquiries into the relationship between educational relevance and nurturing interest and skills in local farming, Rao and Patil (2022) describe how the large fishing village of Sapati in Maharashtra, India has been impacted by the decline of the Fisheries School, which sought to impact vocational skills relevant to fishing. By examining the changing meanings of education in the context of a fishing community, Rao and Patil describe how the shift toward a decontextualised, universalist curriculum focused on cultivating a modern identity. By alienating youth from occupational skills and abilities relevant to rural life, it is suggested that educational practices can undermine the legitimacy of rural communities, in addition to magnifying the gendered nature of the training that existed and the uneven impacts it has on men and women.

Finally, it is worth noting the theoretical pitfall that focus on the relationship between educational experiences and livelihood trajectories overemphasises the role of education, placing impossible expectations on its role in addressing social inequalities and nurturing harmonious relationships with rural place. As such, to argue for the analysis of educational experience and to claim it is the sole determinant of livelihood well-being are not one and the same. Recent agricultural transformations experienced in Uganda illustrate this point, whereby the security of rural livelihoods has been considerably impacted. For example, in Uganda and other SSA countries, governments, agri-business companies and global development organisations have aggressively promoted sugarcane contract farming as a means of integrating smallholder farmers into commercial agricultural circuits. Championed as a way to improve the prospects of rural development, a recent study has challenged this, arguing that the incorporation of smallholder farmers leads to dispossession of land from below, heightened competition, and ecological degradation (Martiniello and Azambuja 2019). This theme will be considered in more depth in chapter 6, illustrating the importance of placing the migration-education nexus within the broader processes of agricultural modernisation and transformation occurring in rural Jinja (Martiniello, Owor, Bahati, Branch 2021).

3.5 Summary

By illustrating the theoretical frameworks, conceptual underpinnings and empirical accounts of migration, education and rural livelihoods, this and the previous chapter have sought to strengthen the argument for the importance of the migration-education nexus in the context of establishing sustainable rural livelihoods in Uganda. The concept of a 'nexus' (derived from the Latin word *nectare,* meaning to connect) in sustainable development seeks to uncover "connections, synergies, and trade-offs" (Liu et al 2018, p. 466). The migration-education nexus is wide-ranging and many others have argued for the importance of accounting for its different dimensions, including the nexus between migration and higher education (Robertson 2013; Cerna and Chou 2023), migration to fulfil educational aspirations (Crivello 2011; Cubab 2023), the educational experience of migrants in 'receiving' settings (Allsop and Chase 2023), and equitable and situated education for mobility dependent livelihoods (Dyer 2023; Dyer and Rajan 2023). While each dimension of this nexus contributes to a mosaic of insight, the focus of this project concerns one foundational theme: the ways in which educational experiences in rural settings – both formal and non-formal – shape the migration aspirations and capabilities of young adults. Based on the routes through which educational experience unfolds in rural Jinja, the term migration-through-education is utilised to build on the work of some key scholarly contributions (Corbett 2007; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Rao and Patil 2022) and further unpack rural educational experiences in Jinja, Uganda.

In summary, these chapters have delineated how the examination of educational experiences in rural settings impacts upon the aspirations and capabilities of youth and their intentions to migrate, to stay or both. This dimension of the migration-education nexus, with its far reaching implications for development endeavours more generally, has received growing attention but requires further grounding in the lived experiences and contexts of young adults. To address this, I will now set out how this research seeks to understand the lived realities of young adults in rural Jinja by placing their experiences, concerns, aspirations and challenges in two rural villages at the centre of the thesis. By considering these experiences, and carving nuance regarding the capacity of formal and non-formal education programmes to adapt to rural contexts, this research conceptualises the relationship between mobility trajectories and educational processes as two key components in the transformation of rural-urban livelihoods.

CHAPTER 4

Research Design & Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with examining the patterns and processes of rural transformation in Jinja, Uganda, utilising aspirations and capabilities to understand two key processes that shape the livelihoods of rural youth: education and migration. To accomplish these aims, the methodology and design of the research has considered the formulation of migration and broader life aspirations, the experiences of education in rural settings and their surrounding livelihood patterns in Bujagali and Kyabirwa, two adjoining villages in rural Jinja. As previously discussed, the flow of economic, labour, and cultural resources in Uganda impact on the very conception of mobilities in Jinja. Thus, the act or plan to "leave" one's village has several potential expressions. This required me to be agile, flexible, and responsive to unanticipated opportunities.

The purpose of this chapter is to account for how I conducted my fieldwork research in Jinja based on the research question framework, to provide justification and rationale for its design and offers a reflexive account of the fieldwork process. Built around the research questions of this thesis, the design was open to adaptation and local interpretation, while maintaining focus on the textural expression and interactive nature of aspirations and capabilities, youth sustainable livelihoods, and the rural educational experience of young adults in Jinja, Uganda.

After further describing the fieldwork context of the research, this chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological approach of the thesis, while clarifying certain concepts as they pertain to focused ethnographical approaches. Considering this, it expands on the ways in which aspirations and capabilities were conceptualised and practically researched during my fieldwork. After doing so, it describes the considerations for the qualitative design of the study and the various methods employed during the fieldwork. It then goes on to detail the main aspects of my methodological approach: the methods and approaches of the design, the utilisation of wealth ranking and transect walks, how I carried out participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, information about my local 'gatekeepers', the

incorporation of reflexive practice and the important ethical considerations relevant to the project.

My research employs a mixed qualitative approach to explore how varying experiences of education in rural settings *interact* with the aspiration and capability to migrate, to stay, or both. However, this approach is mindful that migration has multiple 'drivers' and can only be meaningfully understood when considered part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010; de Haas 2010). To better be able to grapple with the interlocking dimensions of rural life in Uganda, this project maintains its focus on the opportunities and challenges facing rural youth. It does so by considering some of the factors involved in the transformation of rural livelihoods, the nature of educational experiences and the mobility trajectories of young people.

4.2 Research Setting

The introductory chapter of this thesis described the youthful demographics (78% under 30) and scale of Uganda's projected urban growth (44%) by 2050. Such dramatic estimates are emblematic of a wider context: the changing economic, social and cultural landscapes of rural and urban settings in Uganda (Wiegratz et al. 2018). This section illustrates elements of the research setting relevant to the objects of enquiry pursued by the thesis.

Jinja District is located in southeastern Uganda (see Figure 5), where the source of the Nile flows out of Lake Victoria. As one of six sub-counties that comprise Jinja District, Budondo is comprised of almost 9,000 households, split across 38 villages. Ethnically, a vast majority of the region are Basoga, whose origins lie in the Busoga kingdom of Uganda, which is one of four constitutional monarchies in present-day Uganda.

During my research scoping trip to Jinja three months prior to my fieldwork, I visited three of the six sub-counties that make up Jinja District. On visiting Budondo sub-county (see Figure 6), I had the opportunity to visit several of the thirty-eight villages that comprise Budondo sub-county, including the trading centre of Buyala. During this visit, I decided to focus my research on two adjoining villages in Ivunamba, a parish in the south of Budondo sub-county. The two villages, Bujagali and Kyabirwa (see Figure 7), are often considered part of one larger setting that has historically centred around the Bujagali Falls, a waterfall near Jinja that has attracted high levels of tourism, in particular for its white-water rafting (Nelson 2011; Nayler 2021). The Falls were submerged in 2011 by the building of a hydroelectric power station with

international aid, a controversial development that has affected the development of the region to this day (Zalwango 2018; Nabunya 2019). As two villages on the shore of the Nile, the benefits of focusing my research on a smaller setting in Budondo sub-county had several strengths.

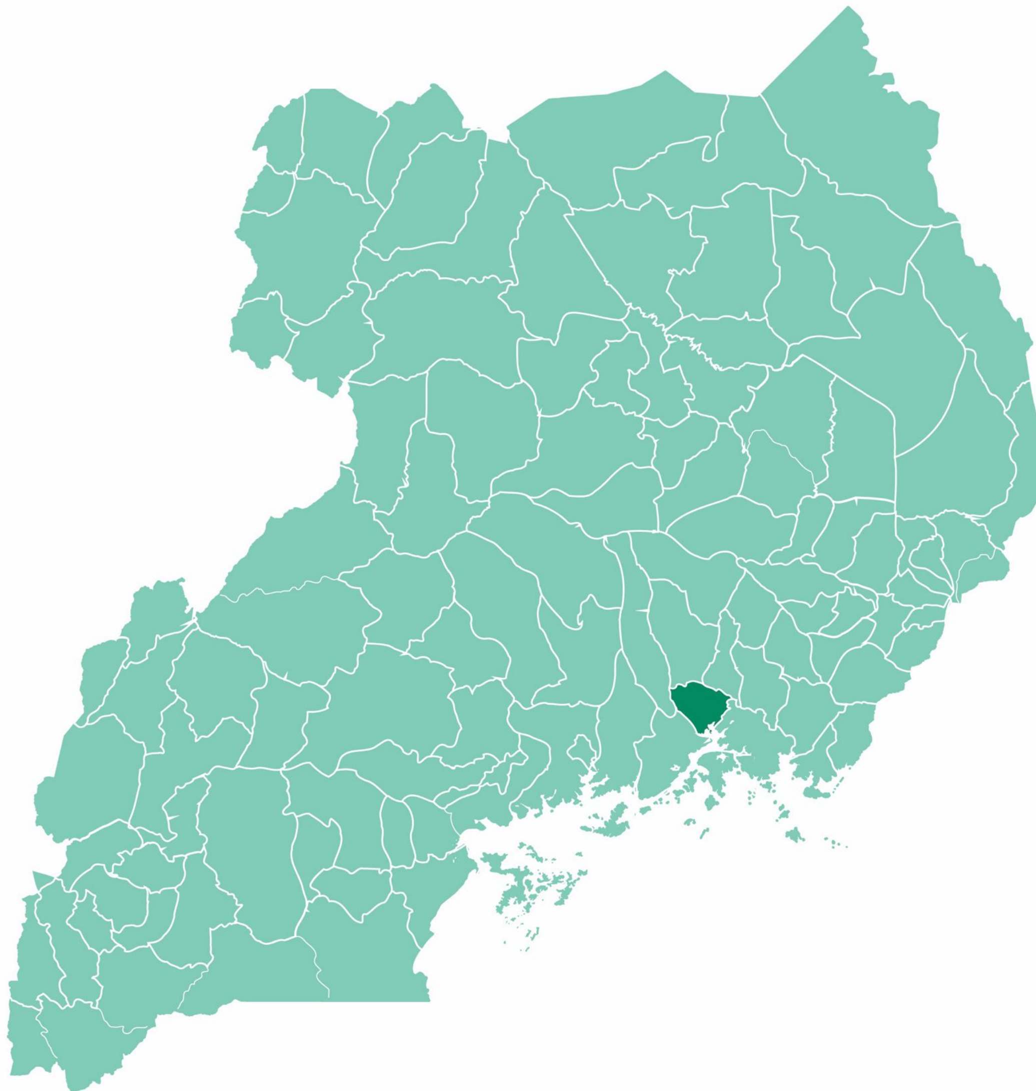

Figure 5: Map of Uganda, Jinja District

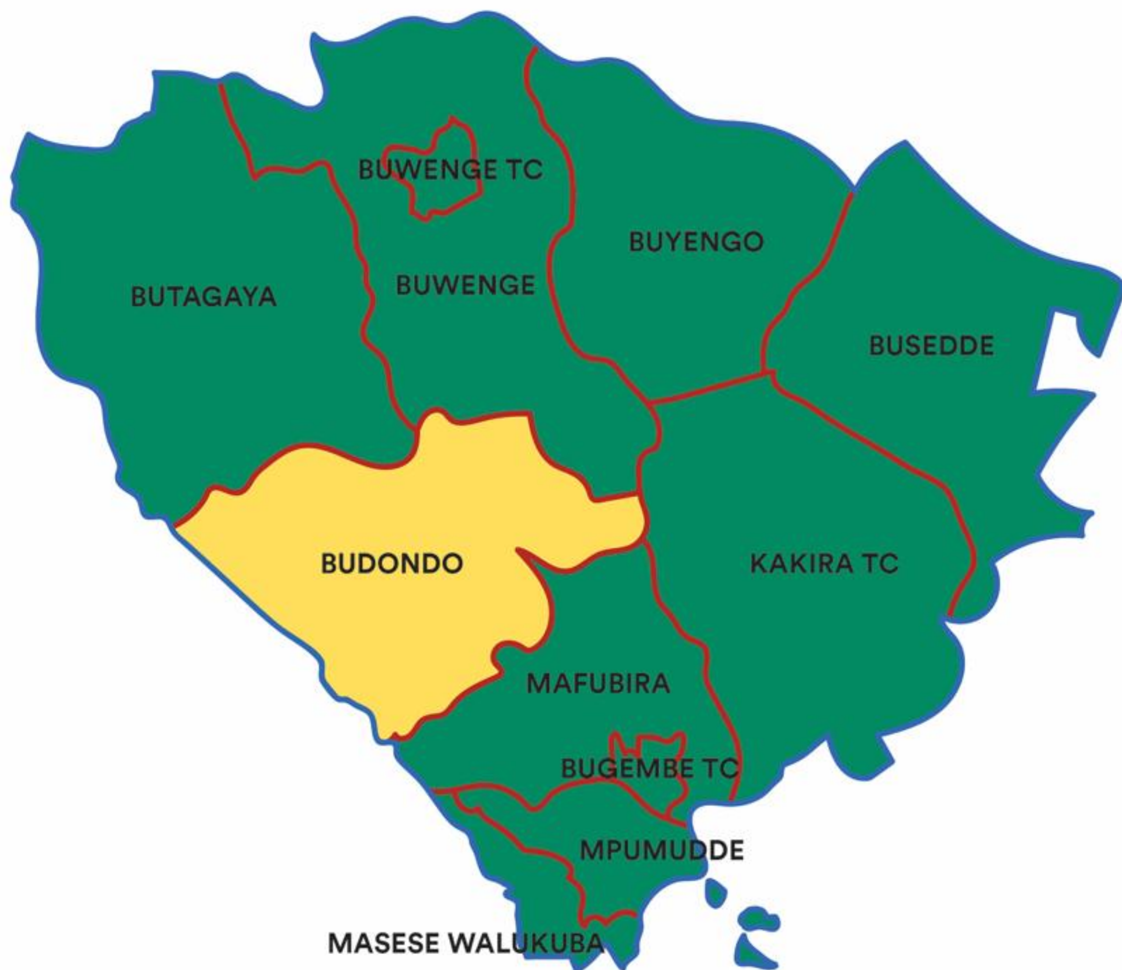

Figure 6: Sub-counties of Jinja District, rural sub-county Budondo

Figure 7: Research Location

Kyabirwa & Bujagali villages in Budondo, a rural sub-county of Jinja District

While an alternative approach was available to study the aspirations and capabilities of rural youth in Jinja across the entire district, I chose to reject this methodology due to the depth and texture required to understand the interacting elements of my overarching research question, namely how aspirations and capabilities are shaped by educational experience, migration prospects, and the broader transformation of rural livelihoods. Such an approach, it was clear,

was amorphous and the far-reaching distances associated with youth migration patterns in rural Jinja faced both theoretical and logistical challenges. Rather, to establish grounded insight into the overarching research question, the design and locus of the research had as its primary concern two adjoining villages, with focus on understanding the nuanced factors that interact in the context of rural livelihoods. While the perspectives of youth who travelled to Kampala, South Africa, Dubai and Qatar were organically incorporated into the fieldwork research (often as 'return' migrants), the value of focusing on a concentrated area of Budondo sub-county was clear, with a wide range of experiences and circumstances from the same settings providing nuance and texture into participants educational experiences, capabilities in the context of rural-urban livelihoods, and their aspirations to both stay and/or leave their village. Thus, through detailed engagement with these two villages, I was better placed to consider the interacting dimensions of this research in a focused manner; that is, educational experience, migration aspirations and labour opportunities. As outlined, far from seeking to predict future migration plans, engaged exploration of the migration-education nexus offered a helpful window into the wider conversation on sustainable rural livelihoods and youth aspirations.

Given a central theme of this project concerns the impact of the migration-education nexus on youth livelihoods in rural Jinja, it is necessary to highlight the educational context in Budondo. District education offices (DEO) have a degree of independence in formal educational delivery. As such, with the task of delivering the national curriculum, district-level officers determine the administrative and logistical arrangements around staffing, resources, and buildings.

While Uganda's political commitments to Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007 are well-reported (Nishimura, Yamano and Sasaoka 2008; Chapman et al. 2010; Kan and Klasen 2021), the ongoing tension between educational access and educational quality is a challenge for Jinja.

Formal schooling has expanded considerably in Budondo over the last 50 years. This has been through a combination of UPE and USE commitments, the rise of private schooling and the proliferation of non-governmental organisations focused on various initiatives connected to education (these include directly funding education, complementary skills, agro-business projects, micro-financing schemes). According to data collected in 2017 and 2019 (Ashraf, Banerjee and Nourani 2021), there are 62 registered schools for pre-primary to secondary level, 46 of which are private.

Budondo Education	Public	Private	Enrolments	Total
Pre-Primary & Primary Schools	15	37	18,022[4]	52
Secondary Schools	1	9	3,185[5]	10

The figures in Budondo demonstrate two stark realities: (i) despite UPE and USE commitments, most formal schooling available in Budondo is through private channels – particularly NGOs, faith groups or other private investors; and (ii) there is a sharp drop-off from primary to secondary enrolments, demonstrating that the advances made in attaining 'basic education' are difficult to sustain through the educational cycle. While surprising, this does not tell the full picture. As discussed in chapter 2, migration-for-education (Crivello 2011) is a frequent occurrence as students finish primary school and seek 'better quality' education, with many youth either staying with relatives in other sub-counties (often urban), boarding, or commuting to schools in Jinja town each day.

In addition to the pre-primary, primary and secondary level schooling available to children and youth in Budondo, there are select opportunities for youth to acquire separate Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Although such formal courses are rarely available to youth in Budondo itself, many youth often migrate temporarily to acquire a certain skill or vocation. With a number of options in nearby towns and cities, youth most commonly attend the Nile Vocational Institute (NVI), a private training provider found in a nearby district and with the aim of providing 'vocational skills for gainful employment' in "Domestic Technology" or "Building Technology", with carpentry, brick laying, vehicle mechanics, nursery, business, and hotel management amongst the courses offered.

Having completed one of these courses, the majority of youth initially seek employment in a nearby town or city. Given the contracted labour market, youth find it difficult to find consistent employment and, in many cases, end up returning to the village with the aspiration of starting their own business and/or saving capital for future migration.

Non-formal education

In addition to these more formalised approaches to education, the "non-formal" education programmes running in Budondo are a mix of standalone and complementary programmes.

[4] As of 2017
[5] As of 2019

Some organisations offer financial support to students to attend formal schooling while others, which are the subject of this thesis, offer programmes that seek to develop capabilities that are contextualised, adaptive and complementary to formal education. The two organisations that participated in my research in Bujagali and Kyabirwa were SOUL Foundation and Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education.

While the programmes offered by such organisations are diverse, their efforts toward context relevant education have resulted in novel pedagogical approaches and a heightened focus on the development of capabilities relevant to the rural context of Bujagali and Kyabirwa, the subject of which will be considered in more depth in chapter 7. These programmes are often related to agricultural production, health and disease, small business endeavours, and enhancing participation in the various processes of community life.

Gaining Access to Rural Jinja: Drawing on Local Knowledge

As described above, identifying a relevant fieldwork site relied on collaboration with local individuals and organisations who were familiar with the circumstances of Budondo sub-county and involved in education and development across the district. During the research scoping trip prior to my fieldwork, I initiated contact with three local NGOs and began to work closely with one of these organisations, Kimanya Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education.

Kimanya Ngeyo is an organisation that has been learning to implement non-formal education (Preparation for Social Action) across the three districts of Kamuli, Jinja and Buikwe for the last decade. The organisation is committed to the implementation of an expanding educational programme that develops capabilities relevant to rural life (Murphy-Graham and Lample 2014), is service-oriented (VanderDussen Toukan 2018) and whose educational content has resulted in an increased sense of agency and empowerment among participants (Marcus, Mdee and Page 2016). My encounters with this organisation played a valuable role in describing the conditions of Budondo in terms of the challenges young people face in committing to education and in which the migration of young people is a strong feature of community life. The NGO has sought to address similar patterns of transformation in south-eastern Uganda, so was open to collaborating on my research project and to support me in establishing connections with inhabitants in Budondo.

Initial relationships began through the regional and district education coordinators, where we had the opportunity to explore the experience of educational organisations in navigating rural-urban relationships, educational implementation and the aspirations of young people in Budondo sub-county. As a local NGO (of which almost all employees are Ugandan), its decade long experience has enabled it to develop connections and links with schools and a series of 'collaborators' who implement non-formal education. The organisation strives for inclusion and participation, encouraging all to participate in its programmes. This meant that *access to* and *relationships with* local village leaders, schools and local people had been well-established, and were drawn upon as a natural gateway to numerous individuals and institutions in Budondo sub-county.

During the scoping trip, one of the educational coordinators at Kimanya Ngeyo introduced me to Mukasa Kaderi, a collaborator with whom they had become acquainted in Budondo in recent years. As a lifelong middle-aged resident of Namizi Central and the coordinator of the local governments village health teams across the 38 villages of Budondo, Mukasa was able to offer close research assistance throughout my fieldwork. Here, he was able to assist as a gatekeeper to families, schools and local village leaders in Bujagali and Kyabirwa, as well as subcounty officials. Although perceptions of individuals by local people can occlude research possibilities (sometimes unbeknownst to the researcher unfamiliar with the research context), my work with Mukasa was a great personal privilege. He was generous, systematic and insightful, and offered so much to our ongoing conversations about the themes of the research and life beyond. His support to gain initial access to the local population was also indispensable, and laid the groundwork for me to diversify the networks of individuals with whom I could interact in Budondo. Given Mukasa's role as a village health coordinator, my close relationship with him and the support he offered my research also provided a locally relatable way for me to introduce myself to individuals and families within the village settings, ultimately building most relationships independent of Mukasa.

Finally, an important caveat to gaining access to rural Jinja was that prior to any formal research being conducted, Mukasa had agreed to introduce me to the Budondo sub-coounty chair (LC3) and the chairs (LC1) of both Bujagali and Kyabirwa. Out of respect and custom, this initial step was essential for me to be able to carry out my research in Budondo. In addition to securing permission from these local chairpersons, each of them were willing to participate in the research. The relationship between the village leaders and these educational and governance

organisations was very strong and provided a helpful relational basis on which to explain my research endeavours and the relevance it had to some of their own questions and concerns about supporting increasingly prosperous rural livelihoods.

4.3 Methodological Approach: Focused Ethnographic Immersion & Critical Realism

Transcending the positivist-interpretivist divide, the ontological position underlying the approach of this thesis is that the construction of social reality is neither independent of – nor encapsulated by – the inter-subjective meaning of its diverse actors (Cruickshank 2003). As such, the view that layers of reality *exist* is part of the philosophical position I adopt in this thesis. Such an approach, however, is far removed from the naive realism that views the task of social researchers as neutral observers focused on examining events and processes independent of socially mediated perceptions (Plé 2000).

The philosophical approach that informs the theoretical underpinnings and empirical research of my thesis is that of critical realism (Bhaskar 1975). With extensive philosophical debate on its role in reaching nuanced descriptions between ontological realism and epistemological relativism, critical realism holds a theory of knowledge generation that is *both* objectivist and fallibilist in nature.

One methodologically relevant position of critical realism is the stratification of reality (Bhaskar 1989). This view of reality as layered and dynamic indicates a relationship between the observable perception or process, and the underlying mechanisms relevant to those views. In the case of this thesis, research into the presence of migration aspirations and capabilities amongst rural youth is enhanced by enquiry into the educational, familial, and community-wide experiences and processes that led to their formation. Thus, this viewpoint stresses the need for a social ontology that links structure and agency to guide the form, approach, and analysis of empirical research (Cruickshank, 2003).

Critical realism is often described as an alternative approach to positivism and relativism in migration studies (Iosifides 2017). Primarily, this means that qualitative research seeks to understand the relationship between the empirical (e.g. experiences of education), the actual (events and processes of education and migration), and the real (potential underlying mechanisms of curriculum or mobility).

Fundamentally it means a consistency between the ontological view that reality is complex (and not reducible solely to prevailing cultural norms or interpretations of individuals), with the epistemological assumptions and methods that facilitate a richness of social enquiry.

The concepts of transitivity and intransitivity are important to the philosophical underpinnings of critical realism. Referring to the nature of scientific knowledge itself, critical realism suggests a dialectical relationship between transitivity and intransitivity (Bhaskar 1975). This means that while scientific knowledge (or *the transitive)* is constantly evolving, the aim of social enquiry is to continually grapple with and better understand the intransitive as it relates to pre-existing knowledge – that is, the causal powers that require human engagement but may operate independently of human awareness. In this sense, the advancement of social enquiry is more appropriately seen as a process of developing better, more accurate theories that reflect the intransitive aspects of the world with greater precision and nuance.

This philosophical positioning has had several practical implications for the empirical component of this research, not least of which is the very use of aspirations and capabilities, as discussed in the following section.

Firstly, the views that reality itself is stratified implies that meaningful insight into the question of youth migration is multi-faceted. The use of multiple qualitative methods thus facilitates exploration of various layers of the surface level descriptions and decisions made by youth to move or to stay. This ontological and epistemological coherence is thus the basis of the qualitative approaches chosen for the research design, as described later in this chapter.

Secondly, a critical realist account of the situated nature of knowledge and the underlying mechanisms of culture imply the need for the researcher to employ reflexive practices in their own construction of knowledge, views of reality, and assumptions that can be unconsciously adopted.

Thirdly, viewing reality as stratified in nature neither seeks to explain isolated observations on the one hand (relativism), nor cause-effect conclusions on the other (positivism). The very structure of the subsequent empirical chapter illustrates the relationship between the transitive and the intransitive, highlight individual aspirations, analysing broader educational and cultural experience, illustrating a non-exhaustive list of narratives that permeate elements of individual and collective life, and adding heterogeneity to the analysis in a manner that seeks to enrich conceptual understanding.

In sum, adopting a critical realist approach in this project prevents enquiry into the migration-education nexus from being usurped by positivist and relativist paradigms, both of which are insufficient in capturing the complex interactions between structural factors and agentic processes. By accounting for the individualised elements of aspiration and capability, critical realism opens the methodological toolkit to enrich social enquiry, to evaluate observable and discursive elements of decision-making, and to evaluate relevant ideological constructions underlying systems of education and labour in rural Jinja.

The research is thus focused on the emergence of migration aspirations, which requires focus on the meanings that people ascribe to the systems, processes and actors of their social reality (Schutz 1962). This textured meaning, far from being treated in isolation, examines the mechanisms and daily practices that demonstrate how larger structural factors shape – and are shaped by – these experiences. In this light, I use an approach inspired by ethnographic methods to understand the daily lives of individuals in rural Jinja, and to shed light on experiences of education and the emergence of spatial aspirations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Cobb and Hoang 2015).

Ethnographic approaches seek to immerse the researcher within a particular context, with the aim of understanding people's lives and the meanings they ascribe to the processes and lived experiences of their social and cultural field (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Particularly suited to understanding the rich narratives of individuals, families and communities, ethnographical approaches have always emphasised the value and importance of incorporating elements of participation and observation (Tileaga 2021). To understand the workings of everyday contexts, it involves the researcher moving *towards* the population under consideration, compared to positivist approaches of research participants fitting within pre-designed conditions (Rosenberg 2011). Through immersion in people's daily lives for a period of time, the researcher strives to read day-to-day reality, experience what is experienced by the participants and ask questions through informal and semi-formal interviews – all of which shed further light on the emerging focus of inquiry and the nuanced processes at play (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). For my purpose, the sensitivity of an ethnographic approach to understanding local livelihoods within a social, cultural, economic and political environment has been crucial for identifying the manner in which spatial aspirations are formed, as well as the subtle relationship between diverse forms of education and the multiple forms of (im)mobility that exist in rural settings.

Relevant to the parameters of my empirical research are methodological approaches that have been termed “focused” ethnography (Knoblauch 2005, p. 4) and “short-term” ethnography (Pink and Morgan 2013, p. 351). Far from being interpreted as a “quick and dirty” version (Pink and Morgan 2013, p. 353) of more traditional forms of ethnographic immersion, this form of ethnography considers the methodological, practical and analytical concepts relevant to conducting social research that is inspired by ethnographic approaches while simultaneously focused on devising a methodology for understanding the operation of underlying mechanisms in particular environments within specific time-periods available to conduct empirical research.

From the perspective of Knoblauch (2005), focused ethnography is consistent with more traditional ethnographic approaches which involve prolonged immersion in the field. As a strategy, focused ethnography does not suggest a separate movement, but a description of a widely used practice and approach in an increasing number of studies. Two key characteristics of focused ethnography are (a) time intensity that is captured through the use of technical equipment (rather than emergent extensity as the only pre-requisite) and (b) defining a focused dimension of the field that is relevant in light of background study and familiarity of the researcher(s). As such, in contrast to an entirely emergent approach, focused ethnography recognises the role of the “observer” in the design and implementation of the research process. If this role is accounted for throughout the research process, then any accusations of superficiality fail to acknowledge the diversity of expressions through ethnographic principles express themselves. This perspective aligns with Wolcott’s (1999) more general discussion of ethnographic approaches, where it suggested that the ethnographic intent of research is more important than the specific methods utilised. While the methods must be consistent with the intent, there are many approaches that are increasingly adopted to engage with elements of culture – be they values, aspirations or power dynamics – before, during, and after the empirical stage of research.

In light of these foundational principles, the remainder of this chapter will consider the particularity of researching aspirations and capabilities as they relate to migration, the relevant empirical and analytical methods adopted during the fieldwork, its research limitations and the ethical considerations throughout the research process.

4.4 Researching Aspirations & Capabilities

Careful attention is required when devising appropriate methods for understanding the aspirations and capabilities in the context of the migration-education nexus. Defining the relationships between aspirations, capabilities and functionings is important for the purpose of the research.

In sum, migration aspirations constitute the thoughts and feelings that are associated with the prospect of migration (Carling and Schewel 2018; Carling 2019). Rather than utilising aspirations to predict future migration flows from rural Jinja, the theoretical rationale and methodological approach I have adopted is that broader life aspirations hold a variety of potential spatial implications. For those who desire to work on the garden connected to their home, the parameters of this space are modest. For those who seek education or work in nearby Jinja, the spatial implications of their aspirations are wider. This same logic applies for those who seek opportunities in Kampala, or internationally. As such, one key methodological concept in researching migration aspirations is not that spatial implications follow *after* broader life aspirations but are oftentimes bound to the aspiration itself. For instance, the oftentimes expressed aspiration that "I want to pursue better opportunities elsewhere" expresses a set of beliefs and feelings about the factors that constitute a meaningful opportunity, the perception of deficit toward one's current location, and the belief that it is different elsewhere. My approach to understanding such aspirations requires the use of multiple qualitative methods. This is an attempt to enhance the richness of insight into individual and collective livelihoods in rural Jinja through triangulation (Patton 1999).

The rationale and approach employed for studying migration aspirations in light of educational experience is that: (a) it helps understand their formation in a particular context; and (b) it offers insight into current behaviour and action, regardless of whether the *actual* migration is realised. In practical terms, people who hold migration aspirations may be less likely to pursue local opportunities or to give expression to "voice" (Hirschman 1970) to change current structures and patterns that they believe to be inadequate.

Researching capabilities of young adults in Jinja represented a challenge, due to the fact that functionings are achieved outcomes (what people are "doing" and "being") while capabilities are potential outcomes (what people potentially have the freedom to "do" or "be"). As such, capabilities are latent and more abstract, and the research design was careful to ensure that participatory methods allowed individuals to express what they had reason to value. Mixed qualitative methodology was thus concerned *with the capability to choose where to live* on

three levels: (a) what individuals value; (b) what they have – and can – achieve; and (c) the conversion factors that facilitated or hindered these achievements.

4.5 Qualitative Approaches

Informed by the above considerations, the empirical research is designed around the primary research question of this thesis: how do the migration aspirations and capabilities of young adults interact with their educational experiences and the broader transformation of rural livelihoods?

Using multiple qualitative methods, the empirical research examines the transformation of rural livelihoods, formed perceptions via educational experience and the presence of migration aspirations and capabilities in Jinja, Uganda.

The qualitative approaches I have used during fieldwork are participant observation, life history interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups. As partial offshoots to these approaches, I also employ wealth-ranking approaches and transect walks with individuals of interest.

As previously outlined, a mixed methodological approach offers empirical depth to enquiry into the various dimensions of the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja. These mixed methods are chosen based on philosophical positioning of critical realism of this thesis, which highlights the constructed nature of scientific knowledge, and the foundational principles of ethnography that emphasise the importance of immersion into the reality and life of the people participating in the research (albeit mindful of the constraints and limitations on this attempt).

Rather than methodological eclecticism, in addition to the more explicit interviewing process, the research design sought to explore the environments of participants, the natural activities in which they engaged, and the underlying conceptions they held about seemingly unrelated features of life in rural Jinja. While each of these approaches are discussed in more depth in the following section, it is important to emphasise the ways in which these different tools facilitated a more integrated exploration of the social reality of the youth and families who participated in the research, as well as the decisive contribution they made to the empirical findings of this thesis.

Most significantly, this approach illustrated the diverse and dynamic ways in which perceptions and experiences can be understood. For instance, in one interview, while one youth described the initial steps they had taken to engage in fish farming, it was only when I visited his fish

farm with him, met his co-workers, understood the rhythm of his life, and the practical details that are relevant to his endeavour (but didn't come up in the interview) enabled a more rounded view and discussion of his experiences. These experiences of "entering" the relevant environments of the youth offered a critical perspective to understanding the ways in which education, labour, and aspiration function in the context of Kyabirwa and Bujagali. While such an approach blurs the lines of when participant observation starts, where transect walks are implemented, and when informal interviewing begins, the attempt to structure fluidity from the grassroots, rather than impose a rigid Western-infused structure on the unfolding processes of individual and collective life represents a distinctive methodological contribution of this thesis, and enriches the nuance and quality of the data that was generated.

Table 1 and subsequent descriptions seek to capture the layers of ethnography and the considerations associated with each approach as they unfolded along three "waves". Of course, the depiction of the methods in table format does not reflect the often-simultaneous processes that unfold as ethnographic research seeks to respond to the experiences in the field.

Wave of Research	Ethnographic Approach	Gatekeeper(s)	Purpose	Initial approach	Next Steps
Wave 1 (March-April)	Participant Observation (continued)	Formal and informal collaborators of Kimanya Ngeyo	To understand the lived realities of rural youth based on their day-to-day experiences with family, education and work	Spent time with KN collaborators resident in Budondo, naturally extending and introducing myself to youth and family networks	Through snowballing and existing gatekeeper(s): I developed relationships with more youth, govt officials and schools in different contexts across the village
	Interviewing: life history approach **(61 individuals)**	Rural youth inhabitants & one collaborator of KN	To understand the lived realities of two-three generations To begin to get a picture of the experiences and insights relating to education, mobility, labour and rural-	1) Interviewed KN collaborators resident in Budondo 2) Interviewed individuals known to KN collaborators (youth, educators, older generations)	Through snow-balling and existing gatekeeper(s): 1) To identify larger pools of individuals to conduct interviews in Budondo 2) To identify a few case studies of

			urban transformation		youth who have moved to Jinja or Kampala
Wave 2 (May-June)	Interviews: semi-structured **(17 individuals)**	Collaborators of Kimanya Ngeyo Snow-balling/follow-up from wave 1 interviews Jinja governmental authorities Local NGO workers	To gain more direct insight into the transformation of rural livelihoods, young people's experiences of education and their imagined futures	1) To interview NGO coordinators and implementers 2) To follow up individuals from wave 1 interviews 3) To interview Jinja governmental authorities & NGO workers to understand policy perspective on challenges and opportunities with rural education and the migration of young people	Inviting select individuals from these interviews to a focus group
Wave 3 (June-July)	Two Focus Groups **(15 individuals)**	Snow-balling/follow-up from wave 1 and 2	Analysing, alongside local inhabitants, the processes, forces and institutions operating in Bujagali and Kyabirwa villages Livelihoods analysis that account for social spaces, perceptions of wealth and success and (im)mobility patterns in Budondo	Identifying local groups of youth and mixed groups through from wave 1 and wave 2	Verification of diverse samples across three waves of research and carrying out final follow-ups to address any identified gaps

Participant Observation

The research questions seek to understand experiences of education, the lived realities of youth, how spatial aspirations are continually reshaped and the expression of their imagined futures in day-to-day life.

Participant observation was used to understand these nuanced realities and gain deeper insight into the context of Budondo and the daily experiences of youth with education, work and

migration. One common misconception about migratory processes is that they are fixed or permanent. Often, however, mobility can be circular, seasonal and temporary, with individuals sometimes deciding to live in one place and work in another, or to live elsewhere for a period and to return to one's rural village for particular parts of the year. As a research tool, participant observation provided the flexibility and space to examine and explore these fluid mobility patterns in my research project. This fieldwork was conducted in a manner that acknowledges the "reciprocity of perspectives" between the inhabitants and myself. Thus, I was focused on learning about how the 'observer' (myself) and 'observed' collectively explore and experience elements pertaining to the research questions of this project: **education**, **community, labour**, and **migration** (Jorgensen 1989; Hammersley and Atkinson 2019).

As captured by Table 1, the participant observation began with the gatekeepers of Kimanya Ngeyo and with the first cohort of youth that were interviewed. Through these interactions, I came to participate in community-wide spaces, and to meet the networks of these individuals in the village. Often, participant observation involved "hanging" out in the village settings, in the gardens of some families, at the local health centre, in a *mzungu* owned restaurant, or at the local trading centres. I also utilised transect walks with participants, walking through parts of the village, going on their boats to see their fishing activities, helping them in their garden, or visiting land that belong to their family.

As mentioned previously, these more fluid approaches offered more nuanced insight into the natural patterns and processes of community life, as well as the relevant settings in which young people pursued the rhythm of day-to-day life.

Throughout my fieldwork, I used my field diary as a way of capturing impressions, reflections or comments that pertained to the experiences of living in rural Jinja, the complexities and opportunities that were faced and, from their perspective, what this all meant for the future.

Interviewing

Life History Interviews

This research project is concerned with understanding how rural youth view their past, present and future in relation to education and migration. To understand these experiences, the initial wave of ethnographic interviewing drew inspiration from a life history approach to migration (Bertaux-Wiame 1981). Life history approaches rest on the interpretations of individual lives that form the basis for analysis of individual and collective circumstances and in so doing,

weave together numerous ‘voices’ that are rooted in culture and conditions relevant to the research endeavour (Becker 1970). By creating room for an historical, a present and a future perspective on the relationship between social structure and individual agency (Goodson 2001), they account for inter-subjectivity in a way that enables commonalities and contradictions to be identified in a particular context. In this way, this approach attends to what is not said as well as what is said, to *how* the story is told, and the tensions and contradictions that emerge during the process of carrying out the interviews (Munro 1998).

In describing one approach to life history interviews, McDonald and Thompson (2004) argue for strategic sampling to ensure that the network with which one engages does not fall prey to circularity. To meet this aim, this research incorporates the approach of interviewing more than one generation within families and networks to enable insight from differing experiences and, crucially, to shed important light onto the commonality and diversity of experience within the particular cultural context of Budondo.

Open-ended guiding questions were offered to see how youth make sense of their own aspirations, challenges and opportunities in the stories of their lives. This allowed participants to construct a flexible narrative relating to aspirations for the future. Furthermore, interviews with older generations shed light on the perceptions of the transformations occurring in rural Jinja and how this informs the imagined futures across Budondo. The interviews thus considered the narratives of individuals’ *past* to understand the major features of the individual’s life course (with particular interest in their educational experience and mobility considerations); the second component sought to understand their *futures* through their life aspirations and imagined futures both for themselves and their families; the final stage of the interview, will directly address migration and education – both for themselves and their village – and consider the consequences of education and migration for the past, present and future of Budondo;

Semi-structured interviewing

To complement a life history approach, I utilised semi-structured interviewing in two ways:

1) Ten follow-up interviews took place with youth on the relationship between educational experience, rural transformations and spatial aspirations (or other unaccounted for factors). For some, this involved using a timeline exercise to account for the individual (and village) history

as well as more explicit exploration of the relationship between mobility, education and rural-urban transformations;

2) Seventeen formal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with (a) village and sub-county district government officials and b) workers of local NGOs involved with education in Budondo sub-county. The insight of governmental and civil society actors was drawn on to shed particular light on the policy and programme implications of the experiences expressed by the young adults. Two local NGOs and village, sub-county, and district level government officials also participated in the research;

Both the life history and follow-up semi-structured interviews form the central components in addressing the research questions of this project and have been utilised to develop a stronger theoretical account of the factors impacting upon youth aspirations in Budondo, Jinja.

Focus Groups

To make rural-urban 'transformations' accessible, the sub-questions of this research sought to address the relationship between mobility, education and labour opportunities for young people, as well as the broader social and economic processes taking place in these settings. To address these questions, focus groups were used in the final stages of the research process to draw on methods that transcend individual perspective and engage local groups in social mapping exercises (Mascarenhas and Kumar 1991) and wealth ranking approaches (Soares et al. 2010).

These methods enhance participation of the local population as well as improve the generation of ideas and insight related to elements of their cultural context. In addition to interview questions, these approaches sought to elicit more dynamic engagement with historical transformations, the complex perceptions of wealth and success, as well as the economic prospects, subsistence activities, and educational opportunities experienced by local people (Ngwenya et al. 2018; Cavestro 2003).

Wealth-ranking became a particularly useful tool for understanding, through another medium, the ways in which groups of families in Kyabirwa and Bujagali perceived 'signs' of individual and collective prosperity, a dimension of which can be mapped onto broader narratives that exist within rural Jinja, as discussed in chapter 6 of this thesis.

Groups met during the interviewing process were invited to focus group sessions toward the latter stages of the fieldwork period. With one group from each village, the sessions facilitated the interaction of their knowledge and perceptions of rural life, experiences of education and factors relating to their imagined futures. With the incorporation of younger and older generations, the groups sought to better understand the interacting features of community life and, in particular, to develop deeper insight into the transformation of economic activities, community-oriented spaces, and the cultural features of rural Jinja.

Sampling Considerations & Constraints

As previously described, through collaboration with relevant grassroots based educational organisations, I was introduced to lifelong residents who had been connected to village-based teams in the 38 villages across Budondo. Rather than entering as an isolated assessor, this provided invaluable assistance and access to local leaders, youth, families, and other organisations in the area. While this initial access connected me to networks of families and individuals within the two villages, there were a few key considerations that guided the sampling process.

Given the natural fluidity to community-based research, a combination of convenience and snowball sampling—once initial connections were established—was utilised as the primary approach for 'recruiting' participants in the research. For an "outsider", this approach to spending time with contacts was important for establishing meaningful connections and facilitating a depth of exploration, as well as assisting to tap into existing networks that allowed for a wider reach of the project that was not dependent on my research assistant.

The specifics of this approach often meant asking youth who participated in the research to if they had friends, family or other relevant contacts that would be open to participating in the research. Initially, the impression amongst participants was that the "criteria" for participation was that youth were already planning to migrate from the village. While of course such individuals presented an interesting opportunity to understand their experiences in Budondo to that point, I made clear that the study isn't confined to those who are thinking about leaving. In fact, as illustrated by the analysis, an equally interesting theme was to speak with those who had consciously made the decision to stay, or to return, or held ambivalence toward some of these questions. As such, understanding the emergence of migration aspirations includes seeking to understand the aspiration and capability to stay, and to consider the variety of ways

in which these ideas express themselves. This was important in how I would frame the 'snowballing' request and opened new opportunities along the lines of other qualitative approach. e.g. to take a walk to a new piece of land acquired by a youth and their family and hear their plans, to go on a boat with a youth to his fish farm, or to be in a family home whose children had just returned from the Middle East. Such a diversity of experiences enriched the qualitative approaches.

Over time, while the above table highlights the broad plan and approach that informed the methodological implementation, data saturation became the guiding determinant in conducting "enough" research, given generalisability was not a dominating concern. As common themes, concerns, and questions started to repeat themselves amongst participants and groups, it became clear that our inter-subjective enquiry had reached its conclusion at that time. While the above describes the general context and approach of sampling, it important to highlight three key topics that bear relevance to the nature of the enquiry.

Youth

It has been previously described that Uganda is one of the worlds youngest populations with approximately 78% of the population under 30 years old (World Bank 2020). While this thesis takes the view that youth livelihood characteristics are a more meaningful conceptualisation than rigid categories, it is nevertheless important to have clarity on the parameters of the study. As such, the demographic that participated in this study ranges from 18 to 30 years old, a categorisation that is based on the National Youth Council Act, and the targeting of youth-based initiatives by the government toward this specific category. Moreover, in my scoping trip interactions, informal enquiry as to "who are considered" youth and "why" pointed to this broad category of 18-30 year olds. While such categorisation raises interesting questions around, in particular the 15-18 age bracket, the 18-30 categorisatios is appropriate for the subject of this thesis. In order to understand the *possibility* of migration and its relationship to education, the research design seeks to build its analysis around the inter-subjective experiences and perceptions of youth who have previously participated in education (and to the extent possible, in secondary education), and are considering the relationship between education and labour opportunities, which this categorisation facilitates.

Organisations

It is important to acknowledge that my sampling of participants from relevant local non-government organisations – some of whose coordinators and teachers participated in this research – was largely formed in consultation with the management structures of those organisations, and required their general approval to be able to pursue individual based interviews.

Gender

45 males and 33 females participated in this research. The sampling process always sought to incorporate a reflexive approach to the balance of gender amongst the participants in the research, with an awareness of the gendered dynamics associated with the migration-education-development nexus. In general, I found the cultural dynamics and spirit of hospitality amongst youth and families to be welcoming of that access, which allowed for a relative balance in the experiences of young women and men, an important sampling consideration for the nature of the research. However, while access to both genders is one dimension of this process, it is important to acknowledge the explicit constraints of my own positionality on the qualitative enquiry.

Mindful of potential gendered dynamics in my own role as a 'researcher', moments arose during interviews and in focus groups that required a degree of sensitivity on my behalf. In some moments, this meant being mindful of gendered dynamics between male and female participants within a group interview. In others, it meant finding a way to sensitively explore topics with family members support, with the knowledge that we could stop the conversation at any point. This was particularly the case when an 18-year-old female participated in an interview alongside her brother and mother. As a recently returned migrant from Saudi Arabia, this youth had experienced several distressing experiences with her 'host' family and only recently found a way to return to Uganda. Sensitivity to her experiences felt important in this regard, as a general principle, but also with an awareness of the gender dynamic potentially impacting the nature of the conversation. In this instance, her brother was able to support the conversation, and we made clear that there was no insistence on discussing the details of her experience. As such, while the conditions were managed as best as possible, this case is an example of the approach to sampling that may have impacted the nature of the engagement, and ensured the integrity and well-being of all participants.

Maintaining Confidentiality & Incorporating Respondent Voices

Based on the circumstances of individual lives, participants in this research came from three different contexts in Jinja, Uganda. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in this research, anonymised basic details of participants, including their village residence and gender are included in this study (see appendix 3). In all instances, names used for writing purposes are pseudonyms. This coding is utilised throughout the citations of the research. In addition to these details, a number of the participants had experience of both formal education and participation in complementary non-formal education programmes (often of fixed duration). Unsurprisingly all youth who participated in the research had at least some experience of formal education, however many were unable to complete their secondary education. Another study conducted in Budondo found that the 84% of children and youth between the ages of 5 and 20 attended some form of schooling in 2017 (Ashraf, Banerjee and Nourani 2021), with the majority of individuals attending primary school by the age of 7 and progressing to various levels of primary, secondary education and for some, tertiary education.

Participants experience of non-formal educational programmes is also noted, with the two organisations in this research commonly cited.

4.6 Analytical Approach

Thematic analysis informed the analytical framework of the fieldwork research so as to address the ways in which educational experience, migration prospects and rural transformations interacted and shaped the formation of aspirations and capabilities in rural Jinja. Often described as flexible and adaptive due to its theoretical unboundedness and ability to cater for diverse ontological viewpoints, thematic analysis has also received criticism for failing to make explicit certain epistemological commitments and assumptions about the data that has been collected (Finlay 2021). Nevertheless, given its capacity to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of interacting factors, thematic analysis is a method that assists with identifying, analysing and making sense of patterns within large sets of data (Braun and Clarke 2006). To harness this potential, a few key principles that were used for the analysis of the data are made explicit:

(i) While many thematic approaches can resemble grounded theory (Frith and Gleeson 2004), 'theoretical' thematic analysis was used to identify themes and patterns with the data of this research (Boyatzis 1998). This implies that the research questions and broader theoretical framework of the thesis were relevant in the six phases of analysis.

That is to say, the analytical framework of the relationship between migration, education, and labour informed the ways in which the research was devised and the lens through which the data was analysed. Notwithstanding, the process of thematic analysis involved repeated phases of analysis that sought to identify repeated patterns of meaning relevant to these broad areas of interest. This involved familiarising myself with the data along the broad themes covered by the research questions of the thesis. Initially, in the process of generating initial codes, this meant beginning to consider the relevance of respondents' comments to the broad themes of migration, education, and rural-urban transformation that form the basis of the research questions of this thesis, as well as noting areas of intersection. As a growing number of codes were generated, themes were identified that integrated varying codes. The eight themes were: agriculture and development; cultural views of education; formal educational experience; non-formal educational experience; cultural views of agriculture; processes of rural livelihoods; youth experience.

(ii) The six-phase guide for conducting thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilised to identify, analyse and report on patterns in the data emerging from the fieldwork research. This analysis followed each stage carefully, beginning at familiarisation with the data through transcription, re-reading and note-taking, generating initial codes, collating codes into themes, reviewing and defining themes, and producing extracts and the final analysis along the empirical chapter outlines of this thesis. Through each stage of the analysis, codes and themes were consistently reviewed against overarching themes, with an ongoing assessment of themes relevant to the wider narrative constructed in the thesis. For instance, as codes became overarching themes, these themes were examined to see if they mapped onto coded extracts (level 1) as well as onto the entire data set (level 2).

(iii) Informed by the philosophical positioning of critical realism (Bhaskar 2009), the thematic analysis conducted during the research adopted a "contextualist" method, which places emphasis on the ways in which participants make sense of their own experiences and express their values, while allowing for an explicit engagement with the ways in which individuals interact with social context and structural factors in their immediate surroundings. The emphasise placed on educational experience in this study illustrates this approach in the collection and analytical stages of the research, where the experiences of youth in education were explored in a manner that allows broader

views to be expressed about the role of education itself, the various processes of community life and labour in Budondo, and the aspirations that individuals hold for the future.

(iv) Rather than purely semantic analysis, codes and themes were identified at the latent level, where underlying ideas, values, assumptions, and beliefs were considered. This ensured that analysis went beyond surface description and that the incorporation of themes into the thesis has involved interpretation, with the acknowledgement the analysis is not purely descriptive, nor an objective exercise, but rests on various theoretical underpinnings that guide the research questions of this project.

The above points delineate the approach that I adopted throughout the analytical dimension of the research. With a total of 8 themes and 87 codes generated, thematic analysis enhanced the rigour and reflexivity of the fieldwork, providing depth and breadth to the experiences of youth in rural Jinja.

4.7 Research Constraints & Ethical Considerations

While ethnographic principles guide the structure and approach of this research project, I acknowledge that a five-month time scale to carry out fieldwork limits what was possible to achieve. While the principles, attitudes and behaviours still apply, their effectiveness and expression are different when compared to the scope of many ethnographic approaches committed to long-term engagement in research sites (Shweder 1996). Thus, while this study acknowledges the limitations of time constraints, the initial scoping trip in October 2018 and the use of various gatekeepers familiar with the local context allowed for swift integration into the processes of village life and thus, enabled me to apply the principles of ethnographic approaches within the time constraints. In addition, the work on "focused" ethnography (Knoblauch 2005) as previously described seeks to acknowledge the strengths of applying the principles in consistent, yet diverse, forms.

Another point to note in relation to constraints on the quality of the research endeavour is that of communication and language. While most of my interviews and focus groups were conducted in English, the participant observation approaches engaged contexts in which Lusoga was the primary mode of communication. To this end, the support and translation provided by gatekeepers proved important, as well as that of other participants in the research process. Translators constantly make decisions about the cultural meaning which language

carries, and as such the limitations to any forms of translation are not merely technical (Edwards 1998). To confront this, the reflexivity (described below) was conducted not only with myself as the primary researcher but also with the gatekeepers that are present, in order to identify our bias and to make explicit the ways in which we were impacting the insights being generated from the fieldwork. Additionally, where necessary I incorporated the clear practice of requesting my research assistant to transmit – to the extent possible – what is shared verbatim rather than a summary or interpretation of the comment(s). The incorporation of these multiple strategies sought to transmit meaning as clearly as possible.

There are several ethical considerations that have required careful attention in this project. This research draws on the insights of theorists such as Kellehear (1993) as well as Lincoln and Cannella (2009), who transcend the view that ethics is a process of vetting methods that are done *to* subjects, but rather that ethical considerations should be viewed as the broader moral and social responsibilities that are held by the researcher and extended to those participating actively in the research process (i.e. local inhabitants of Bujagali and Kyabirwa villages, in this instance).

The lofty aspirations for a qualitative researcher are that of an empathetic individual who is interested in the lives of others and seeking to systematise exploration into these realities (de Laine 2000). While this approach challenges the power dynamics traditionally associated with the dichotomised 'researcher' and 'researched', one core ethical consideration that still arises is the management of *anonymity* and *confidentiality* (Lincoln 1998). For focus groups and interviews, initial data will be collected, including name, age, gender and location. All data will be uploaded at the time of collection to an encrypted laptop and deleted from the original device at the point of uploading. The data will be stored confidentially in a password protected document for 5 years and analysed within a secure and isolated environment. All names were recoded into pseudonyms at the end of the fieldwork research. In the intervening period, individuals were informed that they are entitled to withdraw from the research process. Further information on requests from participants to be identified are explored in the next section on reflexivity.

Closely related is that of informed and freely given consent. An information sheet and consent form was prepared for each method. These tools outline the purpose of the research, the participation and the freedom to withdraw at any point. Where participants had varying levels of literacy, the written form was not appropriate and I provided the same information in verbal

format. Where feasible, participants were asked to sign their names and if not, their consent was recorded verbally.

Seidman (2013) describes the trust and familiarity that can be built through qualitative research approaches, which can result in participants sharing aspects of their lives that may cause discomfort or emotional distress during an interview. If researchers misuse the words of the individuals this could leave the participants in discomfort. Therefore, a key strategy in this research project was (a) to inquire after each interview if the participant is happy to provide the consent they provided prior to the interview; and (b) at the end of the fieldwork research, to convey the preliminary insights emerging from the methods in the arranged focus groups. This not only reduced the risk that participants took on when they agreed to be interviewed but also enhanced the quality of the research itself by including their perspectives throughout the research process.

The ethical research application was reviewed by the Social Sciences, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Leeds, and a favourable ethical opinion was provided by attempting to account for the various ethical considerations outlined above (see Appendix 4).2

4.8 Reflexivity, Positionality & Constraints

One external criticism toward qualitative research is that its flexibility is a veneer for the attitude that "anything goes" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p 95). Although qualitative research should not be subjected to the same criteria as quantitative studies, there exist methods and approaches that require systematic application, reflection, and refinement. This section demonstrates the methods necessary to ensure that the relationship between myself as the researcher and the research context has been given careful consideration. In so doing, the aim isn't to *remove* myself from the research process, but to incorporate a reflexive consciousness that informs and contextualises how my own approaches and beliefs have enhanced and inhibited the research process.

To begin, there is an evident tension between ideals and pragmatism when considering the originality, significance, and rigour of any qualitative research project. As such, this section outlines the necessary efforts made to ensure processes have been in place to account for the impact of personal beliefs and biases on the research process, the partiality of situated knowledge, and the inevitable practical constraints faced during fieldwork.

A key element of qualitative fieldwork that is credible, ethical, and rigorous is engagement in reflexive practice throughout the research process. Rather than seeking to justify the researchers position into neutrality, reflexivity is about understanding one's position and bias in relation to a research question, and to account for the power dynamics that are relevant to the fieldwork research (Smith 2012). This form of reflexive practice uncovers unconscious influences that shape research and analysis (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), promotes transparency through the research process, and recognises the situated nature of knowledge (Haraway 1988).

To implement active reflexive practice throughout the research, I dedicated time every week to journaling. While the length of my reflections varied quite considerably, this opportunity became a central feature of my fieldwork and sought to address how my fieldwork experience was helping me reflect on four key themes: (a) processing any feelings arising from the interactions that were taking place; (b) uncovering any taken-for-granted assumptions; (c) reflecting on any questions, challenges or discomfort that arose in relation to the fieldwork experience; and (d) roughly noting down the percentage comparison on how much I spoke vs how much participants in the research spoke, so as to account for any researcher impositions on emerging perspectives and comments.

In addition to providing structure and reflection to the intensity of the fieldwork research, the reflexive practice unearthed several relevant themes. Two, in particular, are important to highlight in this chapter.

Positionality

The first theme concerns my ongoing efforts to reflect on my own background, values, identity and beliefs. Power dynamics inevitably impact upon the collection of data and insight, and as a white male seeking to engage meaningfully with rural inhabitants in Uganda, my presence raised a degree of curiosity and suspicion. Through the use of key gatekeepers and by maintaining transparency in my day-to-day interactions with local people, these concerns were alleviated to a reasonable extent. However, while the gatekeepers had intimate familiarity with the patterns and processes of community life in Budondo, they were often men, a dynamic that was important to bear in mind when it comes to the authoritative and power dynamics that can emerge from such interactions. This entailed understanding the implications of my place as a researcher, incorporating daily reflexive activity to remain attentive to the concerns of local people and to remain open to refining my approach. Understanding the cultural customs and

expectations associated with my presence in Budondo was an ongoing area of reflection with the my initial gatekeepers and research assistant.

The following excerpt, captured midway through the research period, illustrates the ways in which my positionality was an ongoing part of my reflexive practice:

> "As I walk through the villages, the prolonged stares are keenly felt. I was imagining what they must be thinking. Questions like: 'Why is he here? What does he want? What does he have?' are simple and fair for any outsider. But they are also part of a deeper history of colonial rule, development intervention and the expectation that 'mzungus' (white foreigners) have come to fix things, rather than to understand something together (the patterns of rural livelihoods and local perspectives on the past, present and future). Children run up to me, making me reflect on the traditional imagery of 'development aid' that it conjures up. Notwithstanding the discomfort, one of my firm convictions is in the oneness of humanity; regardless of class, race, religion, culture, our primary identity is rooted in a commonality that transcends those secondary dimensions. This is what sustains my involvement in the remote parts of Uganda – to be able to understand, explore, discuss, collectively question and determine with those whose voices are some of the most marginalised yet also some of the most insightful. Practically, I am aware that there are some implications for the nature of the research endeavour:
>
> - First is the nature of what people share: as a white man from the UK, how does my very presence shape not only how much they feel comfortable to share, but also *what* they share and *how* they share it. For instance, is education emphasised in their own stories because it is what "mzungus" focus on in development interventions? Is money and work shared as being important simply because that's what seems to be important and valued? Would the same narrative be presented to a local grandmother or would it change? The answer probably is that of some and some. Of course it would change. Naturally, the relatively emerging bonds of trust and the image I inevitably portray will shape the interactions with locals and the nature of what they share (what they feel *I* think is important) but these narratives are not dependent on myself. They are expressing decisions that they made, paths that they took and relations that they have established that far outweigh my interaction with them, so it is important I don't *overplay* my role at the same time. Trying to understand their decision-

making processes and feelings around those things is my task and one that feels very meaningful.

- The second related point is that I am often managing expectations in the interviews and transect walks. This is to be expected. I have come to talk with them about education and migration, so it is natural that they might think I have some sort of links that I do not. This is also something that happens with 'recruitment' to the Middle East, brokers visit the villages to speak to youth who are looking to realise their aspirations and are struggling to find opportunities locally. It has been the case that several times at the end of my interviews, youth have asked if I am aware of opportunities for them in the UK. They want to know if I can assist them to travel there - the conversations have always been open and full of respect, but it does make me wonder what I "embody", and of course to think how I can be clear throughout what the purpose of our conversation is." (entry 9)

Conducting social research inevitably poses challenges regarding whose voices are heard, as well as the nature of the insights and the expectations that may be raised due to my presence. One particular sentiment that remains throughout this reflexive practice is that I am not the "best" person to represent the experiences of youth in the two villages of rural Jinja. As such, the weight of responsibility to do justice to the sentiments, concerns and aspirations expressed has been present in the finalisation of this thesis.

Methodological Individualism vs Methodological Collectivism

The second ongoing theme related to the form in which the fieldwork research was being conducted. As I began my fieldwork, my plan to conduct life history interviews with individuals in ethically sanitised settings, with no influence of others on the interview process, had to quickly adapt. Conversations with my local research assistant and local government officials would consider effective ways to engage with young adults in Bujagali and Kyabirwa. "I have a friend who we can connect with" would be the sentiment conveyed, and we would plan to meet with them the following day. Often on arrival, we would begin interviews with individual youth who would subsequently invite their friends or family to join the interview process. My initial response to this was one of nervousness, with an internal concern that it had somehow impacted on the integrity of the research process. "What if the presence of others doesn't allow individuals to give full expression to their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations?"

I would think to myself in the first phase of the research. As the research proceeded, this pattern became familiar. We would arrange, often through snowball sampling, to meet with a youth in the village, only to find groups of friends waiting for us when we arrive at our agreed time. As the research proceeded, I would often write my reflections, thoughts, and impressions throughout the process. During this time, my perspective on participatory qualitative research in a previously unfamiliar setting was transformed. As one of my reflexive notes states:

> "I have come to realise that while there is a broad framework in which I am conducting my research, I only have an emerging understanding of the most effective ways to gain a fuller and richer understanding of youth aspirations and their surrounding concerns. For instance, I have been a bit uneasy and unsure when originally planned "individual" interviews have become a group interview of 2 or 3, and sometimes even larger when you include the family in the background. My main concern has been how to ensure that individuals feel *comfortable* to share their innermost concerns and aspirations during the interviews and informal conversations. The other day one of the participants said "why would I not feel comfortable to speak in the presence of my friends?" when I was checking if they were OK to proceed with the interview, even though we were now a small group sitting on the clay pathway outside her family home. Though not a position on cultural relativism per se, the thought still holds: who am I to say what is an appropriate way to explore themes of relevance in a meaningful manner? I am learning from the participants throughout this process, and we see ourselves as part of a common exploration on their own aspirations, as well as their perceptions of the social reality in which they are immersed." (entry 5)

Methodological individualism is a theoretical principle that has come to emphasise the individual as the primary unit of analysis (e.g Hayek 1942). As such, in the view taken toward participants in the fieldwork process, but also in subtle ways in which the fieldwork unfolded, the practice of reflexivity enabled me to challenge my taken for granted assumptions, open myself to nuanced cultural expressions, and to harness the potentialities of a methodology that embraces a diversity of viewpoints and opinions within any given conversation. It is worth noting that while this reflexive practice facilitated a move away from individualism that has become baked into narrow conceptions of meaningful methodology, the incorporation of methodological collectivism (e.g. Durkheim 1897) has not been an attempt to go to the other extreme and advocate for a version of collectivism that suffocates the legitimate expression of individuality or seeks to oversimply complex dynamics and contradictory experiences within

a given cultural context. Rather, the point is that taken-for-granted assumptions on fundamental questions concerning the number of people participating in an interview should be subject to scrutiny and consideration through reflexive practice.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the philosophical underpinnings and methodological choices of this thesis as it relates to the overarching question on how aspirations and capabilities are shaped by the educational experience, migration prospects, and transformations occurring in rural Jinja. Outlining the specifics of the research context and the specifics of the participants in the research, it has considered the rationale and appropriate use of qualitative methodology that would offer grounded insights into the interaction of education and migration in the context of youth livelihoods in Budondo, outlining the various approaches taken to achieve depth in the time available for the fieldwork research. Through a combination of complementary qualitative approaches, it has sought to illustrate the importance and value of depth over breadth. This relates to the aim of the research more generally to penetrate meaning amongst youth in rural Jinja – both individually and in groups – that, uninterested in cause-effect conclusions, seeks to uncover youth perspectives and experiences on the research questions posed by this project. Rather than seeking out a set of new migration laws, it acknowledges the contextual nature of the insight generated into concepts that bear relevance to other settings, albeit in their own nuanced manner. The use of thematic analysis and the approach to generate codes and themes in a way that remained as close as possible to the perspectives of the participants has been used to ground insight into big themes – education, migration and rural transformation – in the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants in the research. In so doing, this chapter has demonstrated the originality that can emerge not only in its empirical outputs but also the ways in which reflexive practices provide opportunity to make taken-for-granted assumptions explicit and to learn more about the components of culture and identity that must be acknowledged and harnessed when conducting research in previously unfamiliar settings.

Taken together, the context, methods, approaches and analysis of the thesis project all seek to illustrate the workings of the migration-education nexus in the specific context of Budondo and utilise diverse qualitative approaches to establish links and interconnections that address the specifics of the research questions of the thesis and bear relevance to broader themes within the fields of education, migration and development.

CHAPTER 5

The Dreamscapes of Urban Life:

Rural Youth, Migration Aspirations & the Promise of Education in Jinja

"Children are growing up to think: 'In my locality there is nothing! Everything is outside'"

Sarah (xxi)

5.1 Introduction

The central argument advanced by this thesis is that migration and education represent an important intersection for analysing the transformation of rural livelihoods in Uganda and the aspirations amongst a growing number of youth moving to urban centres, both internally and internationally. While chapter 6 places this intersection within broader narratives of prosperity that exist around rural livelihoods in Budondo, this chapter demonstrates how the analysis of migration and education is critical for reaching a more nuanced perspective on the educational experiences of youth, the thought processes of aspiring migrants, and the rapidly changing processes of rural life from the perspective of its young adults.

This chapter addresses a key component of the overarching research question of this thesis by interrogating how the aspirations and capabilities of young adults are shaped by their educational experiences and considering the relation these hold to processes of (im)mobility. In particular, it directly addresses the sub-question of the thesis on how educational experiences and migration aspirations interact in rural Jinja, by demonstrating the subtle ways in which formal educational experience contributes to wider narratives in rural Jinja that inform notions of the good life (in the city), shape the imaginaries of rural youth, and often result in heightened migration aspirations. Far from suggesting a direct causal link, this chapter grounds its analysis in perspectives that youth ascribe to their own educational experience, challenges organisations have faced in supporting youth, and the impact of perceived deficient opportunity structures in the rural setting on youth aspirations more generally.

As previously described, an established perspective on the relationship between migration and education is that of migration-for-education (Crivello 2011; Dustmann and Glitz 2011; Chandrasekhar and Sharma 2014). This conceptual tool suggests that a key driver of youth migration is the desire to pursue new opportunities and to fulfil one's educational aspirations in urban centres. This desire to acquire skills and experience through education in urban settings is thus considered an important reason for migration. To complement this analysis, this chapter approaches the migration-education nexus from an alternative (yet complementary) perspective that has received comparatively little attention: that of migration-through-education (Corbett 2007; Schewel and Fransen 2018; Rao and Patil 2022). To connect the educational experiences of youth in rural settings to specific spatial implications, this chapter outlines how and why formal education in rural settings – through its curriculum, portrayal and promises – has come to be associated with rising migration aspirations. It is also maintained throughout the chapter that discussion of education in rural settings should ensure that, while acknowledging the central importance of formal schooling, constitutes other forms of education in rural spaces. As will be explored in chapter 7, non-formal educational programmes in rural settings are one such example that also offer insight into some of the alternative characteristics of rural education that are important to consider in nurturing a number of capabilities relevant to rural life, and, in particular, genuinely cultivating the capability to choose where to live.

This chapter demonstrates how youth make sense of their past, consider their present and envision their futures. In particular, it examines the relationship these youth experiences have to 'place', be it rural, urban, or in several cases both. The expansion of formal and non-formal education in rural Jinja over the past two decades has been an important consideration in how young people conceive of – and identify with – their local communities, thereby impacting the circumstances that shape the aspirations of youth to stay or to migrate. As mentioned previously, far from problematising youth out-migration, this chapter seeks to illustrate the nuanced perspectives young people hold, the labour limitations they perceive, and the desire they hold to 'succeed' for themselves, their families and their communities.

With the expansion of formal education in Budondo, it is argued that the experience of many rural youth aspiring to migrate to cities can be seen as a *partial consequence* of their experiences of formal education in rural settings, viewed through the prism of their aspirations

and capabilities. This builds on the work of Appadurai, who describes the ways in which aspirations are formed in the thick of social life and the work of Jorgen Carling who suggests the emigration environment is an essential component of analysing the emergence of migration aspirations. Taken together, the following analysis illustrates how youth in Budondo construct the rural and the urban as distinct yet related socio-spatial entities that represent and enable different ways of life. The under-researched role that educational experience has played in how young adults conceptualise their spatial futures is explored in the wider context of the transformation of Uganda's social, economic and political landscape (Wiegratz, Martiniello and Greco 2018).

5.2 Youth & Community Livelihoods

A key theme of exploration during my interviews with youth. adults, government officials and civil society actors in Budondo sub-county concerned the relationship between young people and two adjoining villages in Budondo, as they deliberate on and engage in future-making endeavours. Here, the comments and perspectives of youth on the ways in which they identified more widely with their rural community pointed to a tension; for many, cultural circumstances were such that youth held a sense of connection to friends, families and their wider village. However, the scepticism on the future viability of rural life in its current guise, and the commonly held perception regarding the lack of opportunity structures that exist in their immediate surroundings resulted in a number of youth feeling uneasy about staying in the village.

Helpful in this regard is the work of Hirschman (1970) regarding the ways in which individuals respond to challenging circumstances in the surroundings, where individuals are engaged in dynamic decision-making processes concerning whether they devise a plan to *exit,* find the relevant approaches to give expression to their agency and *voice,* or choose to acquiesce to the current set of circumstances through *loyalty.* This chapter outlines some of the individual, family-wide, and structural considerations as they relate to the migration-education nexus and the question of transformative agency (Bajaj 2009).

A key theme regarding the relationship between youth and community is the concept of translocality and the dynamism that consciously joins multiple relations, spaces and networks into one social field. In contrast to the idea that a young person's identity is always fixed or bound to one location, the experience of youth in rural Jinja offered an alternative narrative:

that mobility is intertwined with family, status, opportunity, and education and often unfolds in a number of ways.

For instance, in many interviews and casual encounters the response to the seemingly simple question of 'where are you from?' was often quite complex, with a number of youth remarking that they were 'from Jinja', only to reveal later that they had either grown up and gone to school in another village, moved back and forth between a few locations in Uganda, or lived for a period of time with an extended family member in another part of the region, city, country or world. This insight coheres with past research outlined in chapter 2, which describes the intergenerational connections within Uganda and, consequently, between the rural and the urban. As described by research with youth in Uganda: "when migrants are asked whether they are urban or rural, they are often uncertain what to say" (Barratt et al. 2012, p. 220). This is not due to the inability to commit to new environs, but due to a socio-cultural context that is built upon the traditions and practices of rural life.

Similar to research in other contexts (e.g., Skeldon 2015; Dyer and Rajan 2023), mobile livelihoods and *repeated* circularity of movement was a common reality for youth residing in both rural and urban Jinja, with many youth expressing their aspirations to migrate from villages to cities (and abroad) for short periods of time to engage in discrete employment before returning to their village. Importantly, this movement wasn't perceived to be a permanent disconnection from their rural environs, but often part of a set of livelihood and household strategies adopted by the family network of a youth.

Disruption of the narrative that migration is fixed or linear, however, is not to say that youth in rural Jinja fail to identify with community in a meaningful way. Rather, it is to articulate the network of connections that are maintained between one or more locations as a young person navigates their current circumstances and to appreciate the ways in which this continues to shape their future decision making. Internal interconnections that disrupt spatial embeddedness have been discussed in the field of geography (Featherstone 2011), anthropology (Appadurai 1996; 2004), and cultural studies (Bennett and Peterson 2004).

Although clearly acknowledged by the mobility turn (Urry 2007), migration theory has placed more explicit emphasis on the concept of transnationalism as an articulation of interconnections that transcend national boundaries and brings two societies into a single social field (Schiller et al 1992; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). In building on these principles of transnationalism, the

concept of translocality in the context of migration (Greiner 2011) offers the conceptual apparatus to express the *internal* interconnections between spatial communities and networks that operate within one region or country and give rise to a more nuanced understanding of how rural livelihoods are composed of networks, activities and patterns of life that are connected to the urban. Utilising this concept in this way ensures that the dynamic relationships are incorporated into the analysis of youth and community livelihoods and cater for a diversity of mutual interactions between the rural, the peri-urban and the urban. Indeed, as described in chapter 2, adopting a more fluid and dynamic connection between spatial communities assists in moving beyond the extremes of a 'sedentary' bias on the one hand and a 'mobility' bias on the other – a moderated dynamic that is crucial to understanding the diverse circumstances and processes through which the individual may or may not come to identify with community life and contribute—in diverse ways— to its unfolding narrative. However, this research suggest that translocality is more than a helpful concept to demonstrate links between rural and urban settings. Rather, given the connections come to shape one's own identity as bound to other generations, and as a result other locations, it is argued that a translocal identity is relevant to how we understand both 'potential', 'temporary', 'active', or 'return' migrants. Indeed, it is a description of youth identity that transcends the categories imposed by systems of formality or governance.

Thus, a more nuanced understanding of youth livelihoods in Budondo incorporates experiences into how youth – and their families – navigate their perceived opportunities and constraints to pursue the lives they have reason to value. This pursuit concerns various processes of individual and collective life, of which spatial mobility, labour and education are the interrelated subjects of this chapter.

When it comes to labour, small businesses, agriculture, fish farming, health services, motorcycle taxis ('boda boda') and construction were amongst the labour activities that youth articulated as viable forms of employment in the context of village life. However, unemployment, underemployment and quality of employment is an ongoing challenge for the youth, not only in Budondo but in Uganda at large. According to the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), while Uganda's unemployment rate revolves around 9%, this rate rises to over 13% for youth, a figure that is often higher in rural settings. Although difficult to quantify, underemployment and the quality of employment for young people in rural Budondo was a concern expressed by participants, government officials and civil society actors. According to one local youth, this challenge is structural as well as aspirational:

> "Looking for jobs has also become a problem because jobs are not seen, and the youth are a little bit in a big number. So, they need to be organised so that they can access and at least earn a living. If you combine those youth with skills and those youth without skills you find that it can be easier for those people with skills to at least share with people without skills such that they can do something, which can help the community." (vii; male youth from Bujagali)

Many youth, in the face of structural challenges and spurred on by the desire to give expression to their energy and enthusiasm, are seeking to determine the most effective pathways they should pursue as they make sense of their past and conceptualise their future – a decision closely bound to household strategies, peer relationships and community-wide conversations unfolding in Budondo. As such, while this process is far from individualised in the cultural context of rural Jinja, the view expressed by several participants is that youth have energy, that the village does not provide opportunities to give expression to that energy, and that it is often better to find opportunities elsewhere rather than to just sit 'idle' in the village. This legitimate desire amongst youth to give expression to their energy and enthusiasm, is of course, closely bound to the view on what it means to engage with opportunities. As will be discussed later, while continuing to tackle the structural obstacles that exist in the labour market, one powerful dynamic in the rural setting is the possibility for creation of new pathways.

This reality implies the need to consider the features of an educational process that nurtures job-creators, a question being asked by some educational organisations operating in Budondo. While a strand of this perspective perpetuates an oversimplified, meritocratic view of rural development that is challenged in chapter 2 (packaged as the aim of cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit), the civil society actors with whom I interacted viewed the creative process around economic well-being and production as an act of transformative agency in itself, in which individuals see themselves as promoters of community well-being. How to nurture this agency is, in many ways, a central question for education in rural settings. According to one research participant, one important consideration in this regard concerns the role of parents and grandparents in helping the youth (and children) who grow up in villages. Such involvement ensures connection to local knowledge and tradition – a process that, in some ways, can be described as informal education in Budondo and, according to their view, is being lost.

> "When you look at our parents, when we grew up those parents were good - giving us informal education. As per now, those parents who are available and in our presence today, they do not give out that informal education. This has affected the community in that the culture that we had at first has run-away. Now, people are copying a Western culture which they can't maintain! Because if you copy the Western culture and you can't maintain it can at times become a problem." (ix; female youth from Bujagali)

The weakening connection of youth to local knowledge of rural community life opens a vacuum within the community that is exposed to wider influences. With the two villages of Bujagali and Kyabirwa having strong tourist presence due to promixity to the Bujagali Falls, this changing reality has been present in rural Jinja for several decades. While participants were clear not to advocate isolationist approaches, a number of youth expressed how a vision of 'success' has come to be shaped by visitors from outside. According to one youth from Kyabirwa:

> "Parents will sometimes say that living in the village means you cannot afford the town. Maybe you are not educated, maybe you are not opportunistic, you are not lucky! You (*mzungu*[6]) people learn and when you learn, 99% of the blessings, of being rich, being well-off - it is where? It is in the cities, it is in towns! So it is quite hard. If you are to stay in the rural area, it is when you have got a white collar job, you are rich from the city and have just come to the village to invest." (xxvii; male youth from Kyabirwa)

As expressed, not only youth but the parents and families who hold most of the access to household resources and local knowledge often develop household strategies in which some of their children will migrate. While this aims to diversify the sources of income into the household, the perspective expressed above demonstrates how the ideas underlying this decision-making process concerns where wealth is generated and distributed. With the city being equated with a standard and symbol of success, local opportunity structures in rural settings often pale in comparison.

While it is naïve to adopt the overly romantic view that opportunities in the rural setting are subject *only* to the perceptions of youth, the diversity of views expressed by participants in relation to what was possible and what was desirable is telling. For example, although elaborated more extensively in chapter 6, agricultural opportunity is the main economic activity

[6] Mzungu is a term used to refer to anyone of foreign descent. While translating literally to "those who roam around aimlessly", it is most commonly used to describe white visitors to Eastern Africa

of Uganda, a national reality that is magnified even further in Budondo which has come to be colloquially known as the 'food basket' of Jinja. The fertility of its soil and the possibilities of land acquisition, though decreasing, means it is one of the most effective means for fostering sustainable livelihoods. Despite the view that agricultural intensification constitutes one of the central livelihood strategies in Budondo, many youth do not view agriculture as a viable pathway for their own futures. Largely connected to the idea that agriculture is a replication of their previous generation, and therefore an automatic path to poverty and difficulty, many youth articulated the view that a meaningful life constituted escaping such a future. Instead, agriculture has become framed as a realm of activity consigned to those who fail to achieve their loftier ambitions – a narrative often instrumentalised as a source motivation by parents and teachers for advancing in one's schooling. For example one youth shared an example of the common remarks they would hear from their teacher to inspire their own students:

> "The teacher would tell us: "the other day I was walking through my village and I saw Michael. Michael used to be my student and had so much potential but now I see him in the field because he did not work hard enough. And now he is stuck in the village. If you do not want to be like Michael, then you must work very hard" (xli; male youth from Kyabirwa)

This example provided by the youth sought to illustrate how particular conceptions of individual aspiration and ambition rest on ideas – be they implicit or explicit – about the deficits and 'backwardness' associated with rural life, particularly in the context of neoliberal entrepreneurship. Education in the village, from this perspective, is, at worst, a hindrance and strain on the realisation of individual and collective prosperity and, at best, a springboard that youth with hard-work and creativity can use to pursue opportunities elsewhere.

As illustrated, youth identity is intimately bound to the conceptions of community life that exist in rural Budondo. With legitimate questions concerning opportunity, labour and individual expression, youth are engaged in an ongoing process of discovery that is informed by processes of education in the household, in the family, and in several other spaces that make up day-to-day life. Taken together, these illustrate well the iterative ways in which youth come to form their futures and points to the need to better understand the cultural value placed on education and the promises of schooling that permeate community life.

5.3 Promises of Schooling & the Perceptions of Education

In Budondo, the way in which youth conceptualise their futures interacts closely with commonly held perceptions on the role of education for their own lives and its relevance to the processes of community life unfolding in each village. During the research, narratives surrounding the promises of schooling were increasingly prevalent amongst youth, families and institutions. In the face of the challenges expressed about rural life, the powerful potential of education is strongly held as one of the primary ways to transcend the difficulties associated with rural poverty.

Purpose

In rural Jinja, education has become the litmus test as to whether youth aspire toward meaningful livelihoods. With the arrival of universal education programs over the last two decades in Uganda, obtaining a good education has come to be considered as an essential feature of life that all have the right to access. As frequently emphasised by participants, however, receiving the certificate "papers" (v; male youth from Kyabirwa) from their education has taken on more value than the education itself. The central emphasis on papers indicated the hope amongst many youth that education itself had become a ticket for greener pastures. Youth expressed education as a future investment, not only for themselves but for their entire household. Notwithstanding the positive progress brought about by wider access to education, many participants expressed disappointment and disillusionment at the fact that once they finished their education they did not feel they had many opportunities to progress further. The experiences expressed by several youth seemed to indicate that, as a result, several false promises have come to be associated with progress through formal schooling.

Fundamentally, exploring whether the promises of education are fulfilled relates to understanding the set of ideas that exist concerning the purpose of education. From the perspective of the youth and community, education is often central to how youth engage in future-making. As described by one participant:

> "…that one who has not gone to school and is riding a boda-boda [motorcycle taxi], he is just getting what he wants. Education can help us in how we think about our future…" (xxviii; male youth from Kyabirwa)

It is perhaps unsurprising that education is seen as pivotal in helping youth think about what they can do in their future. However, with growing numbers of youth graduating from secondary and college courses struggling to find meaningful work, questions around the purpose of education have started to arise amongst youth. One participant expressed it in the following way:

> "I think there is a lot of confusion among young people about even the purpose of their education. If they begin to look at education as getting good grades to go and get a job somewhere then that impacts others who are wanting to advance in their education because they are seeing a very big number who are unemployed." (ii; male youth from Bujagali)

Along similar lines, another participant described the challenges of this confusion and the lack of clarity about the core values of education as it relates to the individual and collective purpose of education:

> "Even some people go to graduate and put on a gown. We do not know its meaning but we just enjoy putting it on. We don't know the core of education – sincerely we do not know. We have to know!" (xxii; male youth leader from Bujagali)

Naturally, the desire to understand the purpose of education as it relates to life in Budondo represented an important concern for this youth leader, as well as for many others who support youth initiatives more locally. For one adult who works with youth in Budondo, described matters along similar lines, suggesting that it is the experiences of education itself that contribute to the confusion around its purpose:

> "The other interesting thing is that you find that most young people who finished secondary school or even college. The majority of them are the ones who are really confused about life [laughs]. And these young people who maybe did not go beyond Primary 6 are the ones who are into business and are succeeding [laughs]. You find that most people who are confused about life are university students and people who are successful are the ones who never went to school." (xix; male NGO worker in Budondo)

With education so often associated with the expansion of human capabilities, the notion that education leads to further confusion is somewhat counterintuitive. However, as implied by this participant, the muddled perceptions around the purpose of education have not emerged from a vacuum. Rather, they are expressions of conflicting and unsettled perspectives on the role of education in Budondo itself, with some suggesting it is a pathway out of poverty and others suggesting it is to be cast aside and work of the family to be prioritised. As such, this polarisation of perspectives can leave youth in situations of precarity and fail to meaningful cultivate genuine capabilities and increase human freedoms.

As previously discussed, several theoretical frameworks have sought to understand the role of education in society. With human capital approaches supporting the view of "investment" in resources, and "rights" based approaches concerned with education as a human right that is guaranteed to all (Robeyns 2006), this research has argued the capability approach provides a helpful framework for understanding the educational experiences of youth in Budondo. The view that education should nurture capabilities that individuals have reason to value, thereby generating true freedom in the choices and decision-making processes of its participants, points to alternative ways to engage with community-wide perceptions of education and to address conflicting viewpoints on the purpose of education. While acknowledging the importance of skills and qualifications, as expressed by the participants, the capability approach overcomes the instrumentalisation of education and comes to appreciate its intrinsic value when defining its purpose. In this sense, far from simply 'skilling up' or 'acquiring papers', the analysis of experiences and aspirations expressed by youth point to the importance of considering education as having an interconnected, dual purpose; the development of individual capabilities, skills, qualifications and knowledge; and the connection of these cultivated capabilities to contribute to the progress of the various components of society (Farid-Arbab 2012).

Relevance and Practical Application

A related dimension of educational perceptions and narratives around the promises of schooling in rural Jinja concerns the perceived relevance and practical application of what is learned in formal education to livelihoods in rural communities. When articulating the history and development of educational experiences in rural Jinja, several youth and government officials described how school has, traditionally, been overly theoretical and left many unsure

about its relevance. One civil society actor expressed personal reflections that illustrate this wider point:

> "I told you for 19 years you are in cage and you learn all these beautiful things. For 19 years this other person is doing things practically, you know. I was one of the examples of this. When I went back home, I felt I was out of place when I looked at my age-mates. They are doing their business and are really prospering but the person who was studying all these books now cannot sustain a business. You see that, I don't know." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Scepticism toward overly theoretical approaches to education, with their roots in the colonial history of Uganda and its resulting educational system, is now well-established amongst youth, families and institutions. This overly theoretical approach and disconnection from the rural reality is partially stimulated by the way in which education is packaged. One youth engaged with political activism across Jinja described this as a paradigm shift, with an excessive focus on grades and processing information:

> "… over time we are beginning to see that there is a disconnect between schools and the community, where the schools have started to demand more and more time for people to stay in class and this disconnects young people from real-life situations. The schools want to see that the children excel in their exams" (liv; male youth from Jinja)

With students often made to attend school during the weekends and holiday periods in the name of educational advancement, one casualty of this focus and attention is the further separation from what is learned in the school setting to day-to-day life in the village. While pedagogical expectations weaken the opportunity for youth to apply their learning to their realities, it is also the case that the very topics that are learned are abstract and often not applicable to local circumstances. As one local educational coordinator remarked:

> "When you think of the content that people are studying, you find topics like the Rhineland, the Canadian Prairies or cocoa growing in Ghana. Things that are completely disconnected from the reality, even this starts from nursery. In the village setting they are saying 'A is for Apple', the child has never even seen an apple and may never even eat it in their life. So then you are beginning to see that education has been

> completely shifted to focus on being able to take in a lot of information and being able to reproduce it at the exam time" (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Akin to the previously referenced swinging pendulum of extremity, one of the main diagnoses amongst participants in response to education that places excessive emphasis on abstract concepts and realities was the need meaningfully develop practical skills in children, youth and adults. As a response to this perceived problem, efforts to provide skills have multiplied in recent years in a growing number of TVET courses and with ongoing revision of the formal school curriculum. Most comprehensively, "Skilling Uganda", a flagship programme developed by the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2011 sought to facilitate a "paradigm shift" to ensure the educational sector is part of a comprehensive system of skills development for employment, productivity and economic growth. With the aim of focusing more attention on employable skills and competencies relevant to the labour market, many youth have participated in these courses, with several sharing their own experience in completing courses from a nearby technical college.

Having observed the gaps in education and labour alongside rising levels of unemployment, these programmes have been trying to redress the balance. While acknowledging the need for skills, one coordinator for an alternative educational programme in Budondo described the process of training and offered insight into some of the constraints that this response has imposed on the process of education and development in Uganda.

> "They train many people. After you have thousands of youth now getting back to their communities and they begin to feel that this is what they can contribute but it is very difficult for them to apply because they don't have the tools to do so. It goes back to the other area we were discussing: if we say education is to raise capacity, what is that capacity we are talking about? How does that capacity not focus only on information or only on skills or only on attitudes or only on qualities?

According to this perspective, the challenge for the educational experience of youth lies not in the question of 'supply' or 'access', but rather in the nature of the educational experience itself, and the capacities that are subsequently cultivated. Although there is distinction between the two, this assessment resonates with the literature on the role of capabilities in education and rural livelihoods. Without these capability enhancing markers of progress, educational

advancement thus becomes a series of policy assessment documents that determine relevant inputs, resulting in a fragmented approach to education delivery for youth. She goes on to suggest the integrated nature of education is thus an essential feature of capability enhancement:

> "How can it be a comprehensive whole? Because if you don't have knowledge but you have the skill even your capacity to be able to think about what is available in your community is limited. Knowing the different processes in community life are interconnected is important, for example."

As such, the resulting fragmentation of educational experience and knowledge shapes the orientation a young person has with the processes of community life in Budondo. The interconnections between family life, local subsistence, weather, agricultural opportunitiy, educational experience, labour opportunities, conscious use of technology, the local market, relationships with urban Jinja, the media, and local tourism, to name but a few, all contribute to a holistic conception of community life. Without this integrated view, this actor goes on to describe that rather than solely being unprepared to navigate limitations on the presence of absence of 'capital', this as constraining thought as more important to our assessment of educational pathways to labour opportunities material limitations:

> "A youth may not be able to see that if you have skills in tailoring, maybe there is a relationship with this plot of land that you have. You have actually raised your capacity in agriculture but at the same time you have another area that you can actually work on. But they are being made to think in a box. Maybe you need to start from there and organically you begin to raise up the funds necessary." (xl; female NGO worker in Kyabirwa)

Although the development of capabilities in relation to broader narratives of prosperity will be considered in the following chapter, the experience of youth expressing difficulty to practically apply their training demonstrates the importance of analysing the educational experience as part of the more general development of capabilities relevant to rural life. Over the course of my interactions with youth, they would often describe a course they had trained in and expressed the need for capital in order to be able to start anything. As such, while the development of skills is an essential feature of enhancing capabilities, the observation that

attitudes, knowledge, and context-sensitive understanding all contribute to cultivating capabilities that individuals have reason to value represents a critical area of reflection for institutions and agencies involved in setting the pedagogical approach of diverse forms of education.

As previously discussed, one laudable aim of education is to cultivate transformative agency within students (Bajaj 2009). When educational experience fails to nurture this ownership and orientation toward education, one extreme is that higher levels of school dropouts exist in rural settings. Another extreme, however, is when passivity toward ones educational and labour opportunities results from the educational experience. For many participants, and from the experience expressed by civil society actors, many youth see themselves as stuck with skills that they cannot use, and seeing interrelated processes of community life as fragmented from one another. While a series of policy and development interventions can assist in the connection between education and labour (including micro-financing), further thought is also required to better understand some of the characteristics of educational processes in rural settings that nurture skills in areas such as hairdressing, farming, tailoring, mechanics or construction, but also connect these skills to knowledge of the fields and a deepening awareness of how they support – and are reinforced by – other processes of community life.

Pathway to Urban Opportunities & White Collar Jobs

A prevalent conception of education that arose during the research concerned the view that educational credentials and papers have become a means by which youth feel they can leave Budondo and find work in the city (be it Jinja, Kampala, or international). While the reality of migration decision-making is far more complex, this perception of education is closely connected to views on its purpose and relevance in rural life. Importantly, it is also bound to broader views expressed by youth – and their families - about the future of the village, the city, and what it means for Uganda to be modern (Wiegratz 2010). As described by one youth living in Kyabirwa:

> "Beginning life from the village and ending up in the village is something that is felt to be terrible. Even parents say to learn, get educated, go and associate with your fellow educated men and women who are working in towns. They will say that is the purpose of education. Not to be at the same level as your parents, but youth are using education

> to distinguish themselves from the previous generation" (xliv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

The success of youth's educational engagement is often characterised not by *who* they become or even *what* they can do, but rather *where* they end up. The formation of identity amongst youth is relational, with references made by families themselves as to what it means to live a successful life in the current climate. Representative of the general trend toward urbanisation, these narratives are woven into the whole experience of formal education in the rural setting and as one participant described, such expectations are heightened in general conversations in school about the urban setting:

> "In school that's when people say: if you go to town, you will exactly find there a job. Or: if you are in town you will live a better life. That's what they know." (xxvii; male youth from Kyabirwa)

These more general conversations in school illustrate the fact that formal schooling entails a set of diverse, multi-directional interactions that go beyond the teacher-student relationship. As phrased, the intentional ambiguity of 'people' represents narratives that permeate interactions between peers, teachers, administrators, families and even the community at large. This diverse set of interactions demonstrates well the idea that the experience of formal schooling represents an important intersection of actors familiar with – yet similarly sceptical of – the durability of the rural setting.

In describing the reach – and impact – of these conversations around youth attending school, another local youth leader noted that discussions about *where* they end up are often inextricably bound to the more general ideas about what constitutes the good life.

> "So you have this movement. Sometimes I feel the kind of education system we have is the one that is causing it. Because the nature of the conversations that happen around those who are going to school makes them imagine that they will find a better life somewhere else and as this is engraved in their minds right from childhood – that they really have to get out – so whatever conditions they encounter in the city they have to endure" (xxiv; male youth leader from Bujagali)

For many youth engaged in an ongoing process of future-making, valued features of individual progress circulate in school and form part of young people's educational experience as a whole. This supports the idea advanced by social reproduction theory that the educational system is built on more fundamental views of how society should be organised and the infrastructural support that is afforded to educational settings in the village. While the different components of the educational system – and features of its alternatives – will be considered in chapter 7, the perception of formal schooling is that, as one participant recalled, it prepares you for a life elsewhere:

> "In school they would say: we are educating you to get jobs. Jobs like this are always in towns. Students would say 'I should work hard; I finish my studies and then I should hunt for a job'". (xiv; male youth from Bujagali)

The view that education supports – and reinforces – urban aspirations is connected to the decontextualised nature of the educational experience and its apparent irrelevance to rural life. As made clear, however, the relationship between educational pursuits and the type of opportunities that are considered meaningful work holds within its purview a certain view on what work is attractive and, as this research explores, that this work is to be found in the city. Such a perception reinforces the mobility imperative that becomes part of the educational system in rural Jinja. More specifically, several participants made the link between education and the desirability of white-collar jobs. As one participant from Kyabirwa explained:

> "So, the kind of education we have is training us to get white-collar jobs, not using practical skills. We are just taught to write, but you are not really trained to get a skill." (xliii; female youth from Kyabirwa)

With the importance of skills re-emphasised, several participants outlined their personal experiences of how education made them think about the pursuit of work that avoided manual labour, a type of work that is the basis of significant economic activity in rural settings. One youth leader resident in Budondo describes this in the following way:

> "I think that the educational system is one that doesn't support much in appreciating where we come from. It's about getting good grades, so when you get good grades then you are able to get good jobs. The educational system has made people feel like: 'if I

> work it is about getting white-collar jobs. It is about me. If I get this knowledge and I get this job then me and my family will be OK. It is not about how is my neighbour or how are the other families or how are my friends'." (xxiv; male youth leader from Bujagali)

This portrayal of educational experience is emblematic of neoliberal visions of how education should function, especially in low-income settings. By emphasising meritocracy and individual progress, institutions view education as the pathway out of poverty for many of these youth. However, the insight expressed by the youth leader unearths the individualism that lies at the core of neoliberal ideology: that successful educational outputs constitute capable individuals who are able to transcend the limitations of their surroundings and discover opportunities elsewhere. The insistence on avoiding sensitivity to context in the educational approach impacts youth in a very real way; not only in developing skills and abilities that bear little to no relevance to their immediate surroundings, but also regarding the aspirations and values that are nurtured about what it means to live a successful life. The irony of this development in Budondo is that, due to the communal ties that exist in rural settings, this individualised perception of education that is gaining prominence also starts to spread amongst peers, families and the community more generally. According to a local governmental official from Kyabirwa:

> "If your perspective is to say education is about bringing the skills and then getting the white-collar jobs – which are in the urban setting and not in the rural setting – then they think the system is doing well. For the people in school who have managed and then gone to urban settings, others in the community feel like 'yeah, I think that is the best way and I need to work hard'" (xxxiii; male govt official from Kyabirwa)

As such, the perception of education as a means to obtain white-collar jobs, which are largely found in urban centres, is part of a wider cultural message. In addition, it has come to shape collective sentiments that exist around the role of education in community life. Importantly, obtaining these jobs or moving in the hope of doing so, relates to how young people construct their identity and the expression of ambition or 'heightened' aspiration. With the fear of staying being equated with failure, a large proportion of youth seem to feel a mobility imperative arising within community life – and intensified by their experiences of education – that equates moving with a level of success and achievement.

Others have started to question this increasingly dominant narrative on the role of education in Budondo, with one youth asking: “why is it that most of the youth who go to school seem to no longer want to stay in their communities?” (lxxxii; male youth from Bujagali). As the next section will seek to illustrate further, the systems of formal education in rural Jinja are arranged in a way that has often weakened ties with their local community and expects – both explicitly and implicitly – that a “better future is on the other side”. In this context, the urban bias that permeates these perceptions embeds a mobility imperative in rural educational experience. The next section considers the formation of migration aspirations of young adults as it relates to these educational experiences in the broader context of rural livelihoods.

5.4 Migration-through-Education: Aspirations in Budondo

The final part of this chapter is concerned with the aspirations that youth develop through formal education in rural Jinja, which can be considered a core feature of Budondo’s “emigration environment” (Carling 2002, p. 13). Understanding the emergence, persistence and non-linear formation of the migration aspirations of young adults necessitates consideration of the environments in which youth aspirations are continually (re)formed. While research has argued that the desire for educational advancement can serve as a strong driver for youth out-migration as they seek out vehicles of modern accomplishment and success (Gina Crivello 2011), this thesis has been examining the ways in which the aspiration to stay or to leave is shaped by young adult’s experience of education in Budondo.

Building on empirical accounts concerning the role of education in shaping the aspiration to migrate (Schewel and Fransen 2018; Rao and Patil 2022), this thesis utilises the term “migration-through-education” as a way of capturing the attempt to understand the educational experiences of rural youth and their efforts to navigate their important decisions concerning place, identity and purpose.

As previously discussed, the aspiration to migrate is a window into understanding how mobility and immobility are part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2013). Migratory aspirations are intimately bound to the broader life aspirations and connected to a set of interrelated capabilities that are rooted in a particular socio-cultural context (de Haas 2014). Through a series of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, this research shows how mobility aspirations have, at times, become a response to the challenges posed by the education system itself. When the education system has been focused on studying theoretical concepts

without opportunities to apply their knowledge, then youth have expressed the frustration that, upon graduation, they are released into a world for which they feel unprepared.

In response to this perceived lack of opportunities in rural areas, many young people choose to migrate to urban centres or even consider working abroad. Mobility is thus viewed as an expression of agency, a way to seek better prospects and escape the limitations of rural life. One civil society actor describes some of the comments and thoughts he has encountered in this regard:

> "You find that someone has been pumped with a lot of theories for a long time and then after that says: 'I don't know how to apply this knowledge in real life situations, which is the reality in Budondo.'

This concern with enhancing abstract theoretical models and the inability to consider its relevance to life in Budondo is thus a critical element of the way in which migration-through-education ferments. As he goes on to say:

> "This leads them to say 'maybe if I went to Kampala then maybe this would help me.' Then they find themselves in Kampala and they find that even in Kampala those that studied in Kampala they are also as confused as they are. In the end, there is nothing." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

As previously discussed, overly theoretical approaches to education as well as overly practical approaches to education each have several tangible implications in terms of the orientation of young people toward work, their own futures, and the future of rural life. This section goes further, claiming that education plays an important role in shaping the individual and collective aspirations that youth hold and the capabilities they develop in Uganda. As Appadurai (1996; 2004) argued, the aspirations that individuals form are part of systems of ideas that are rooted in cultural norms and shaped by ideological forces and institutional practices. Exploring the formation and operation of aspirations in this way offers further appreciation into the ways in which agency and structure interact and informs understanding of the drivers of migration in rural Jinja.

In light of the above, the chapter will conclude with exploration of the particular ways in which the aspiration to leave has emerged in the context of educational experience in rural Jinja.

Before doing so, it is important to acknowledge that it has been argued that migration theory has suffered from a "mobility bias" (Schewel 2019, p. 328). Thus, examination of rising migration aspirations in any given setting represents but one side of the mobility coin and efforts to understand processes of immobility and the aspiration to stay have come to be recognised as an important dimension of any meaningful analysis in determining why people do, and *do not,* decide to migrate. In this context, rather than treating the aspiration to stay as a tag on to the assessment of rising migration aspirations, the aspiration to stay – the other side of the mobility coin – will be considered in more detail in chapter 7, in light of some emerging themes regarding the characteristics of educational processes that deepen rural relationships.

Aspirations to Leave & the Role of Education

Migration aspirations are not simply about where you are, but *who* you believe yourself to be (Carling and Schewel 2018). This conception of identity is, thus, not fixed but continually reconstituted in the "thick of social life" (Appadurai 2004, p. 10). During the research, one of the primary themes that informed perspectives on how youth were navigating questions of identity related to engagement in work, and in particular agricultural activity, a theme that will be considered in more depth at a later point. Here, one youth planning to leave Budondo expressed the question of identity in the following manner:

> "If you are going to become a farmer that is when you can stay in the village and start thinking about what you are going to do there. But if you went to school and studied, say, computer science, there is no way you are going to do that in the village. Maybe you want to set up your own company and stuff like that but that means you have to go away from the village to look for a job like that.

As expressed, the close relationship between school experience, labour opportunities and how youth come to view their own identity in the village impacts the emergence of aspirations to leave. As she goes to say:

> "They look for the better future and we expect to get the better future on the other side. To also be more exposed and the more you get exposed the wiser you become. You find out you can do so many different things so I think that is why most people move away." (x; female youth from Bujagali)

This perspective offers three important components for conceptualising the aspiration to leave rural Jinja. Firstly, by illustrating who youth want to be as central to where they envision their futures, migration aspirations to leave the rural setting are often connected to broader narratives on the place of agriculture and the future of the farmer in modern society, a theme that has been considered in chapter 3 and will be discussed in empirical detail in chapter 6. Secondly, the educational experiences of youth are a central feature in determining the relevance and applicability of the acquired skills and knowledge to rural life, and as such play an important role in either strengthening or weakening the connection to rural place. And finally, it is suggested by this participant that, in addition to new skills and abilities, the educational experiences of young people play a significant role in informing their very conceptions of the good life that permeate conversations amongst young people. These conceptions, that wisdom and opportunity reside elsewhere, are intensified in formal education and often result in rising migration aspirations.

According to a youth leader from Bujagali, the nature of the challenge is clear, and the concrete perceptions that form amongst youth exposed to formal educational experience is hard to challenge:

"It is quite challenging. As you have stated, there are very many youth and even those above youth, they want to go to work. Because they have seen the example of those who have gone and comes back and is something very different and very unique... it looks quite hard now to tell that person 'don't go, remain here'. They may not have land and may not have anything and believe the only option now is to go and work abroad. So it is for that reason that it is quite hard for those youth who get the opportunity to go. (xxiv; male youth leader from Bujagali)

As such, the real nature of the challenge should not be underplayed. As expressed by this participant, the idea that opportunities reside elsewhere is far from a complete fabrication – structures of global inequality reinforce this experience and perpetuate this view, with narrow opportunities for youth in the rural setting a stark reality. The perceptions amongst youth in formal education is thus a formidable challenge, with many youth viewing the opportunity structures in rural Jinja as inadequate. This perception of inadequate opportunity is reinforced by another youth from Kyabirwa:

“I think if there were job opportunities in the village then people would like to stay there. But because they do not have that opportunity then they cannot get more exposed and that is why they decide to go over on the other side, where there are more opportunities. You find in a country like Uganda - you find that Kampala is a capital city - it is where everyone wants to go - so many businesses around there. Everyone wants to put his or her own business in Kampala. No one wants to invest their business” (xxxii; female youth from Kyabirwa)

According to another youth who had reached secondary school, he shared experiences of himself and his siblings progressing to varying levels of senior education, with the support of their parents. Despite reaching different points in their education, he described the challenge that “none of us have skills for any jobs”. In this way, while the discourse on “skilling” is discussed at a later point in the thesis, this is representative of a general tension amongst growing groups of youth, adults and institutions.

“We are just bouncing around but hear that outside Uganda you can get a job. If I get a chance and go outside then maybe I will at least earn something. When I come back it can then make me develop within other areas.” (xxix; male youth from Kyabirwa)

These perceptions and expressions of dissatisfaction permeated a large proportion of interactions with youth in rural Jinja. While identifying the nature of the challenge, they often expressed uncertainty at what was possible and how. Such perspectives are in contrast to other perceptions of youth participants in this research, some of whom have experienced other forms of rural education or received additional educational support. Some of these youth described that navigating the decisions amongst rural youth about whether or not to migrate suggested a more direct link between an urban-oriented curriculum and the aspiration to leave:

> “Sincerely, I look at this curriculum. I would say the reason why people move from the village to town is the design of the curriculum. The curriculum trains you to look for an opportunity.

Expressed evocatively, this youth outlined that rather than *simply* the reduction of opportunity in the village, it is actually the way in which education is structured and experienced in Kyabirwa had a direct impact on how we perceive opportunity, as well as the process of

deciding to migrate. He goes on to describe the subtle ways in which these perceptions of opportunities are cultivated in formal schooling in rural Jinja:

> "That is why after three years they will teach you things like, how to create a CV, that means you are writing for somebody. They will tell you the professional ethics - you have to dress smart, you have to give a good first day impression. If you meet people in an interview, they tell you how to do it. As if you are going somewhere! This is not how we get work in the village. Sincerely, the curriculum prepares us to go somewhere. That means the curriculum is designed for us [in the village] to move." (xliv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

Using the term 'curriculum' to denote educational experience more generally, the reflections conveyed by this participant about how youth are trained to prepare for the future are related to a vision of where they should aspire to 'end up'. As such, while preparation for job interviews and the ways in which one conducts oneself in the workplace can be seen as normal features of educational preparation, these preparations are at odds with the reality of opportunities that do exist in Budondo and the kind of preparation that may be needed in relation to agriculture, education, tourism, or other forms of local business. This disconnect illustrates well the urbanised emphasis of the educational experience in rural settings. Often as a result of the absence of context-sensitivity design, this implicit dimension of the educational experience is a central point when considering the aspiration to migrate, with the subtlety of these experiences often more impactful on youth mindsets due to the unconscious engagement with a seemingly neutral part of school life. For another female youth engaged in local business, this connection between education and the aspiration to leave is deeply connected to a wider cultural context:

> "If you come here in the morning and say: I am giving out 1 million dollars to every youth to set up a business in Budondo, anywhere he wants and you also say: I am also here to give air tickets to England you will see the line for the air tickets will be longer than the line for 1 million dollars! [laughs]"

In extending the significance of the curriculum on the aspiration to move, the subtle thought experiment provided by the participant here seeks to demonstrate how, even if the markers of

rational choice economic theory were the only ones to be applied, mobility – with less economic gain – would still be the preferred option.

> "So naturally, people want to move. It would be very few of us who would say, no, give me 1 million dollars. Somehow it is the curriculum that designs us to move" (xxiii; female youth leader from Bujagali)

This perspective offers a compelling case for enquiring into the social and cultural context in which migration aspirations are formed, the ways in which migration is often about identity rather than economic utility and shows the role of decontextualised education in shaping the aspiration to leave.

However, the connection between education and the aspiration to leave is not only implicit. According to one youth, the connection between education and the aspiration to leave has become increasingly explicit in recent years.

> "What the school teaches is: 'please, after here you should run for jobs'. But the jobs are in towns. They have never told us: 'please, after here go and set up a job'. They only tell you to go and look for jobs, they don't tell you go and create jobs. They teach us to be job-seekers and that makes most of the youth after studying to think they must run to towns and to cities to hunt for jobs. You know I feel it is very bad. The ones who stay in villages they are the school-dropouts. They say in the villages there is no future" (xxxvi; male youth from Kyabirwa)

As discussed previously, this perspective touches on the ways in which formal education experiences have emphasised job-seeking rather than job-creating pathways. When youth are primarily taught to seek jobs in urban settings, the narrative of expanded horizons shapes the aspirations of the youth, encouraging them to search for, as one civil society actor described it, "a utopia which they do not find". Oversimplified considerations of merit, agency and the structural constraints on opportunity in rural settings can funnel the discourse into well-worn debates around brain-drain in rural communities and the need for entrepreneurial activity amongst youth, both of which underestimate the role of the community and the institutions in fostering conditions that enable individual volition. Notwithstanding, the vision of education supporting creative engagement with work in rural settings can be understood as nurturing

transformative agency (Correa and Murphy-Graham 2019), a concept that views structure and agency as mutually constitutive and views their reciprocal development as central to a holistic vision for the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of rural life.

To illustrate the ways in which limited orientations toward work and scepticism toward local opportunities emerges from educational experience, one local youth provided the example of participating in a business course at school and the subtle ways in which mathematical examples shape perspectives on what is required:

> "Take business and commerce. In school they give you examples, such as someone had 7 million Ugandan shillings, then had a business of 2 or 3 million, then got a loan of 20 million. At the end of the course you move outside, having it in mind that for me to open up a business I must have many millions because all the examples they have given you have been in millions.

While the emergence of migration aspirations is more likely to be associated with – rather than directly caused by – such examples, the perspective offered by this participant demonstrates how the perception that significant financial resources are necessary to avail of local opportunities can emerge – a comment made several times in a number of interviews and informal interactions during my research. These unrealistic sums of money mean that many youth express the view realistic and meaningful opportunity is to be found in the city. As he goes on to say:

> But when you look at practical examples, those who are rich have begun small. They began when they had nothing. Our curriculum then is teaching a student something else. If you hear something regularly in your mind, then it becomes the order of the day. So someone will sit at home and say if I don't have 50 million then I cannot fulfil my plans. This is what we have been studying. We get it from our education." (xxi; male youth from Bujagali)

This pragmatic assessment offers a slightly nuanced perspective on the emergence of migration aspirations. Rather than suggesting youth are attracted to the glamour of the city, a view that was also expressed by youth, the dominant sentiment that emerged from unstructured and semi-structured interviews, as well as in conversations on transect walks and in family homes, was that youth were aware of the challenges associated with moving to urban centres but, as

expressed by one participant, despite the difficulties "it is better than not working here" (viii; female youth from Bujagali). As such, the desire amongst youth to utilise their energy – and their discomfort with "sitting idle" (viii) in the village – coalesced into mediated aspirations to migrate, framed as a strategy to raise capital to invest in land back in the village – a common household approach that has been pursued by many and capitalised by institutions who offer precious work, both locally but also in the Persian Gulf.

Finally, closely associated with rising migration aspirations and rural education is the vision articulated by youth for their own future and that of the two adjoining villages of Bujagali and Kyabirwa. With varying levels of hope and concern for the future, youth highlighted the importance of re-thinking the education system and its role in shaping youth aspirations, particularly in relation to future-making and rural development. From the perspective of a local youth engaged in local business, the educational system offers a chance for a better future if it is able to combat the forces of individualism and competition:

> "It [the future] depends, now, on the education system of our country. If you put all that is there in education, then for sure these learners will become important for themselves and for their community. But when somebody goes to school, they look at those people in higher places, how much they earn, when somebody looks at somebody with a posh car, houses, and all that, then they ask: 'what do these people do to get these things?' Now the attitude is: 'what am I doing now to get a benefit at the end, for myself'?" (xliv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

As such, these perspectives that exist within and beyond education come to shape the individual and collective aspirations of youth in Budondo and point to the importance of considering the role of education in shaping a sense of purpose and social consciousness. In building on this perspective, another resident who works for a local development organisation emphasises the importance of asking fundamental questions about the educational system if it is to deliver on its many promises in the future. This perspective recognises the challenges facing the educational system and feels such exploration can build a durable vision for the future of rural Jinja and its potential in supporting youth who aspire toward meaningful livelihoods. As he describes:

> "All of us who are concerned about development, whether in rural or urban settings, need to re-think the nature, content and delivery of the education that people are going through. We can begin to ask some fundamental questions and maybe those questions could actually lead to drastic changes. There is a fear to depart from what we are used to as we are not sure of what we expect but somehow it can be better to explore rather than just remain somewhere and be content with all these challenges" (xxxix; male NGO worker from Kyabirwa)

When thinking about the future, other youth articulated relative disinterest in the future of Budondo, with a plan for their own migration and the view that it will only succeed if it: (i) becomes swept up in the urban spread from Jinja town; and (ii) mechanises the majority of its agricultural production processes. This more sceptical view on the durability of rural life is part of a set of well-worn ideas on modernisation that dismisses the importance of local context and utilises the West's pathway to material progress and industrialisation as its marker for development (Rostow 1959). However, despite the rising migration aspirations and concerns expressed on the educational systems capacity to nurture meaningful relationships between youth and rural place, two educational organisations offered a more hopeful outlook on the future of the village and the changing aspirations amongst rural youth:

> "In this program youth are learning to work together in the context of agriculture. So I hope in some five years to come we shall have less youth that feel forced to migrate from villages to towns. With time, in Budondo that margin is going to be narrowed. The villages will also develop - we shall have an understanding of each other, unity at hand, and so we shall have a village which is so good and a community that is fine. I pray that it continues that way." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

For this youth worker, migration aspirations have the potential to evolve in light of a changing economic, social and cultural environment that redefines what youth have reason to value and where they feel they can give expression to their aspirations. This glimpse of hope for the future of Budondo is a common theme amongst those connected to alternative educational programmes. By highlighting the potential for positive rural transformation that is driven by youth empowerment, education, and the recognition of local resources and opportunities, another organisation suggested that the possibilities for realising the changing aspirations of rural youth will also expand:

> “I think there is great potential for Budondo. As more people go to school, they actually get to appreciate that there is a lot here and they can help with the knowledge they are gaining. With growing internet usage - even in rural areas most youth have WhatsApp and social media - I see that the community will change. With more education, this community can change.

With hope in a long-term perspective, those connected to youth challenge the deficit discourse surrounding rural life and envision Budondo as a rural sub-county of possibility and promise. As she goes on to say:

> “The brother to my friend studied urban farming - he's into vegetable growing and I buy things from him as I don't have a garden here. To have such individuals here - in ten years they will stand as a pillar for this village. I see more of them coming and having more people like that makes me think Budondo will be a big place.” (xxv; female NGO worker from Bujagali)

As raised by this coordinator, technological advancement in the rural space has already become a dominant question for youth. Bound to a set of values, modern technological development is to be welcomed in connecting rural settings to the different parts of the world. In addition, however, the role of the media is well-documented in how it shapes the perceptions and aspirations of the youth, and the changing social media landscape in the context of rural-urban transformations represents an important area of continued research.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has explored the relationship between community identification, perceptions of education and rising migration aspirations amongst youth in rural Jinja. By drawing on the perspectives of youth, community leaders, district officials and civil society actors, the chapter has illustrated the contested nature of education in Budondo. While widening access to education has ensured higher enrolment in rural Uganda, it is important to consider what role education has taken on in the cultural context of Budondo, how rural youth make sense of their educational experience as they navigate their futures, and the implications it may have on their future trajectories.

The central argument advanced in this chapter is that the urban dreamscape that emerges within formal education has come to play an important role in how youth conceptualise their futures outside of Budondo, as well as the capabilities that they develop. Even if it is uncertain that such a reality will be realised, this portrayal of an urban landscape – and its corresponding rural malaise – can appeal to youth who are invested in that dream, or have lost hope in their current reality.

Conceptualising youth agency in this context offers nuanced insight into how educational experiences and migration aspirations interact in rural Jinja. As this chapter has demonstrated, while youth face structural challenges through their experiences of formal education the choices and hopes they form are not slaves to school. Interrogating and contextaulising aspirations and capabilities strengthens this analysis by ensuring it neither overemphasises structural or individualistic explanations on the interconnections that exist between formal education in Budondo and the emergence of migration aspirations.

While this chapter has considered the emergence of migration aspirations, it should be stated clearly that such analysis does not seek to problematise or reduce internal migration. Rather, the focus of this thesis is to understand the educational experiences and rural conditions that lead to the emergence of migration aspirations, a concept that has been treated as a black-box of enquiry when it comes to migration theory. Any choice to migrate should be coupled with the choice to remain and avoiding the bifurcation of the migration discourse into "for" or "against" perspectives is essential in order to rigorously engage with the far-reaching implications of considering migration – and the capability to choose where to live – as part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2013).

As such, this chapter has illustrated that rising aspirations to migrate are connected to the perceptions of youth regarding the deficiency of capability enhancing opportunities in rural Jinja. Moreover, it has advanced the claim that migration is a meaningful way to explore structural-agentic processes that unfold in rural settings and utilised aspirations as a helpful window into understanding the role of formal education in shaping individual and collective purpose. The following chapter will place this consideration of the migration-education nexus within key communal narratives that were analysed from a set of tools related to participatory research and outline the importance of the capability approach in this regard. Chapter 7 will then turn its attention to some potential features of alternative education in rural settings that

nurture transformative agency (Bajaj 2009) and bears relevance to the aspiration to stay (Schewel 2020).

CHAPTER 6

Youth Rural Livelihoods: Sketching Local Narratives of Prosperity

“Those who are crocodiles in the village

do not wish to be lizards in the city”

Frank

6.1 Introduction

Gaining a deeper understanding of migration in its diverse forms relies on exploring its connection to broader processes of social transformation. Migration is both a cause and consequence of this transformation (Castles 2013) and concentrating analysis of the migration-education nexus in the cultural context of Budondo illustrates the diverse ways in which future-oriented livelihood decisions are shaped by processes of (im)mobility. This chapter describes, from the perspective of its inhabitants, the broader processes of development underway in rural Jinja and its relevance to the migration-education nexus. This is accomplished in two ways. Firstly, a narrative typology is suggested to understand the conceptions of change, transformation, and livelihoods from the perspectives of participants in the research. Based on mixed qualitative methods employed during my fieldwork, four narratives are identified, contextualised, substantiated, and explored in this chapter. Secondly, these narratives are used to inform a perspective on livelihoods in the rural settings that relates to capability expansion and development in the context of the migration-education nexus.

As a means for understanding the spatial implications associated with education and development, the thesis outlines four key narratives that have been developed during my fieldwork research with young adults in rural Jinja. These are categorised as: (i) *an identity narrative*; (ii) *a development narrative*; (iii) *an agrarian narrative*; and (iv) *a modernity narrative*. These narratives aim to capture layers of insight, concerns and aspirations held by

rural inhabitants in relation to their perceived opportunity structures in the two villages of Bujagali and Kyabirwa located in the Budondo, a sub-county of Jinja district.

In addition to drawing on participants' perspectives relating to these four broad narratives, the chapter considers the context, resources, strategies and outcomes of the research participants, drawing primarily on wealth ranking, focus groups and participant observation notes. Importantly, considerable attention is given to the tensions and debates concerning the agrarian economy in the context of modernisation, and the connection of younger generations to this central activity in Uganda.

6.2. Narratives of Rural Prosperity

The rural space is a milieu of diverse interactions. Against visions of a modern world, however, it is often seen as a vacant site for the experimentation of competing ideas and practices. This global tendency is founded on a brand of modernisation whose modus operandi is increasing productive capacity primarily through processes of industrialisation (Irwin 1975; Arbab 2000). Aggressively pursued in the name of economic growth, these approaches have placed the city as the locus of expansion, with the gross domestic product of a country and its rates of urbanisation often used as metrics for tracking progress. For Uganda, the dynamics of rural life remain persistent and relevant to the majority of its inhabitants, with 84% of its population still residing in rural settings (USAID 2020). However, projections continue to suggest that Africa's "future is urban" (Aucoin and Bello-Schünemann 2016, p. 1; Pozhidaev 2020). This poses a problematic: if the future is indeed urban, what then, is the fate of Uganda's villages? What are the perspectives of rural inhabitants on these ideas, practices, and trends? And how does this inform their orientation to the past, perceptions of the present and hopes for the future?

It is with these questions in mind that the transformation of rural livelihoods in Jinja is considered in relation to the migration-education nexus, as articulated by the overarching research question of this thesis. Understanding transformation is bound to the historical, cultural, and personal narratives of its inhabitants. To this end, this chapter utilises narratives, not as a meta-device for broad sweeping analysis, but as a way of understanding the broader forces of transformation from psychological, emotional, and personal perspectives of the residents of Bujagali and Kyabirwa in Budondo, Jinja. Rather than conducting an isolated analysis of historical events, these four key narrative themes are utilised to ground the dynamics

of transformation in local perspectives and to place the aspirations and capabilities of youth within a broader tapestry of meaning and culture amongst the inhabitants of rural Jinja.

Utilising narratives in this way build rests on strong intellectual footing. In his seminal work *After Virtue,* for instance, Alasdair MacIntyre describes the role of communal narratives in situating individual and collective sense-making within relevant social, political and cultural histories:

> "Living traditions, just because they continue a not-yet completed narrative, confront a future whose determinate and determinable character, so far as it possesses any, derives from its past" (MacIntyre 1984, p. 223)

Narratives form a bridge between the past and the future, both of which inform the ways in which individuals, communities and institutions navigate the present. They play a role in understanding struggles, plans, intentions, and hopes in local contexts (Hardy 1968). MacIntyre explains how communal narratives facilitate a more nuanced and rooted understanding of the individual and collective practices that come to be valued in any given setting, stating that "it is because we live out narratives in our lives… that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others" (p. 212).

Narratives thus provide a helpful framing for understanding the rural and urban transformations of Jinja, as well as the ways in which these transformations relate to the migration-education nexus. Beyond simply the description of a sequence of events, they can be marked by an array of themes, intentions, and questions. This chapter suggests the four narratives identified offer an original reflection of how youth, families and community leaders grapple with the important elements of rural livelihoods in Jinja. However partial, it underscores the centrality of the community's day-to-day sentiments in shaping, understanding, and directing their socio-economic trajectories.

While a broad coherence should exist between themes, the approach adopted in this thesis allows for contradiction and tension, thereby assisting in overcoming overly simplistic depictions of transformation from a particular ideological standpoint. In the same vein, the shifts in rural livelihoods in Jinja are outlined not in absolute terms, but as one version and interpretation of the communal quest for meaning and prosperity.

It is important to note that the term *narratives of prosperity* can be mistaken for prosperous narratives -- that is, narratives that illustrate examples of prosperity in rural Jinja. Despite the potential for such misunderstanding to arise, the term *narratives of prosperity* is utilised for the following two reasons: first, to demonstrate the developments, disagreements, tensions and questions that are bound by a common aim: enhancing individual and collective livelihoods in rural Jinja; and second, to counter the "typical rural deficit discourse" (Corbett 2016, p. 270) that has already been problematised throughout this thesis. With descriptions and projects focused on rural livelihoods so often concerned with "fixing" problems or "alleviating" poverty, the rural space discourse frequently becomes pathological in its approach. Moving beyond a paradigm that focuses solely on diagnosing problems and dispensing solutions is a long-term process but has implications for the use of language. In this thesis, it is suggested that adopting a perspective of possibility does not mean failing to acknowledge the very real challenges faced by the rural space. Rather, framing grounded experiences in the context of *narratives of prosperity* in rural Jinja seeks to widen the metrics of development, centralise the lives of these spaces in the discussion, situate the migration-education nexus within broader themes, and, ultimately, to align with a discourse of hope and possibility.

6.3 Identity Narrative

One key narrative that found expression during my fieldwork research in rural Jinja concerned the expression of individuality, and how this relates to the opportunities, constraints, experiences, and aspirations that shape the very conception of youth identity in Budondo. "Who I am", "what I do", and "why", are thus impacted by a broader story about the past and the present, and surrounding beliefs about what constitutes a meaningful future. Socio-cultural factors, the role of the family, the influence of expectation and the weight to be accorded to individual talents amidst collectivist culture all emerged as relevant to the narrative surrounding identity and aspiration in rural Jinja. At its heart, however, participants expressed how the promises and experiences of education were fundamental to how youth, children, families and even entire communities come to see themselves and others in the context of rural livelihoods.

Educational (Under) Achievement & Aspiration

One element of the *identity narrative* is the way in which aspiration is utilised and understood. As outlined in chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis, the use of aspirations has drawn on the work of Appadurai (2004), amongst others, to engage the socio-cultural reality of rural Jinja and interrogate the interplay of structure and agency in that context. However, despite this nuanced philosophical basis in some circles, aspirations have also been used as a mechanism for heightening individual responsibility in neoliberal development discourse. For instance, Best (2017) and Pimlott-Wilson (2015) both describe how aspirations have become the primary instrumental tool often used by neoliberal ideology in order to place the virtues of individualism and competition centre-stage. In a neoliberal context, aspirations become narrowly defined in terms of material success and individual achievement. The goal for raising aspirations, as Pimlott-Wilson (2015) describes, is for the neoliberal future-making citizen to become enterprising, self-sufficient, and employment-securing. With responsibility placed on the individual to 'aspire', and consequent expectations placed on education to raise aspirations, these values become defined by their material nature. One outcome of this wider ideological context is how identity becomes defined by a particular idea of what it means to aspire and the contextual pressures that inform youth perspectives on worthwhile ambition. To be ambitious, in this framework, means to rationally – and relentlessly – pursue material markers of success. As a result, this conception of aspiration relates to narrow perspectives on achievement, where the hegemonic vision of the globalized world insists that an individual must learn to function independently (Corbett 2016).

Interestingly, several interviews with rural youth expressed the ways in which aspiration is intertwined with the concept of being a good citizen. According to one youth who dropped out two years before graduating from secondary school:

> "People want to get an education to be civilised, to be able to read and understand, and not to be associated with those in the bush (rural life)... The illiterate are considered backward." (xc; female youth from Kyabirwa)

That being civilised relies on a good education was expressed numerous times and a central part of the *identity narrative*. That education is a civilising force implies a conception of education that is bound to perceptions on the role of education in Uganda, not only in economic

terms, but also regarding the perception of education as a moral force and a remnant of coloniality. Packaged as part of material standards, one youth remarked how increasing his knowledge, prospects and ambition through education had "provided" him "with anything [he] wants". On the other side of this conversation, many youth expressed concern when describing the circumstances of groups of youth in the village, who spend their time "on alcohol and loitering". Again, many expressed this backwardness as a lack of ambition and education. For one youth who had recently returned from Qatar, the problem was clear:

> "You will find by the Bujagali Falls, some youth who are doing nothing. They have a lack of education, because they didn't take it serious, they have problems in the future... if you don't have knowledge then it is not possible. There are many problems amongst the youth". (lxxv; male youth from Bujagali)

In the Ugandan context, the worth of an individual, their societal standing, and potential for future success are closely tied to their educational experiences. While education has always been championed, this shift in perspective indicates that education is a litmus test for someone's success and seen as a prerequisite for respect and societal standing. According to one parent in Kyabirwa, although the perception of education has changed, there has also been a shift in expectation.

> "Uganda has changed as a country. Before you did not have to be educated, you could get anything. But now, Uganda is for the educated people, there's nothing you can do you if you do not have the papers". (lxix; male youth from Bujagali)

As such, the aspiration to be "educated" becomes more than just about gaining knowledge; it's about proving oneself and, often, distancing oneself from the supposed "backwardness" of rural life. Moreover, the value of possessing proof of educational qualifications, or "papers", reinforces the *identity narrative* insofar as they symbolise a ticket to opportunities and a move away – both physically and symbolically – of what is deemed "backward".

This strong inclination towards education in the context of identity is not just about social validation; it is also rooted in perceptions and expectations of routes to economic stability. To ensure personal well-being and allow individuals to provide for themselves is a conception of identity that conforms to neoliberal conceptions of aspiration, with associated feelings of shame

and inadequacy inculcated in those who are unable – or unwilling – to comply (Best 2017). Education has thus become the touchstone of one's moral worth and, as suggested in chapter 5, the pathway out of poverty, despite the conflicting experiences youth have faced.

Closely related to the status and expectations of formal education is the way in which talents are part of the *identity narrative*. Historically, focus on talent individuality was not felt to be a feature of importance in Budondo's cultural context, with one elder commenting that "before we would just do what we could" and lamenting that youth now feel like they "need quick fixes… when they start something, the following day there must be results". As such, the interplay between hard-work, collective commitment and identifying individual interests and talents is part of generational dynamics and constitutes an ongoing conversation in the culture of modern-day Budondo. For many youth, the description of their own talents as part of their identity was often seen as rooted in who they are, and expressing frustration at the lack of institutional support – educationally or otherwise – in nurturing those inherent dimensions of their characters. For one youth, this frustration expressed itself in her concern with the educational system, noting that many people who are very capable struggle to fit into a narrow mould of what it means to be educated:

> "Education should help you to do what you are good at. But not in Uganda, there are many compulsory subjects and you don't have any choice. So many of my friends told me they wanted to but could not continue. It can be so challenging." (lxx; male youth from Bujagali)

Again, education is perceived as the central way through which one's individuality can be expressed, particularly through the development of talents inherent to one's character. For another youth with a particular interest in football, this posed similar challenges:

> "For them, they were interested in the school performing well in exams, not promoting talents… My wish was at least to play at national school level but my school was not promoting the talents. Yeah, so that one led to me to not be happy in my heart, because at least I wanted to push my talents ahead." (ii; male youth from Bujagali)

For many, the absence of support in nurturing talents in formal education is a problem. Interestingly, while this perspective points to dissatisfaction with an educational system that

prioritises academic success over the nurturing of diverse skills, it is also an noteworthy feature of how the *identity narrative* has changed in two generations. With aspirational discourse emphasising individual responsibility, what it now means to be a good citizen in Budondo is different to before, and developing one's inherent talents are increasingly part of how youth currently express their circumstances. For those unhappy about this, they point to the erosion of community-oriented values, suggesting that it is preoccupied with self-fulfilment and in the words of the well-known work of historian Christopher Lasch (2018), fostered a "culture of narcissism". On the other side, however, it is well-established that certain versions of collectivism can become suffocating, failing to account for legitimate individual expression of individuality (in contrast to unfettered individualism) (Cagan 1978; Hui and Trandis 1986; O'Boyle 2014). Regardless of the particular conclusion reached, what does become clear from this dimension of the *identity narrative* is that for better or worse, individual talent is now part of the lexicon and aspirational values of many young people, and failure to engage meaningfully with this aspect of identity leads to discontent amongst youth in rural Jinja.

Family Networks

Amidst these overarching aspirations and the place of individuality, another key feature of the *identity narrative* concerns one's responsibilities toward their nuclear and extended family. Simultaneously seen as a source of support and expectation, responsibility toward one's family tradition came through clearly. At the same time, the hope for youth to surpass the difficulties faced by previous generations was evident. These responsibilities are complex, and as discussed in chapter 5, even seemingly individual acts of youth migration are often partially connected to the household strategy for diversifying sources of income and reducing risk. The following extract taken from my participant observation notes describes the tensions many of the youth navigate.

> "I spent time with Michael today by the Source of the Nile in Bujagali. As always it was interesting to get to know each other better and to hear about his girlfriend who is living in Canada. We continued our conversation from last time on the possibility of him leaving Budondo, and how he wants to use his education in a way that is more specialised. He is still figuring it out. Today I felt our relationship was strong enough that I could ask him more challenging questions about the implications of moving on: (a) his family and (b) on the risks associated with moving (he has friends in the city and

abroad, and some news stories are coming back from the Gulf about the human rights abuses that youth are experiencing).

On both topics he was strikingly clear. If the (perceived) opportunities were in Bujagali he would prefer to stay. "When my parents die they will be buried here," he said. "How could I not want to be close to them? But I need to work, I do not want to sit here doing nothing. When I sit here doing nothing I feel like the body is becoming weak. It is better to be there than to be idle here, doing nothing."

I could feel the tension in his body and words and we discussed what he hopes for the future. It is complex: I have noticed especially with institutional officials that youth are often positioned as the problem in this question of rural futures, but very little time is spent trying to understand what they are thinking and feeling, and what additional mechanisms of support are required." (entry 4)

These notes illustrate the connection to family networks, the legitimate desire for youth to use their energies, and how this informs the *identity narrative* in rural Jinja. Far from relegating family networks in decision-making processes, youth are searching out meaningful ways to reconcile their individual future-making endeavours with commitment to their family and community. As such, traditional – often illusory – attachments of "staying put" to help the family was less present in the *identity narrative*. Rather, there existed a burgeoning aspiration for distinctiveness and individuality, not just among the youth but also among many parents. They harbour hopes that their children will forge unique pathways, one that distances them from ancestral norms and promises a life of enhanced opportunities. This resonates with Gina Crivello's observations from Peru, where she highlighted the aspirations parents held for their children's futures, as contrasted with their own lived experiences. The metaphorical words of one parent in her research captures this dynamic well: "I walk in the fields with sandals… at least he will go with shoes if he gets a good head with education" (Crivello 2011, p. 18). These expressions reinforce the perception amongst youth and parents regarding the role of education in elevating one's social and economic standing in a way that facilitates distinction.

This element of the *identity narrative* was not absolute and, naturally, some youth expressed that family connection and parent perceptions varied in Budondo. For some youth, their parents were not able to support their children to obtain the education they wanted, largely due to the

inability to afford school fees, a reality that is exacerbated by the proliferation of private schooling and limited public schooling, despite government commitments to UPE and USE, as described in chapter 3. According to one youth who was able to reach Senior Level 3, and then had to drop out 1 year before graduating:

> "We also find the reality in the Budondo setting where a parent will openly tell you: "Ah, I just went to P1 - P4 and stopped. But I have still survived and still support my family. So, if you go to school, good. But if you don't then you are still OK as there are so many sugar cane plantations and factories around. If you can get a job there and you can survive then that is also well and good."" (lxxxv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

While some families have to make difficult financial decisions about which children can continue with school and which have to take on additional responsibilities of the household (or indeed migrate), the pragmatic view on parental support is also a feature of the *identity narrative* around family networks. Nevertheless, the overriding perspective expressed during my fieldwork related to family support to achieve distinction. One youth, Denis described the support and expectation he and his friends have experienced from their parents.

> "It is one of the slogans whereby my parents say, "we are old, since we are old we do not have much work to do. We did not go to school and cannot apply for white collar jobs." They say that living in the village means you cannot afford the town. They use themselves as a reference." (lxxxiv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

Denis remarked to me that it is "felt to be terrible" if an individual begins and ends life in the village. With the perspective that you are a "failure" or "school dropout", parents themselves are keen to emphasise the importance of education and the symbolic meaning associated with leaving the village. He went on to explain that:

> "Parents say: learn, get educated, go and associate with your fellow educated men and women who are working in towns… that is the purpose of the education we are giving you. We don't want you to be at the same level as us." (lxxxiv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

As such, the dual responsibilities toward one's family and the expectation that a youth will chart a path that was not available to their parents adds texture to the *identity narrative* in rural Jinja. Operating within the wider cultural context that weighs varying perspectives on tradition against modernity, needs against wants, and collective duty against individual expression, youth are navigating this terrain and striving to forge meaningful livelihoods that relate to the qualities, beliefs and portrayals that form one's identity, as well as the reasoning behind the future-oriented decisions that shape their livelihood prospects.

6.4 Development Narrative

The *identity narrative* relates to collective conceptions of progress in Budondo. As described in previous chapters, Uganda has been used as an example of 'successful' development globally, heavily backed by international financial institutions and with notable economic growth (Ssewanyana et al. 2011; Wiegratz et al. 2018).

The *development narrative* seeks to evaluate the scepticism, uncertainty and difficulties associated with top-down approaches of development, some versions of which have been described as subtle expressions of colonial legacies (Goldsmith 2014). In so doing, it gradually illustrates the experiences of participants that development is often something that someone (often white) does to a people in Budondo, and comes to introduce the relevant externalities and values associated with a Western model. In addition to generating the power and energy to resist the operation of such forces, the narrative itself unearths a series of tensions amongst youth and families in Jinja, who aspire for progress and to leave behind elements of the past that have seen incredible suffering for them and their families. The narrative does not seek to ask 'if' development should take place in Budondo, but seeks to understand, from the perspectives of the participants and spaces associated with this research, 'what' capability-enhancing development can look like, for 'whom' this development is considering, and in particular, the place of the migration-education nexus within that wider set of considerations.

To illustrate the way in which this narrative expressed itself during the empirical research, it is particularly value to highlight a few relevant historical points for Uganda, a country whose recent past has navigated the struggle for independence and various regimes of brutality. In light -- and partially as a result -- of these challenges, Uganda has pursued socio-economic development as the remedy for addressing the roots of its political insecurity. Protracted

conflict, in various guises, has a pronounced impact on the hopes and aspirations of a people and can often do much to influence decisions made about 'progress' more generally. As Rostow controversially argued in his "non-communist manifesto" (1990), with modern versions of the development project, economic progress is shifted from the realm of possibility to necessity. In the case of Uganda, growth was leveraged as the civilising mission that would repair a conflict-ridden country.

Since 1986, Uganda has witnessed major economic transformation, moving from a "failed state" to one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Sendi, Mayanja and Nyorekwa 2021, p.12). This emphasised the transformation from a 'peasant' economy to a 'modern', diversified, independent, self-sufficient industrialised economy that would bring about a middle-class based society. With this gradual move toward a neoliberal reform agenda in the name of development and progress, several Structural Adjustment Programmes were implemented in the late 1980's, and subsequently, increased privatisation, de-regulation, and public sector reform in the 1990's (Ssewanyana et al. 2011).

As such, the markers of development were narrowly defined and Uganda adapted, opening itself to considerable debt relief programmes, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPCI) in 1997, for which Uganda received two billion dollars in exchange for readjustments to its policies and programmes (Radebe 2011). On the basis of economic growth, Uganda established a perpetual cycle of debt relief, deregulations and increased GDP. Despite these figures, growing numbers in Uganda contested these developments, claiming that conditions were actually leading to higher levels of unemployment and underemployment, less safety and protections for those who do work (e.g. with the breakdown of cooperatives), claims of political corruption and a loss of important resources (such as land) to public and private enterprises (Henri 2019). Moreover, arguments have been made that these adjustments abandoned "pro-poor growth" (Kappel, Lay and Steiner 2005, p. 27), a concept that views growth not as an end in itself but within the context of poverty reduction and rural livelihoods.

While it is undeniable that there has been improvements in livelihood necessities, these criticisms bear relevance to life in Budondo. During my fieldwork research, the *development narrative* indicated a texture, tension, and scepticism completely at odds with Uganda's international success story. To begin, however, is to acknowledge this progress. From the perspective of a local chairperson, the development that rural Jinja has witnessed is notable.

> "Development has come. It is now different in Budondo. Some time back there were very few schools. You would have to move a distance, looking for where to study. Even trading centres are more safe and there is more available… you find that at least there is some improvement." (xxviii; male youth from Kyabirwa)

This sentiment was echoed by a number of youth, with one participant acknowledging differences and difficulties, but expressing that "you cannot develop everyone to the same level, at the same time". For an older parent, it was clear Budondo has changed quite significantly:

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> "I can say way back Budondo was not like this. Sincerely, we have developed. When I grew up there was no maize milling machine. But in Budondo we grow so much maize, it is the local food. We used to take it to other sub-counties but we now have some processing machines, some technologies. It is not at a faster speed, but we are shifting slowly by slowly." (xlv; female adult from Kyabirwa)

As such, with a sense that access to electricity and health facilities, an increasingly diverse labour market, technological developments, as well as diverse routes to education becoming increasingly available, the *development narrative* in Budondo contained within it a sense of progress.

While many participants acknowledged this progress, the fieldwork also illustrated several challenges that have arisen in the name of development. Through the proliferation of charities and the involvement of governmental and non-governmental agencies, Budondo has received considerable outside attention in the past few decades. The questions and concerns that have arisen from these developmental initiatives relate to the relevance of external knowledge and institutional support to community-driven development processes.

From the perspective of a different local chairperson in Budondo, one caution in relation to development endeavours is the manner in which the reality and needs of the population are understood.

> "Charities at times come to vulnerable societies. When the population grows, people develop several challenges… then there is a number of charities - you [white] people coming in. You know at times I appreciate those who come from outside. But at times we may look at something minor and think it is small, while someone may come from outside and think, 'oh that is a big problem'. So, someone will open up the charity not because the community has recognised the problem but because they have seen it as a big problem." (lvi; male govt. official from Budondo, Jinja)

With notable emphasis placed on white people embodying a "Western" approach to development, the observation about the ways in which problems are understood and identified represents a significant element of the *development narrative* in Budondo. Along similar lines, one youth expressed the separateness that these projects have from their lived realities.

> "I will talk about your charities. I will not say our charities. I will say your charities. Here in Budondo they come here with very good missions and objectives. People who lead them are like you [white]. But after teaching you some information, they will go. The one who came up with the charity has never come back, will never come back, and will never follow up. So, they will leave you in a quagmire - you are there, you are stuck! You don't know where to go - this way or back to my life." (xc; female youth from Kyabirwa)

It is not uncommon for external charities and development endeavours, especially in the former colonies of Sub-Saharan Africa, to consider their positionality in relation to the local community it purports to serve. Notwithstanding, some organisations encountered during my fieldwork research had explicit business motives, and others had been criticised for adopting a "white saviour" mentality in Budondo. For the majority of organisations, however, the question of participation of the village inhabitants in multi-institutional development interventions remains. Toward that end, some initiatives were engaged in an ongoing process of navigating "we" and "they" dichotomies. I suggest that these top-down approaches are largely driven by a lack of theoretical clarity on the parameters of the more general discourse amongst development practitioners. On one extreme, the desire to avoid paternalism associated with past development endeavours is clear, while on the other, glorifying cultural autonomy and isolationism in the name of participation is something to be avoided. One local educator expressed concern about certain approaches to development, describing the ways in which

charities "come to the community, see what is not available and put it there" (xcii; female NGO worker from Jinja).

Beyond the clear and valuable need for development endeavours to nurture meaningful participation and to sustain long-term commitment, this local educator describes a more subtle element of the *development narrative* concerning how issues are identified and addressed. While the 'inclusion' of rural inhabitants may be used as a simple catch-all solution to this challenge, there is growing disillusionment with the failures of this approach in practice. In light of my earlier suggestion that theoretical fogginess clouds the quality of action, it is worth briefly outlining the subtle patterns of thought that perpetuate this oft-cited challenge.

After World War II, when development economists began to promote growth in nations across the world, technical discussions on industrialisation, capital accumulation, and technology transfer became centre-stage, and some suggested categorising each country along five stages of economic growth (Rostow 1990; Arbab 2000). This approach to development has found expression in diverse contexts. It is suggested that the application of Western conceptions of rationality to solve problems of human processes underlies the approaches adopted by external development endeavours – albeit often unconscious or inadvertent. From the perspective of Denis Goulet (1977), this approach is embodied by the broader push toward technological transfer and adoption which, far more than simply "sharing know-how", results in emphasising Western conceptions of rationality and efficiency in rural livelihoods while failing to understand their livelihood patterns and internal logics of production.

This desire for problem-solving constitutes a technocratic approach quite different from Freire's (1970) notion of problematising as a critical element of consciousness raising. While development endeavours seek to address legitimate problems, the participants in this fieldwork describe their unease with the separateness that existed amongst many development initiatives they had encountered in Budondo. From Freire's perspective, problematising in development is about engaging an entire population in reading the totality of its surroundings, collectively generating symbols capable of creating critical consciousness, and empowering them to alter relations with nature and social forces. It is based on these conceptual ideas that new paradigms for participation thus emerge. This removes the inside-outside dichotomy and ensures rural inhabitants, rather than being left in the aforementioned "quagmire" where they are unsure of

their futures which are dependent on others, are empowered to develop transformative agency in the context of working toward vibrant rural livelihoods.

This theoretical context and the grounded perspectives show how the scepticism associated with external support was thus a central feature of *the development narrative* in Budondo. For one youth, the frustration was not simply the absence of ongoing support, but the external expectations and mental obstacles that such approaches facilitate.

> "One charity I remember had a group. They began the work but then they left. You know the bad thing is that they don't give you the explanation of how they work - so the group in Kyabirwa they did not know. If they had that knowledge they could at least try to continue… For the locals they are not open to new things anymore. Why? Because they say a mzungu [white foreigner] taught us like this" (lxxxv; male youth from Kyabirwa)

Building on this concern, another enduring impact articulated as part of the development narrative in Budondo concerned the re-shaping of expectations amongst local youth. According to one district official:

> "We have seen NGO's get to the communities, in so many ways they are saying they are promoting the well-being of our community, but the approaches are different. Some approaches are 'to give' money to start initiatives and build business around the youth. They think it is the solution and the youth are taken by that… they say "Ah, I will join these ones that give money for myself and not volunteer with others"" (lvi; male govt official from Jinja)

In describing another mental obstacle as the reluctance of youth to engage with organisations that do not facilitate "handouts", the efforts of organisations focused on raising capacity becomes challenging, where they struggle to establish ways to tap into deeper sources of motivation amongst the youth.

Importantly, some participants were keen to clarify that their scepticism toward development endeavours was not isolationist or self-determinate in outlook, with many acknowledging the

important role that external support can play in the advancement of a community. According to one local educator working with an organisation focused on capacity building:

> "Now, this doesn't mean that what's external doesn't contribute, but we must be conscious that there is a lot of knowledge that can be generated in the community. I think this is one of the questions we need to raise in the community, sometimes we tend to say 'modern' and 'traditional' knowledge. We are seeing how there is a dialogue between the two and it is connected to our own understanding of the community. We are beginning to collectively identify what is relevant and seeing how to apply it to address some issues." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Despite these concerns, two development organisations that I encountered in Budondo were conscious of these challenges and had an explicit focus on the role of local inhabitants. Rather than viewing residents in Budondo as merely beneficiaries of their programs, some employees expressed their view that development should be concerned with the development of capabilities. This capability-enhancing development was connected to a conviction that children, youth and adults in Budondo were able to generate and apply new knowledge relevant to the progress of their surroundings. The local coordinator of one educational organisation in Budondo described it in the following way:

> "If we are talking about rural development in all its dimensions, then we have to be thinking about how the youth can play a very important role. They are a reservoir of energy; they have a lot of potential and capacity that needs to be tapped for them to be able to contribute to the development of their communities. So then one thing we can say is this capacity is latent in them but for it to become useful then it has to be developed.

According to this perspective, a foundational starting point for local development initiatives is the perception held toward the very individuals that development purports to serve. With the view of latent capacity being closely associated with the idea of capability enhancing opportunities, this coordinator illustrates the conundrum that they face when grappling with the migration-education nexus in the context of development:

That raises the question: how can we develop the capacity of the youth for them to be able to support their communities? I think this is what the government is currently struggling with. We say the development of capacity is done through exposing youth to education… But some of the questions that we have been struggling to understand as an organisation that somehow works with the youth is: why is it that most of the youth who go to school seem not to want to stay in their communities? They go to school and develop their capacity, that capacity should assist them to advance but also for them to contribute to the development of their communities. Why is it that when they go to school there seems to be a disconnect between them and their communities? Especially those youth who are in the rural setting." (xxvi; female NGO worker from Bujagali)

The perspective articulated by a Ugandan educational coordinator illustrates the central conviction that poor material conditions are not associated with backwardness, a subtle mentality that development thought has had to shed since its global expansion. Taking these perspectives together, the *development narrative* amongst inhabitants in Budondo is intricate and complex, expressing a general sense that progress and development has occurred, raising concerns about some of the motives and approaches of particular development approaches and their long-term impact, and considering the broader purpose of development endeavours, be they international agencies, local organisations or government led-initiatives. This narrative indicates a broader relationship that individuals and institutional initiatives navigate as they consider the dynamics of their relationship and seek to overcome obstacles – both conceptual and systemic – that historically have led to mistrust and limited their harmonious interaction.

6.5 Agrarian Narrative

Over the course of my fieldwork, my encounters with the *development narrative* in Budondo became closely connected to the perceptions, practices and expectations associated with agrarian livelihoods. This was unsurprising, given the historical connections between development and agricultural activity in Uganda.

During the first two decades of the global development enterprise, as alluded to in the previous section, agricultural activity came to be seen as a waste of productive power that could be more effectively used in the processes of urban industrialisation (Mukwaya et al. 2012; Singh,

Earnest and Lample 2015). However, it was the same logic of production from these development endeavours that ushered in what has come to be known today as the Green Revolution (Cleaver 1972). This phenomenon adopted the central tenet of economic growth as the pivot of development policy, with agronomists like Norman Borlaug (1968) and economists like Theodore Schultz (1983) suggesting the productive potential of agriculture, insisting that large scale investment would be central to facilitating the modernisation of the "developing" regions of the world. The effects of this Revolution were felt most explicitly in Asia and Latin America, where new technologies were introduced, and the agricultural sector was deliberately integrated into the capitalist market. While the initial impact of the Green Revolution was muted in Sub-Saharan Africa, the legacies – and associated logic of enhancing crop yield per unit of land – cast a shadow over present agricultural systems and perceptions in Uganda.

As mentioned in chapter 3, agriculture is the most significant economic activity in Budondo, accounting for 25% of Uganda's GDP in 2022 (World Bank 2022), a figure that is much higher in a rural sub-county such as Budondo (before accounting for widespread practices of self-subsistence farming). Despite its centrality to the livelihoods in Budondo, there remains an ongoing tension between youth aspirations and agrarian livelihoods in the village. From the perspective of a youth engaged in smallholder farming on a plot of land in Bujagali, why youth do not see a future in agriculture was a source of confusion.

> "Sincerely, if you say the backbone of Uganda is agriculture then how can you say you don't see a future in the backbone? That's what I told you, people do not see opportunities around them. They need to be told opportunities are here." (xxiv; male youth leader from Bujagali)

Reinforcing the theme of spatial imaginaries as youth engage in future-making endeavours, one element of the agrarian narrative in Budondo was clear: many youth seemed to acknowledge that agriculture was the future for Budondo, but this did not necessarily mean it was *their* future. From the perspective a local youth in Kyabirwa, the reasoning for this juxtaposition is connected to the *identity narrative* and the measure of someone's aspiration or educational level:

> "For a community to develop in my country, Uganda, the process that most of the people are engaged in is the area of agriculture. We have vast land and it is one

> opportunity that the youth can actually tap into, but they think agriculture is for those who have not gone to school." (lxxxix; male youth from Kyabirwa)

Agriculture as Failure

During my fieldwork it became clear that youth not availing of the opportunities to engage in agricultural activity in Budondo is largely intentional and founded on the perception that working on the land is a sign of "failure". This idea was prevalent in the perspectives of several youth and adults, with a local chairperson expressing that there exists a "mindset that views agriculture as proof that you have not been able to advance in your education". (xxxiii)

For another youth resident in Bujagali and considering her next steps, she acknowledged that many of her friends "do not see these opportunities" in agriculture, but that it is "for those who have not been to school, for those who have failed in life." Ironically, the source of the idea that agriculture is a failure of ambition amongst school drop-outs was attributed to ideas expressed in school itself. According to one youth leader, those who attend school come to view agriculture as a "waste of time" for two main reasons. Firstly, the overly theoretical content and approach of formal schooling narrows the types of employment youth aspire toward:

> "This is based on the curriculum. Our education curriculum is more theoretical than practical. And while these youth are at school they mainly bank on white-collar jobs. Agriculture is not part of that" (xxii; male youth leader from Bujagali)

By limiting the horizons and capabilities of youth to apply knowledge to their surroundings, it is suggested that they come to value the pursuit of white-collar jobs as preferable to that of agriculture, a theme also touched upon in chapter 5 in the context of the formation of migration aspirations. Building on this point, this youth describes how "education is packaged to look at the industrial sector - they start from processing and not from primary level, which is the garden." (xxii; male youth leader from Bujagali)

Secondly, the youth leader described the role of educators, with some refusing to take jobs in Budondo, or some accepting to do so and deciding to reside in a nearby town, with one local adult describing that this is often due to the higher pay that village teachers receive from the

government. This, it was suggested, reinforces some of the deficit narrative around agrarian livelihoods.

> "The teachers who are at school emphasise: "if you don't want to go high in education, you will go to agriculture". Already they create negative attitudes. There is that poor perception that agriculture is for a lower class and it has created a negative attitude among the youth." (xxii; male youth leader from Bujagali)

In addition to delegitimising agriculture as a viable pathway to pursue, the ideas conveyed by teachers is significant, with many students internalising the idea that agriculture is for those who "fail", not only in school but more generally in realising their life aspirations. This perspective paints a vivid picture of the systemic issues faced by education and the ways in which formal schooling has contributed to diminishing interest in agriculture amongst the youth in rural Jinja, an insight that resonates with Biriwasha's (2012) research in Zimbabwe and Katz' (2004) research in south Sudan, both of which articulate the ways in which formal schooling undermined the role of agriculture and created negative attitudes amongst the youth toward agrarian livelihoods.

Agriculture as Punishment

While participants expressed the view that formal schooling can deepen scepticism of the youth toward agriculture, an additional dimension of the agrarian narrative raised by many participants in the fieldwork research concerned how schools utilise agriculture as a form of punishment for misbehaviour. According to one youth participant, this "cultural" development is widespread amongst schools and in the family home.

> "In schools you find that if someone has done something wrong then they will say please go and get a hoe and dig. It was like a punishment, so naturally we will grow up feeling like agriculture is a punishment. If someone was to give me a hoe to dig? You have *punished* me! Most schools in the rural setting do that. Sometimes you find that you don't get out of that place until you have finished... Then you find that even the portion you are digging is for the teachers - they are growing most of their own food around there" (lxxviii; female youth from Bujagali)

Similarly, another young adult in Budondo expressed the challenging situations they would have to deal with on the school garden as punishment for misbehaviour.

> "We used to have ant hills in the compound, if you come late to school, you are given a hoe to smash the ant hill. The ants are coming up and bite you! You finish up and then the headmaster sits with you to counsel. The next day you will not come late" (xli; male youth from Kyabirwa)

With the labour and toil of traditional agriculture a reality that many young people witness growing up in Budondo, the use of agriculture as a punishment in schools reinforces concerns within the *agrarian narrative* that if youth engage in agriculture, they are doomed to replicating tradition, engaging in a version of fatalism that simply continues the hard work of their parents and grandparents with little tangible benefit. When reflecting on the effects of this attitude toward agriculture, one youth educator shared the mobility implications of sceptical attitudes towards agriculture that are built on its relationship to punishment.

> "Youth are going away from agriculture and even migrating - leaving these very places for other types of jobs. Looking for towns and unfortunately leaving some good soils in these villages… I would love to change the idea that punishment is getting a hoe and digging. That makes me annoyed so much. That drives away the young bloods, it makes them think that agriculture is a very bad thing." (xl; female NGO worker from Bujagali)

This frustration amongst youth who are pursuing lifelong education in Budondo, considering the support needed for youth in their village, and committed to finding new approaches to agricultural production is understandable.

As expressed throughout the thesis, while formal schooling plays a significant role in the fermentation of these ideas, the *agrarian narrative* should also be cautious in overemphasising its role and place as the only environment in which these ideas are expressed. Doing so makes the mistake of assuming that "only if education changed" then these problems would disappear, an overly simplistic conception of education that sees it as a catholicon for social ills. For example, a young adult with small children illustrates this point well, reflecting on the school experience in relation to the family environment and culture:

> "You go and work on the garden and then your friends in the classroom know it is because you have misbehaved. Our parents are also farmers. So, when the weekend comes on Friday - we know very well that we are going to dig [laughs]. Even the way the farmer put on some clothes for agriculture - we thought 'we are learning to be smart in school, to get a lot of money, but now look at our parents! Somebody who is harvesting and working hard in the garden is paid less.'(liii; female adult from Kyabirwa)

This demonstrates the ways in which agriculture, as part of the *agrarian narrative*, becomes both a literal and a symbolic punishment. In the former, it is suggested that youth come to feel the psychological weight that agriculture is bad and used to correct wrongdoing. Perhaps more subtly, however, related to the view that agriculture is a failure, the symbolic punishment that youth imbibe from the school, their family environment, and the community settings, all have the potential to serve as an enduring deterrent, particularly when parents and peers reinforce the idea that agriculture is a backward step in the pursuit of viable livelihood pathways.

Land & Inequality

In addition to perceptions and attitudes that exist around agriculture, one important element of the *agrarian narrative* in Budondo concerns the use of land. Historically, Budondo has been described as the "food-basket of Jinja", due to land availability and high soil fertility. More recently, however, several challenges related to the availability of land for meaningful agricultural production have emerged. At one level, the cost of land continues to rise, with a growing number of tourists settling in Budondo, and more capital available from remittances to families from the migration of some members to Jinja, Kampala and the Middle East. At another level, Ben White's description of a "global squeeze on farmland" (White 2012, p. 12) bears relevance to Budondo livelihoods and their connection to sugarcane plantations.

The main factory of Kakira Sugar Works, the largest manufacturer of sugar in Uganda, is based in Kakira, a nearby town in Jinja district and often referred to as "sugar town". With such a large scale of production, agri-businesses lease land from Budondo residents to grow sugar cane. While negotiated with local families and adhering to law, according to one youth, the

challenge is that "these big factories are really trying to make everyone to resort into sugar-cane growing". (lxi; female youth from Jinja)

This shift in the use of land has posed several challenges for residents in Budondo, who often decide to sell the land used for their self-subsistence in order to acquire lump-sum capital, often in the hope of investment in a longer-term project or to facilitate migration of a family member. According to the coordinator of one organisation:

> "There is now a very rampant monoculture system of sugar cane growing in Budondo, but then from constant conversations with individuals you find that the people who growing sugar cane sometimes are not even residents. An acre could go for 1 million UGS (approximately £200) over 5 years, so you imagine a family not having space for them to grow food and they don't have any other thing they are involved in yet they have to buy food all the time." (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Families navigate the difficulties associated with the pressure to long-term lease their land for sugar cane growing. From the perspective of a sub-county official, sugar cane growing has posed a number of challenges and the hope that "people will go back to growing food" was a discernible feature of the *agrarian narrative* encountered in Budondo. According to Martiniello et al. (2020), sugarcane contract farming in Uganda is an expression of significant power imbalances and has resulted in the loss and transformation of rural livelihood patterns. For many families, while land plots had been used for food crops for household, local or national markets, many have now signed contracts to turn their lands into cash crops for sugar, thereby losing their own ability to grow food. As another coordinator from a local organisation described:

> "Recently we harvested some cassava, but I was so shocked when I saw a big number of people coming to buy our cassava. I was asking myself why are all of these ladies coming to buy our cassava? They were actually fighting for it. I was wondering, Budondo which used to be known as the food-basket, why would people come to fight for this? And then I was told a lot of people have hired their land for sugar cane growing, so they are left with no land on which to grow food. This explained why I saw so many ladies coming to fight for the few cassava leaves that we had harvested." (xl; female NGO worker from Kyabirwa)

As part of the *agrarian narrative*, the experiences faced by many residents in Budondo are portrayed as both inevitable and unavoidable. However, further institutional leadership and regulation has been recommended, given the serious ecological degradation, social differentiation, fragmentation of agrarian structures, and the "dispossession of land from below" (Martiniello and Azambuja 2019, p. 19). For the participants in the research, the challenges associated with land grabbing adds further precarity to rural livelihoods and for some youth, sugar cane growing becomes a potential strategy to raise a lump sum fee to facilitate their migration to the city, or abroad. As one youth expressed, "if they need to fight hard for money, it is usually through the monoculture approach of selling land for sugar cane" (i; male youth from Bujagali).

Gender

One important dimension related to land in the context of the *agrarian narrative* is the patriarchal structure and gender inequality that exists in relation to land acquisition in Budondo. According to one older participant, in the context of family life, "the man is in charge of the land" and this means that he distributes the land to his male sons, while in some instances girls will be given smaller plots of land. Another participant described home ownership elements, and the ways in which "men have full power to sell anything off without consulting their wives". The divergence in rights to access land between women and men in Uganda has been described by past research (Doss, Meinzen-Dick and Bomuhangi 2014), which outlines that despite Uganda's constitution granting equal rights to men and women, that the customs and practice of traditional culture locates land possession within male ownership and inheritance for male relatives.

As White (2012) suggests, youth are not passive victims of these circumstances, but within such structures young people exercise a "constrained agency" (p. 14). In many ways, however, these gendered norms impact upon the livelihoods of youth in rural Jinja, and necessarily inform the distinctiveness of the future making endeavours of youth and the varied possibilities open to men and to women. For example, despite decision-making residing with men, many of the responsibilities fall to the women of the family. As one youth supporting women empowerment activities shared:

> "Families often struggle. For example, looking at a woman in a rural setting and how they do much of the labour-intensive work. You really have to work so hard. For the case of Uganda, women really do almost everything to support the family. Providing food, education, and all these things." (lviii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

According to Rietveld, van der Burg and Groot's (2020) research in Central Uganda, the nature of engagement with agricultural livelihoods is often different between men and women, with young women rarely engaging in commercial agriculture. With the suggestion that "livelihood pathways were linked to a set of normative and structural constrains maintaining gender inequality" (Rietveld et al 2020, p. 152) in land and labour norms, it is unsurprising that the questions and considerations in their respective future-making endeavours have a gendered dimension, with the options before women limited and defined. The following note from my participant observation notes touches on some of this constraint faced by women in rural Jinja:

> "When I visited a family today, I met my friend's sister - a girl called Amina, who was resolute and welcoming. Over the course of our conversation, the family started to share with me that she had just found a way to come back from Saudi Arabia, where she had been staying with a family who had been abusing her. Given the sensitivity of the topic, and my own positionality in the research context, it wasn't possible to sit with Amina to better understand the detail of the experience, but she described the process she went through to get back to the village. Her brother had also been working in construction in Qatar. The risks for men and women as they engage in future-making are clearly different. They told me that when people from the Kampala agencies come to recruit youth labour for the Middle East, the "demand" for women was different. For women, many have their visas and travel booked and paid for by the agencies, whereas men applying for jobs in construction self-organise. This concerned me. Why did they want women so much? What were the risks being faced by migrants moving to the Middle East, especially women? Many youth made reference to "horror" stories that they would hear about abuse in a family household, but the limits of my enquiry stopped there." (entry 7)

Although constrained in scope, these glimpses made clear that the gendered dimension of the migration process represents an essential element of intersectional analysis on the rights and safety of individuals in the context of the migration-education nexus and the development

discourse more generally. Although not the specific focus of the research, combined with a perspective on land rights and family responsibility, these lived experiences of women add new dimensions to the unfolding *agrarian narrative* in Budondo and provide important nuance and texture to differentiated analysis of the migration-education nexus through the lens of justice and equity.

6.6 Modernity Narrative

A final narrative present during my fieldwork research concerned the vision of the future held by the inhabitants of Bujagali and Kyabirwa. In rural Jinja, this *modernity narrative* expressed by several participants was dominant, largely driven by the reasonable appraisal of difficulties associated with the past. As previously argued, tthe arrival of modernisation saw efforts to transform agricultural and industrial processes to increase efficiency, profitability and growth in Uganda (Jones 1971; Singh et al. 2015) and globally (Irwin 1975; Arbab 2000). While structures and organisations for rural people have been dismantled by these strong economic and political forces, the processes of rural life, production, adaptation, healthcare, institutional governance and technological advancement, to name but a few, require structures that serve the needs of the rural population (Leggett 2006).

For many youth, the modernity narrative rests on a tension presented to the youth in different settings, be it the extended family, the school, the marketplace, the peer group, or the community. In forming conceptions of the future, the tension between "traditional" and "modern" knowledge in facilitating individual and collective progress was highlighted. According to one of the local educational coordinators, this ranking of knowledge is a source of confusion in future-making endeavours:

> "Our schools try to show us that we all have to go modern. They say that traditional ways of doing things are backward. If you are still using the hoe you are backward. But that's not the approach that our organisation is taking. We talk about helping someone to be able to make appropriate technological choices. We are not saying that traditional ways of farming are the best and that's what we should embrace. But neither are we saying that modern ways of doing things are the best."

The relationship between the school and the project of modernity is thus well-established, and representative of the opportunity to abandon traditional modes of production and living. By demonstrating the shortcoming of this view, the false choice between the past and the future is bound to values about what constitutes meaningful progress. The conviction that progress has the potential to integrate knowledge from the past with modern science is, for many youth – and indeed for the development enterprise and general structure of neoliberal thought – doubtful at best.

> "And that's why we see the conversation taking place includes everyone - you find someone who has graduated from university and a grandmother. The grandmother has all this traditional understanding. Then this other person has this modern knowledge about agriculture. We want to bridge these two extremes. It is trying to show how both can help but that you have to be able to make proper, appropriate technological choices. We are not saying that tradition is the best or modern is the best. You have to look at your environment and decide, 'what knowledge is relevant and what technology should I use?'" (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

These choices thus characterised the *modernity narrative* in Budondo and informed many of the perspectives shared about its future. For several youth in the village, one critical requirement for a prosperous future was industrial investment. As one youth shared "the future of Bujagali requires investment in industries, then people would benefit", while another described how the area needed to be "modernised, with good industries, then people will be very happy and settled". As such, reflections from participants illustrate that as the relationship with place is shaped by the promises of modernity, the spatial imaginaries of youth are more readily embedded into their conceptualising of rural futures.

During two focus group discussions in Bujagali and Kyabirwa, my fieldwork research engaged in *participatory wealth ranking*, a methodological approach that captures differences in perceptions of prosperity as perceived by the community itself. Composed of youth and adults of both genders, both focus groups sought to understand the perceptions of wealth and welfare in their own villages. Entirely participant led, as a scribe, I drew four quadrants on a large piece of paper for the group to rank "signs of wealth and prosperity" along four lines: (i) very poor; (ii) poor; (iii) moderate; (iv) rich. During the exercise, participants were asked to discuss and articulate – with reasonable consensus – the local criteria that serve as indicators of levels of

prosperity within their village. In addition to ranking criteria, participants in both focus group were asked to roughly estimate the percentage of the village population that they felt fit within each category. Rather than reaching accurate reflection, this exercise derived value from the collective perception of the groups. The below tables are the results of the discussion relevant to the *modernity narrative.*

KYABIRWA	
Very Poor: **8% of the village** • No land • No home ownership, staying with others • Relies on others for small work, e.g. small pay to work on land • Cannot afford basic health care • Isolated	*Poor:* **70% of the village** • Mudhouse • Use borehole for water • 1-2 cattle, 1 goat • Bicycle for transport • Less than 1 acre of land • Struggles to pay school fees for children • Grows dodo, okra, greens
Moderate: **15% of the village** • Growing sugarcane • Brickhouse • 1-2 acres of land • Less than 10 cattle • Vehicle – bike or car • Affords school fees for children • Goats, pigs and chickens on a small farm • Electricity • Tap water • Helps others	*Rich:* **7% of the village** • Grows a lot of sugarcane • Beautiful brick house, with security • Car (maybe multiple) • 10+ cattle • Children in boarding school • 5-10 acres of land at least • A lot of food • Buys meat for the family • Housekeeping support • Helps & supports others • Electricity and Taps

BUJAGALI	
Very Poor: **5% of the village** • Homeless • Alcoholic (maybe) • No work • Beggar • Cannot manage a family • Cannot afford clothes	*Poor:* **40% of the village** • Struggles to support family • Bicycle • Married with kids • Struggle to support school fees • May have land but little knowledge how to farm • Sometimes afford medicine

Moderate: **50% of the village**	*Rich:* **5%**
• Brickhouse • 1 acre of land • Affords school fees for children • Motorbike – 'boda boda' • Feeds family • Can eat what they want • Health • Mobile phone • Some may have taps	• Grows sugarcane • Car • At least 2 acres of land • Engaged in business activities • Poultry- 1000 ; Cattle – 5 • Fish farming • Mobile phone • Electricity and Taps

Taken together, the overlapping signs of prosperity in both villages offer additional insight into what has come to be valued as indicators of prosperity. With 85-90% estimated between poor and moderate in both villages, the perception of rural Jinja is not one of prosperity for all. Perhaps most significantly in light of the *agrarian narrative*, motor vehicle and livestock ownership, access to land and the use of land for sugarcane plantations were all expressed by focus groups as signs of prosperity in their respective villages.

In addition to perceptions of prosperity within rural Jinja, concern for the degradation of rural life in the name of urban prosperity was another element of the *modernity narrative*. According to a resident in Kyabirwa:

> "I feel so sorry for my village… for the future we expect a lot of bad things to happen if there is no solution for them because these are the youth who will start looking for money and they can't find money. What would be the solution? These local boys that you find are smoking weed, they are at a young age, and they are jobless. For them to earn a living they will decide to go and steal, to rob, which is not good. That is what I see for my village. That is the future I am seeing for my village. That is what is going to happen." (li; female adult from Kyabirwa)

The concern for the material and moral future of the residents of Budondo represented one important element of the *modernity narrative*. With this youth expressing a sceptical view of the future of the village, painting a picture of a community grappling with economic challenges, youth disillusionment, and moral decline, they plea for interventions and solutions, highlighting the urgency of addressing the root causes and preventing a downward spiral.

Another youth who had been engaged in fish farming, local education, and recently started a local coffee business in Bujagali, expressed an alternative perspective on the future:

> "I just wanna stay in this community and work hard. There are so many youth who are unemployed and some of them are out of school so it means that their hopes of getting another opportunity is difficult. So I wanna try build a house in my community, try as much as I can to create a platform where those who are unemployed can be financially empowered. Most of the youth who are thinking of migration, it is because they are looking for areas to find money where they can live. So, I just want to try help here… Most of the time, people do not trust the youth that we can do some good things. But you know, it's a time when we have a lot of energy" (xviii; female youth from Bujagali)

Expressing a higher degree of hope and ownership, the reflections of this youth on community engagement, the struggles of unemployment, and the perceptions of youth highlight the important elements relevant to the *modernity narrative* and enhancing rural livelihoods. This youth emphasised the potential of his peers to express transformative agency, their aspirations to initiate local business, and the capabilities required to overcome societal barriers and the perceptions of deficiency associated with rural life (Corbett and Forsey 2017).

For a district level coordinator of an educational programme in Budondo, the *modernity narrative* is thus informed by a growing dissatisfaction with structures and systems that do not address the needs of rural livelihoods. Rather than abandoning the future of the village, she suggested themes for reflection on alternative approaches to education in rural settings, holding broader implications for rural policy formation and educational design.

> "For all of us who are concerned about the future, whether in rural or urban settings, we need to re-think the nature, content and delivery of the education that people are going through. If we begin to ask some fundamental questions, then maybe those questions could actually lead to drastic changes. There is a fear to depart from what we are used to as we are not sure what to expect. But is it not better to explore rather than just remain and be content with all these challenges?" (lviii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Emphasising the need to identify constructive lines of enquiry with regards to the role of education, this reflection provides a nuanced perspective on the need for assessing the purpose, contexts, approaches and promises of education in the context of rural Jinja. In an effort to reimagine the nature of education for rural settings, this perspective aligns with the capability approach (Sen 2001). Grounded in the concept of transformative agency (Bajaj 2009), the capability approach emphasises the freedoms that individuals have reason to value, with a focus on what individuals are able to do and to be. Accordingly, if education is to play a significant role in the context of "modern" rural life, this coordinator suggests that a departure from a 'status quo' that is not facilitating this freedom, nor providing the necessary conversion factors for the emergence of capabilities relevant to rural life and that reevaluating the role of education represents an important element of the *modernity narrative* in Budondo. In so doing, education is not turned solely into an efficient instrument of modernisation but holds an emancipatory role in facilitating the emergence of individual and collective consciousness concerned with constructing a modern future with due regard for traditions of the past.

6.7 Capabilities & Narratives of Prosperity

In the context of rural Jinja, the narratives of identity, development, agriculture, and modernity have been used to construct a mosaic of processes and patterns associated with the transformation of rural livelihoods. Far from being an exhaustive account, these narratives seek to locate wider structural transformations within the perspectives of the inhabitants of Budondo and to address the ways in which education and migration are connected to the broader transformations of rural livelihoods, as articulated by the overarching research question of this thesis. Taken together, they illustrate a number of changes and transformations that have occurred in rural Jinja over the past few decades in relation to individual livelihoods, institutional structures, and community processes.

While weaved throughout the analysis, the value of these narratives is enhanced when viewed more explicitly through the lens of the capability approach (Sen 2001). This approach has been a pivot to the analysis of the migration-education throughout this thesis, with particular interest in the *capability to choose where to live.* However, this chapter has illustrated that the capability to choose where to live is connected a set of wider livelihood capabilities, close consideration of conversion factors, and the ability to perceive – and make use of – livelihood opportunities (Chambers and Conway 1992). Importantly, these capabilities are not simply reactive, but

demonstrate the emergence of a transformative agency that is practical, dynamic and adaptable. Thus, it is in this context that aspirations and capabilities are not only shaped by education, migration and rural transformation, as articulated by the overarching research question of this thesis, but the development of capabilities – through a more dynamic conception of how structure and agency interact (Gidden 1990) – exert a degree of resistance and influence on these wider processes in rural Jinja.

The ability to choose and lead a life that one has reason to value is the cornerstone of the capability approach (Sen 2001). Chambers and Conway (1992) have argued that such freedom implies the ability to encounter, perceive and overcome challenges in one's environment, while also learning to harness the social, moral and economic forces for enhancing individual and collective livelihoods. Through raised consciousness, innovation, and the ability to adapt, such dynamic capabilities nurture livelihood opportunities in rural settings by overcoming uncertain conditions and creating new opportunities that have the potential to be emancipatory in nature.

Given its concern with fundamental *beings* and *doings*, one additional strength of the capability approach in the context of livelihood narratives is its productive capacity to identify areas of enquiry and ongoing research. Toward this end, applying the capability approach to the narratives highlighted in this chapter raises important questions in the context of the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja.

Both the *identity* and *agrarian narratives* highlighted the contradictory forces that impact on how youth are seen in the context of rural Jinja, with particular relevance to educational qualifications, agricultural involvement and the "backwardness" associated with traditional practices on the one hand, and staying in the village on the other. These wider narratives have implications on the decisions youth make about their futures, their experiences of education, and the spatial implications of their decisions. As such, they further articulate youth agency in the face of strong structural forces and articulate the potential obstacles – both socially and mentally – to fully realising the capability to choose where to live alongside other livelihood capabilities. With this in mind, one area of enquiry that emerges from this analysis of the migration-education nexus is whether the forces that alienate youth from contributing to the transformation of rural livelihoods are genuinely enhancing the capabilities of youth in Budondo or fulfilling the functionings associated with urbanisation. In other words, are

individuals truly "free" if their individual choices are informed – albeit subtly – by a version of modernisation that displaced rural structures?

This far-reaching question bears relevance to the *development* and *modernity narratives*, both of which exposed a certain tension between traditional and modern forms of knowledge and practice. In addressing the ways in which individuals come to internalise external logics, Harvey (2007) argues that (i) the external ideas must feel relevant to the challenges faced in a particular cultural context and (ii) that individuals become engaged in the "active construction of consent" (p. 40). To understand these workings, Harvey suggests the need to avoid ivory-tower conclusions that focus solely on the mechanisms for transmission and emphasises the importance of exploring the emergence of common-sense understanding based on the lived realities of a population. With notable exceptions and counters to the dominant viewpoints amongst youth, this thesis has drawn on the lived experiences of rural youth to illustrate the various ways in which they have expressed disillusionment with rural life, a collective allergy to agrarian livelihoods, and rising migration aspirations. In so doing, it has cast doubt on whether rural development has genuinely cultivated capabilities that both individuals – and the collective – have reason to value. While one interpretation of Sen's capability approach can be individualistic, Sen suggests that the collective should inform what individuals value and why (Sen 2002) and as such, determining the relationship of local opportunity structures in the context of capability enhancement for individual and village-wide processes represents a novel approach to research capability in the context of rural-urban transformations. Put simply within the confines of this project, formal education faces a challenge in cultivating capabilities that are connected and relevant to livelihood patterns in rural Jinja when operating in isolation. As such, a wider disillusionment with the individual and collective opportunities in rural Jinja and scepticism toward a vibrant rural future all locate the migration-education nexus within foundational questions of collective life in Bujagali and Kyabirwa.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has highlighted four key narratives that emerged in relation to the transformation of rural livelihoods in Jinja and considered their implications for the analysis of the migration-education nexus. In so doing, the analysis demonstrates the importance of understanding localised contexts and histories in order to grasp the underlying socio-cultural dynamics at play and directly addresses the overarching research question of how aspirations and capabilities

are shaped by broader processes of rural transformation. In Budondo, where tradition meets modernity, the aspirations and capabilities of youth are embedded into wider themes, demonstrating the opportunities and constraints that youth are navigating as they envision their individual futures as well as the future of their respective villages.

Central to this chapter has been the use of capabilities, which underscores the significance of enhancing individuals livelihood freedoms and their opportunities to achieve well-being. In the context of rural Jinja, it was evident that not all advancements labelled as “modern” necessarily align with enhancing these capabilities. This scepticism is not a romanticisation of the past, but the analysis of this chapter suggests that the bifurcation of the relevance of the past and visions for the future into two competing ideas has created a vacuum of insufficiency that leave youth isolated from compelling visions for the future of their country, be it in rural or urban settings. As a result, the desire to use their energy, rather than “to sit idle”, becomes a driving force in the decision-making of youth in Kyabirwa and Bujagali.

Taken together, this typology has placed the specifics of the migration-education nexus in a wider context, and demonstrated the ways in which migration must necessarily be seen as part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2013). Put simply, the decisions individuals make about migration are deeply influenced by their perceived opportunities for well-being in both rural and urban settings. Educational perceptions and experiences, inherently tied to narratives of modernity, agriculture, development and identity emerge as key factors when analysis potential drivers of migration in rural Jinja.

In synthesising these insights, it is important to acknowledge the while the dynamics of rural livelihoods in Jinja are necessarily grounded in the perspectives of its inhabitants, the tensions, questions and themes are part of a global question for the rural settings and their relation to urbanisation. The tensions and potential harmonies between tradition and modernity, agriculture and development, and staying and leaving, all bear relevance to unfolding discourses in virtually every country of the world. Thus, various dimensions of the migration-education nexus, deeply embedded in these narratives, is a powerful conceptual tool for exploring the contextual realities of these globally relevant questions. Understanding local narratives is thus crucial for developing clarity and appropriate initiatives that are aligned with the lived experiences and aspirations of any given context.

CHAPTER 7

Education & Rural Relevance:
From Cultural Deficit to Spaces of Promise

"Some study can help individuals attach value to the reality of their communities"
Amina

7.1 Introduction

One key perspective advanced throughout this thesis is that, for many youth, their educational experiences have alienated them from the opportunities, constraints and general dynamics of livelihoods in rural Jinja. Most notably in formal schooling, youth indicated the ways in which their experiences exposed them to narrow approaches to learning that rest on global pressures of convergence and the insistence that education becomes placeless (Corbett 2016). What, then, are the characteristics of educational approaches that nourish relationships with rural space?

Rigorous engagement with the research questions of this thesis concerning the interaction of educational experiences and migration aspirations in rural Jinja implies unsettling the idea that education is a homogenous entity that people "have" or "do not have". As argued in chapter 3, education is best conceived on a continuum of formality and learning, albeit with diverse forces acting upon any given context. To illustrate the diverse forms of education in Budondo – and their varied approaches to developing capabilities for rural livelihoods – this chapter examines two local organisations focused on education in rural Jinja in which several youth in my research had participated. It analyses the experiences of participants and tutors, and considers the spatial implications of such context-sensitive approaches so as to understand the diverse ways in which educational experience shapes the aspirations and capabilities of youth in rural Jinja and the spatial implications that such educational experience holds.

This chapter draws on the experiences of local youth and educational organisations based in Budondo to consider approaches towards developing culturally relevant and context sensitive approaches to education in rural Jinja. By drawing on research into the experiences of participants and coordinators connected to two educational organisations operating in Budondo, this chapter seeks to: (i) illustrate the approaches these organisations have taken to reading the reality of rural life, (ii) show the ways in which they have perceived the challenge of decontextualization; and (iii) make explicit some of the principles and pedagogical approaches these organisations have adopted to develop capabilities relevant to rural livelihoods in Jinja. In so doing, the chapter locates these insights as tentative considerations concerning the features of rural educational processes that are focused on explicitly nurturing students' connection to their rural surroundings in Budondo. Drawing on this experience, it seeks to contribute to a growing body of scholarly work concerned with the aspiration to stay (Schewel 2015) and enhancing transformative conceptions of agency (Bajaj 2009) that consciously exercise the capability to choose where to live.

Incorporating insights from alternative approaches to education in Budondo has two potential pitfalls that should be made explicit. Firstly, by drawing attention to concepts and approaches adopted by these organisations, the perspective being developed is not suggesting that they embody any form of "best practice" for rural settings, nor that they are seemingly in competition with other forms of education in the rural setting. Rather, their incorporation seeks to overcome the challenge articulated in chapter 3 that treats education as a homogenous entity. By making explicit certain convictions and approaches of these alternative forms of education, this chapter seeks to (a) demonstrate the heterogeneity of education in rural settings and (b) add further context, texture and nuance to the analysis of migration-education nexus in the context of youth livelihoods in rural Jinja. In particular, the final section of this chapter considers the potential implications of some of the insights from these diverse forms of education for nurturing the aspiration to stay (Schewel 2015), an important side of the freedom of mobility coin.

7.2 Organisations Background

Chapter 3 described the ways in which education can be viewed on a continuum of learning, ranging from formal schooling In addition to more formalised approaches to education, the "non-formal" education programmes, running in Budondo are a mix of standalone and

complementary programmes. While some organisations offer financial support to students to attend formal schooling, others, which are the subject of this chapter, offer programmes that seek to develop capabilities that are contextualised, adaptive, and run in parallel to formal education. The two organisations whose tutors and volunteers participated in my research in Bujagali and Kyabirwa (the focus villages of my research) were SOUL Foundation and Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education. The insights gathered and analysed in this chapter do not represent the views of the organisations themselves, but seek to draw on insight from their employees and collaborators, offering a grounded perspective on the approaches adopted by organisations focused on education and development.

While the programmes offered by such organisations are diverse, their efforts toward context relevant education have resulted in novel pedagogical approaches and a heightened focus on the development of capabilities relevant to the rural context of Bujagali and Kyabirwa. These programmes are often related to agricultural production, health and disease, women's empowerment, small business endeavours, and enhancing participation in the various processes of community life.

7.2.1 SOUL Foundation

Based in Bujagali, SOUL Foundation, or "**S**upporting **O**pportunities for **U**gandans to **L**earn" was established in 2010. It is an organisation that emerged from efforts to adopt a rural community-led approach in Kyabirwa, where education came to be seen as necessary to addressing the underlying complex causes of extreme poverty. With local volunteers and now empoloyees, the organisation seeks to foster sustainable community development through four programmatic areas: education, women's empowerment, food security, and maternal health. Six main principles characterise the efforts of SOUL Foundation: (i) seeking of local knowledge; (ii) innovation for sustainable solutions; (iii) addressing global challenges locally; (iv) forging partnerships with communities, schools and institutions; (v) empowering rural girls; (vi) defending human dignity.

While the organisation pursues several interrelated projects, its focus on education for development in Budondo is at the heart of its work. This focus proceeds along three areas:

(i) Student sponsorship

This research described in chapter 4 how, despite Uganda's national commitment to UPE and USE, private schooling is commonplace in Budondo. As a result, one common perception amongst local residents of Bujagali and Kyabirwa relates to the "fees" and added costs associated with attending school. SOUL seeks to address these cost-barriers by partnering with children's families and matching their financial contributions. By observing that girls are disproportionately denied access to education, the sponsorship scheme is rooted in building up women and girls

(ii) Certified trainings

SOUL offers village-based training in Digital Literacy and Fashion Merchandising. With both courses focused on cultivating skills for jobs, the course on fashion merchandising in particular seeks to consider the relevance of these skills to earning an income and using the income establish local business in Budondo.

(iii) Antenatal education

SOUL collaborates with Village Health Teams to share knowledge about maternal, newborn and child health information. In addition to regular information sessions, the collaborators with the health teams seeks to strengthen relationships between local inhabitants, provide training for the teams to look at government health policies, and devise plans for further support.

7.2.2 Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education

Based in Jinja, the Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education was established as an NGO in 2007. In light of growing educational needs in rural settings and as a response to increasing numbers of youth migrating to cities, Kimanya initiated an educational programme titled Preparation for Social Action (PSA), with the aim of enabling youth and adults to become "promoters of community well-being". Originally developed by FUNDAEC in Colombia, the PSA programme is a non-formal approach to education that draws on insights from the capability approach and seeks to develop educational curriculum that is adaptable to the contexts of diverse rural livelihoods (Skeaff 2011; Farid-Arbab 2012; Lample 2018; Pironni 2019). With an explicit aim of generating and applying knowledge, Kimanya's work with the

PSA programme seeks to nurture capabilities that individuals – and the communities in which they reside – have reason to value.

At present, the work of Kimanya is focused on three interconnected areas in the context of rural Jinja:

(i) Community development through education

Through the study of various texts offered by the PSA programme, youth and adults develop capabilities in language, mathematics, science and community life processes, with the use of community service and incorporation of relevant technological choices. Rather than organising the educational programme around subject matter, PSA texts focus on concepts believed to bear relevance to rural livelihoods. To take an example, one text series titled "Small Farm Food Production" draws on concepts from different disciplines to examine the natural and social scientific dimensions for themes like planting crops in the context of challenging social and environmental circumstances. Similarly, in light of challenges discussed in chapter 5 regarding access to land and the growth of monoculture, this text series also offers a unit on the concepts and approaches relevant to youth and adults determining the local processes relevant to promoting agricultural diversification on smaller plots of land.

(ii) Agricultural research

Since 2013, Kimanya has conducted action-research projects focused on what is required for developing sustainable, high-yielding crops based on the challenges of small farms and the eco-system of Budondo. Individuals conducting this research have focused on urban garden management, maintaining soil fertility with green manure, and chicken rearing. The vision of this area is that insights from these research activities inform the practices of local farmers and education groups.

(iii) *Teacher professional development*

To strengthen synergy between formal and non-formal education in the rural Jinja, in 2014 Kimanya initiated a line of action focused on the training and development of teachers working in public and private schools. Through collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports,

this line of action was suggested and Kimanya secured funding to design a relevant programme toward this end. Other research, through a randomised control trial, has demonstrated the effectiveness of this programme for enhancing the quality of teaching and improving exam performance (Ashraf, Banerjee and Nourani 2021).

In light of the description of the programmatic areas pursued by two organisations focused on developing educational content relevant to the rural realities of Budondo, the remainder of this chapter highlights two overarching themes articulated by tutors and coordinators connected to these programmes. In so doing, it will examine the relevance of their insights to: (a) alternative approaches to rural education focused on capabilities relevant to rural livelihoods; and (b) the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja, with consideration of the emerging reflections on the *aspiration to stay* and efforts to enhance the agency of youth to enact the *capability to choose where to live* in the context of the structural constraints and opportunities of the rural space. Such a perspective offers texture and nuance to the ways in which education in non-formal settings in Budondo provides more robust engagements with rural futures and the possibility of cultivating transformative agency (Bajaj 2009) in rural youth and create the possibilities of and practices of futurity that engage with the creative potential of alternative future (Nichols 2023b).

7.3 Conceptions of Transformation

While patterns and trends of rural livelihoods remain complex and multi-faceted, one primary characteristic of the alternative educational approaches in rural Jinja that participated in my research is the conception of change and transformation at the heart of their programmes.

The educational context of such a conversation is that of placelessness associated with modern education (Corbett 2016), which refers to educational practices that disregard the local context, promoting a centralised model of education that is disconnected from the specific needs and realities of rural communities. This approach often manifests in formal schooling and top-down development interventions, which can lead to a dissonance between the education received and the practical needs of the community. This dissonance, it is suggested, can hinder youth's ability to envision and work towards vibrant rural futures.

This thesis has challenged the primacy of economic growth – be it individual or collective – in shaping the delivery of both public and private education in rural Jinja. In addition to normative arguments that challenge assumptions about human nature itself, this critique has centred on the inability of such perspectives to capture the complex relationships that form between individual livelihoods, institutional structures, and community dynamics in such contexts. By narrowing a pathway to progress for rural livelihoods in Uganda, I have argued, that a 'placeless' ideology is often transmitted to youth through the mechanism of formal schooling or top-down development interventions, with the impact of this process on youth's future-making endeavours becoming increasingly at odds with the contrasting discourse on vibrant rural futures. In the context of global forces and pressures of convergence that advocate abstracted versions of education (Corbett 2016), schools and quick-fix education for development approaches have often become sites for transmitting a culture at odds with local reality. This approach to education manifests itself, as argued by Antonio Gramsci, in the gradual separation and distinctiveness between educational experience and the actual realities of local life (Gramsci 1965). Neither a causal nor absolute claim, this thesis has suggested that such a dynamic is present in rural Jinja and has often created conditions for rising migration aspirations – as well as limited capability enhancement opportunities – amongst youth in Bujagali and Kyabirwa.

In contrast to this instrumentalised approach to education, tutors and participants from both SOUL and Kimanya offered an alternative view on the purpose of education, suggesting that the conception of change driving their educational programmes rests on the inseparability of the individual from the collective. This alternative way of framing education is twofold: that of developing one's inherent potentialities and enhancing the capacity to contribute to the transformation of society. In this context, education has an instrumental dimension but it also has an intrinsic one – one that is interested in raising consciousness and enabling individuals to become more meaningful protagonists in building a prosperous community for the collective. For one youth, as a lifelong resident of Bujagali, as well as a past participant – and now tutor – of SOUL educational activities, the need for this wider conception of transformation has been increasingly necessary for meaningfully engaging youth livelihoods in rural Jinja:

> "I think the question that education plays is very critical to help us unwrap how to assist these young people focus on contributing to the well-being of their communities. So, if

> education cannot raise that capacity, then they are left with no choice, they always think that opportunities are somewhere else." (xi; male youth from Bujagali)

This perspective suggests that education's failure to help youth focus on the well-being of their communities not only narrows their definition of "opportunities" but also defines their location. This aligns closely with Hirschman's description, as outlined in chapter 5, regarding the choices individuals make regarding "exit", "voice", or "loyalty" in the context of their immediate surroundings (Hirschman 1970). One limited interpretation of Hirschman is that individual agency is arbitrarily chosen; that is to say, an individual ultimately expresses their agency by deciding to leave their surroundings, by giving voice to their concerns, or expressing loyalty to the status quo. As illustrated by this youth, however, relegating these significant decisions to individual whims fails to understand the role of education – alongside other processes of community life and decisions shaped by institutional governance – in impacting the capability to engage meaningfully with one's surroundings, as well as shaping attitudes as to their desirability. When reflecting on his own education in this context, another youth described his own experience.

> "My education helped me think about local needs… I think the way we are taught, like, showing us how things are done, not just talking about them… If we are talking about agriculture, and planting coffee or whatever, then you need to really see how it happens. In the school that I attended through the support of SOUL, I studied aquaculture, and I was doing hand-on skill. I was seeing how fish are bred. When we learn fishing, they can tell you throw a line and when the fish catches, you try to imagine… but you may find out that it is done differently from what you learned." (iv; male youth from Bujagali)

Now engaged in farming tilapia fish on the Source of the Nile with the support of SOUL, this youth tutor and entrepreneur described how the educational experience he had gained supported him in his efforts to think about the needs of his community and to harness its resources. Closely related to the *identity narrative* described in chapter 6, he described how this orientation toward one's community does not need to suffocate individuality but has the possibility for channelling it in unexpected ways. Reflecting on navigating his own path, he concluded:

> "This river (Nile) is right in front of us… I'm sure we can see what this river can bring to our lives. You know, I grew up wanting to be a doctor but instead of being a medical doctor I decided: 'OK, I will be a doctor of fish'. This comforted me." (ii; male youth from Bujagali)

While this perspective does not seek to undermine pathways to diverse professions, the reflections of this tutor from SOUL demonstrate a willingness to consider opportunities in a way that embraces both their individual and collective dimension. Far from diminishing the *identity narrative*, it is suggested that educational approaches should nurture pride in discerning opportunities in their environment. As suggested, this educational approach rests on a conception of change and transformation that views the individual as inextricable from the collective. While taking steps to avoid the extremes of unfettered individualism and suffocating collectivism as described in chapter 6, this conception of change was also something perceived in the reflections of tutors from Kimanya.

This conception of change that incorporates the individual and the collective stands in contrast to the traditional focus on economic growth within educational frameworks, particularly in rural contexts. This focus, often driven by normative assumptions about human nature and progress, tends to neglect the nuanced relationships that exist between individuals and their communities. As such, there is a need for educational approaches that account for these complexities rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model that prioritises economic outcomes over holistic development.

This is illustrated well by the perceptions and experiences of the youth who participated in the non-formal educational programmes. For example, one youth described how her experience and perception of education itself was shaped by her own engagement with a programme offered by Kimanya:

> "I used to think that education helps someone to get what they want, but when I studied the programme from PSA, I'm also learning that someone can be trained but they do not serve just for themselves. When we were part of the group, we learned there are certain challenges that are complex, which need complex solutions. We also said that we don't need a blame game, we need to sit and find solutions but at the same time I

would like to blame the education system of Uganda but I'm more interested to highlight the ideas that would help it." (lxxx; female youth from Kyabirwa)

For the youth who participated in non-formal education programmes in rural Jinja, while they were able to identify more specific opportunities and reflect on the capabilities they were trying to cultivate, they also were able to outline how their wider conception of education itself, as expressed by the above participant, had evolved. While the individual and collective dimensions of this perception were the most obvious, youth also became more rigorously engaged with approaches to education and community life that sought to pursue constructive paths to contribute to progress, even if they would "like to blame" other challenges. While this experience of alternative education doesn't make the cessation of migration the explicit aim of its approach, the relationship that is cultivated with community life and opportunity was noted to cultivate a transformative agency, a concept illustrated by Bajaj (2009) as well as Correa and Murphy-Graham (2019).

That said, for another participant of the programme, who has recently become a tutor of their own group, this approach to education aligns with their wider decision to become settled into life in rural Jinja, addressing both the individual and collective dimensions of transformation to which they find themselves increasingly committed. As he described:

> "The good thing is I am a tutor - I am born from my community. I have a wife from my community. I have my first born. My parents are within my community. I feel we have moved as a PSA group - what we have achieved - we feel when we go 5 years from now, our group will be one of the best examples in this micro-region. To be examples of hard-work, of bringing change, of being promoters of community well-being." (lxxxv; male youth from Kyabirwa).

Speaking to the intersection of personal identity, responsibility, and community development, this participant illustrates how individual and collective efforts within the rural context of Budondo is connected to conceptions of meaningful change. Enriched by the experience of a group and its own learning process, individualised aspirations are an expression of the local efforts that promote community well-being.

From the perspective of one of its district coordinators, the relationship between the individual and their surroundings is the starting point for curriculum considerations and pedagogical approaches.

> "One of the questions we continue to ask is how education can be a tool for development. If it is a tool for development, then how do we develop a curriculum that responds to the needs of a given population. This means being able to read the reality of the population and thinking about developing curriculum in a way that raises the capacity of the population to address their own circumstances." (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Based on this viewpoint, the approach adopted by Kimanya not only views the individual as holding societal responsibility, but the pedagogical approach of the educational programme grounds itself in a reciprocal interplay between the individual and the collective. One cannot think of genuine capability enhancement in isolation from the structures of society, nor of the possibilities for enhancing rural livelihoods without accounting for the genuine expansion of the individual freedoms whose contours are shaped by collective well-being (Murphy-Graham 2012).

In an effort to avoid a problem-solving approach, as indicated in the *development narrative* in chapter 6, the educational programmes in Budondo are seen as part of an evolving conversation with its rural inhabitants, which takes additional structure in moments, draws on diverse fields of knowledge and seeks to systematise learning in action. In so doing, other tutors observed how when they visit participants in their groups that "what these learners have acquired is being put into practice in their own environment" (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

As articulated by one of its regional coordinators, this ongoing conversation with rural inhabitants utilises community forums, institutional channels, and regular home visits to engage a larger proportion of the inhabitants in conversation about the type of change envisioned for their rural setting. In light of the concerns and aspirations expressed, the use of educational programmes seek "to address some of those gaps" (xix; below) the communities have perceived. In describing the educational approach, the conception of both personal and collective transformation inform their approach to enhancing capabilities relevant to rural life.

> "This curriculum focuses more on what capabilities are relevant for rural life so we begin to reflect more on both personal and collective transformation. This concept of capability, we are beginning to look at it in a new way, giving it a new meaning. We have seen that for someone to become effective or useful in a community that they need to be given access to knowledge, they need to develop certain attitudes, they need to develop certain skills and abilities and then they also need to develop certain qualities. The development of all of these is assisting in the process of personal growth but also helps to contribute to the well-being of their communities." (xix; male NGO worker from Bujagali)

Education in rural settings can be seen as having both instrumental and intrinsic dimensions. Instrumentally, it provides individuals with the skills and knowledge needed for a deepening engagement in community life. Intrinsically, it fosters personal growth and the capacity for critical thinking. These approaches in rural Jinja recognise and integrate both dimensions, aiming to develop capabilities of individuals who are promoters of community well-being. Such an interpretation has significant implications for educational policy and practice, particularly in rural settings, including how the content of any educational content becomes contextualised in conversation with local stakeholders, fostering flexibility and ensuring the adaptation of core content.

With the importance of a clearer conception of change and transformation that resides at the heart of any given educational approach, it is important to reiterate the parameters and limitation of such an analysis. For instance, for a local programme, with local actors, the question of context-sensitivity is the modus operandi and the promotion of such programmes in diverse contexts is thus a promising approach for understanding the ways in which youth become connected to alternative orientations toward their own education and community life, particularly in the rural setting.

While this holds to be true, such analysis is not intended to pit non-formal programmes against formal schooling, suggesting the former can develop context-sensitive programmes, and the latter simply perpetuates a hegemonic set of ideas that contain an urban-bias. Rather, the suggestion of the thesis is that thought, policy and practice can increasingly conceptualise *the ways* in which educational programmes – in their diverse forms and ranging levels of (in)formality – articulate and implement their theories of change in a manner that is (a)

reflective of the concerns and aspirations of the population itself; and (b) gives due emphasise to the individual and collective elements of the environment, including clarity about labour opportunities and constraints, as well as relevant infrastructure.

Nevertheless, from this perspective, the concept of capability itself is driven by the conviction that individual and collective transformation are inseparable dimensions in the process of empowerment (Farid-Arbab 2012). According to Pirroni (2019), while the PSA programme utilised by Kimanya draws on the theoretical work of Amartya Sen as it relates to capabilities, it is also distinct in its approach. This conception of dual transformation seeks to overcome the potential pitfalls of methodological individualism that has been suggested of Sen's conceptualisation of the capability approach (Sen 2002; 2004). This has been refuted by Sen himself as failure to grasp the incorporation of social influences on both (i) what individuals value and (ii) why they value it (Farid-Arbab 2012). Nevertheless, the development of individual potentialities in the context of the capacity to make contributions to the progress of their rural communities is an operating principle that informs the approach of Kimanya and SOUL. This conception of dual transformation offers an alternative approach for education in rural settings and contrasts sharply with the "hegemonic individualised educational thinking" so prevalent in rural settings (Corbett 2016, p. 275).

7.4 Orientations toward Knowledge

In addition to the conception of dual transformation central to the educational programmes offered by SOUL and Kimanya in Budondo, tutors and coordinators from both organisations also highlighted the nature, perceptions, and role of knowledge as another characteristic relevant to their educational approaches in rural Jinja.

While coordinators from SOUL and Kimanya expressed different perceptions on the role of knowledge in rural education, both articulated the narrow ways in which formal schooling in Budondo often focuses on instrumentalising knowledge for its students. With emphasis on standardisation, tutors from both organisations articulated that the aim of education is not to raise consciousness, but becomes concerned with imparting information on various subject matter and discussing relevant skills in the abstract. From the perspective of one educator from SOUL, one manifestation of the emphasis on information processing is the way in which book-learning comes to define the experience of formal education in Budondo.

> "The schools have started to demand more and more time for people to stay in class and this disconnects young people from real-life situations. So, all the time now they are thinking about books, even during holidays they go, even weekends, they go." (xxxix; male NGO worker from Bujagali)

The expectations associated with performance often characterises how information is transmitted to students. This emphasis on school performance and the assimilation of information was an observation also made by one of the coordinators of Kimanya.

> "The schools want to see that the children excel in their exams. Education has become focused more on grades rather than raising capacity, so even the way of teaching has completely changed. There are questions and the teacher will give the approach of how to respond to those questions. This takes away the capacity of the individual to be able to think and to act. We are seeing it is more the assimilation of information and being able to reproduce that information in the way they have been given." (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

The shift in priority from enhancing the capacity of students to ensuring good exam performance is part of a wider culture of expectation, pressure and standardisation that permeates the experience of formal schooling. With schools prioritising grades, the system of education, as described, appears more inclined to assimilation and reproduction rather than nurturing understanding.

(i) Enhancing Capabilities for Rural Life

In light of the structural challenges faced by formal education, the two organisations of SOUL and Kimanya described the role of knowledge in the context of Budondo. Education is concerned with strengthening access to knowledge for inhabitants, and nurturing capabilities that are relevant to enhancing rural livelihoods. For one tutor from SOUL, the mentorship programme they have been running is focused on using education to identify and develop local opportunity.

> "These days education is that you are either a doctor or engineer. We are saying no it is not only that. How do you apply what you've learned to think 'this is what I want to do'. How do you become a businessman in agriculture, or how does biology help you stay healthy so that when are you working you are good. Our programmes are more about skilling and supporting them to think creatively. To think beyond the box and not think only 'I need to get a white collar job'. There's this money but there is gold in dust as well." (xl; female NGO worker from Kyabirwa)

While articulating the role and relevance of skills to enhancing more general capabilities relevant to rural life, this perspective outlines the role of creativity and education more generally in appreciating the "gold" that is present in Budondo. By challenging a deficit narrative on rural livelihoods, this tutor from SOUL suggests that there is a relationship between knowledge and the opportunities for youth to general meaningful opportunities in the rural setting. Providing an example of how this knowledge has nurtured a skill relevant to Bujagali, she shared:

> "This girl went to the programme for 12 weeks, and during the course she was thinking about making soap. They were saving pocket money to buy the ingredients for the soap. They felt it was something they could do not only to generate money for themselves but to solve the problem of sanitation and hygiene. I think this was in light of the programme's focus on creative thinking and entrepreneurship." (xl; female NGO worker from Kyabirwa)

From the perspective of the tutor, she shared that their educational approaches seek to "assess the needs" of their village and by doing so, focus the educational programmes on the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, the example provided here also demonstrates the challenges that approaches to non-formal education continue to face in the context of developing capabilities relevant to rural livelihoods. Focus on the development of a specific skill, as described in chapter 3, is part of a wider initiative in Uganda to focus on "skilling" as a response to abstract and non-applicable forms of education brought by colonialism. Over the course of my research, focus on overly simplistic tasks and skills – and the passivity that such forms of training can cultivate – reinforced gendered stereotypes on what work is meaningful to what gender. This analysis illustrates the point that alternative approaches to education are

not a catholicon for the challenges being faced by education for development in a more general sense.

Coordinators and tutors from Kimanya were more explicit in their description of the role of knowledge in their educational programmes and the ways in which this connected to relevant capabilities to rural livelihoods in Budondo. According to one youth tutor, the PSA programme used by Kimanya had helped "attach value to the reality" of the rural livelihoods. Beyond simply consuming information, one coordinator described how the generation and application of knowledge gave structure to the educational approach adopted in Budondo.

> "You see in the PSA materials it is helping us to reflect on the way in which education can be aware of the context. They help us to reflect on the role of knowledge and this knowledge isn't just from somewhere else. It is knowledge that we can benefit from but we also have knowledge within the community. So, then the PSA materials are helping to create that conversation around how a community begins to take charge of its own development through a process of education. I would call it a school in a way, although it is not formal. We are yet to appreciate the full potential, though we can see the stirrings now." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

While describing the nature of the learning process associated with the work of Kimanya, the district coordinator described the interwoven nature of knowledge and cultivating capabilities relevant to rural life. While the relationship between generating new knowledge and developing locally relevant capabilities offers a more nuanced perspective on the role of knowledge, this is not always clear what it looks like in practice. To further illustrate how it can find expression, one coordinator described in some detail one example of the ways in which careful delivery of the PSA programme strengthens a relationship between generating new knowledge and developing capabilities relevant to rural life:

> "For example, we have a unit that focuses on classification; to develop the capability to classify things. These units give us a case study and through it you want to see that you are able to relate it to the reality of your community. So we have an animals classification scheme and a plant classification scheme. The risk is that when the book ends then the students will think 'I enjoyed that because we learned about animals and different species'. The idea is that if you are able to copy an example from this scheme

of classification of animals, then you'd want know about the reality of your community - what are the different animal and plant species that we have where we live? You get to know the boundaries of your micro region - how many villages are there - classifying different activities and people followed in different activities. Then later someone is able to appreciate whatever they have in their social space. At the end of the day you are also trying to characterise people based on different capacities - if I am sick, there is the doctor to help, for school then I will need a teacher, but then how do all these people in their different occupations support the well-being of the what, of the communities. How do the teachers support the children to rise up both materially and spiritually. So then naturally we see some of these participants even yearning for education - to look at becoming a holistic promoter of community building." (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

The perspective provided by this coordinator demonstrates the ways in which youth and adults can be supported by an approach to education that views the generation and application of knowledge as central to developing the capability to act in complex spheres of thought and action. This approach to knowledge incorporates conceptual understanding, the acquisition of skills, the development of insights, and the nurturing of attitudes. In the case of classification, building knowledge relevant to this capability implies understanding the concept that things can be divided into sets according to their common properties, the ability to recognise the properties for which these elements need to be classified, attitudes of carefulness and appreciation for order. Beyond merely grasping this capability, however, the above example indicates the importance of placing newly acquired knowledge and information into diverse contexts in one's immediate surroundings. In so doing, it is suggested, the connection between one's educational experience and their livelihood patterns becomes reinforced.

While such an approach aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, focusing on the contextual relevance of experience to community livelihoods, is suggested that this cultivates a relationship between the student and their community in an entirely new manner. With a focus on student-centred learning and the value of real-world application, it should also be acknowledged that fostering such an orientation toward knowledge in rural settings requires significant resources and teacher training, administrative mechanisms, and access to diverse local environments. For example, efforts to support youth to become 'holistic promoters of community wellbeing' and the related ownership of one's

education, if taken to an extreme, can fail to consider the ways in which capabilities are enhanced in a way that is mindful of the constraints that are to be navigated. For instance, while particular approaches to context-sensitive education are to be adopted at the philosophical level, or indeed at the level of the curriculum and practice, the delivery of educational approaches also entails consolidated mechanisms, structures, practical consideration of financing and attendance, as well as the administrative components of such approaches. Although seemingly separate from the big questions and approach of alternative educational approaches, it is often the case that obstacles and barriers to meaningful educational access in a way that enhances the capabilities of youth that bear relevance to rural life have a tangible impact on the educational experience, and increase the susceptibility of students to one-dimensional approaches to education that serve to reinforce the disconnection of youth from their educational experience, and by proxy, from their community setting.

(ii) Theory & Practice

Related to the role of local knowledge in cultivating capabilities relevant to rural life is the relationship between theory and practice and its implications for education in Budondo. During the fieldwork, tutors of SOUL and Kimanya challenged the dichotomy often perceived between theoretical and practical knowledge in rural education. As described in chapter 5, with expectations of the educational system in Jinja characterised by a false choice of book-learning for some, or practical skills for others.

From the perspective of a SOUL tutor, these trends have been discernible in the circumstances of the youth and their resulting survey of possibilities, noticing that "those who were studying books cannot sustain a business". This has consequences in the context of the rural realities of life in Budondo. According to this tutor, her concern is that such learning processes are often non-existent in the educational experience in rural Jinja.

> "In science, we learn about soil. Some soil takes in water fast, other takes it in more slowly and so on. But when we learn about this we do not learn practically about rainy season and dry season. I know the climate is changing, but we can learn to study how it is changing and the practical impact it has on planting. You see and live it…" (xxxix; male NGO worker from Kyabirwa)

The suggestion that the inability to translate abstract ideas about agriculture, in this instance, into the realities of rural life was a commonly held frustration amongst the youth. From the perspective of one of the local tutors associated with Kimanya, the "complete disconnection" (lviii) between theoretical and practical knowledge has made it very difficult for a youth to know how to apply what they are learning. Such an approach, she suggests, perpetuates the previously described pitfall of processing information rather than engaging with knowledge.

> "When youth do courses, they go and do theory for 8 months and then have 2 months practice to apply all that they learned. In most cases, that is just processing information. It is not really knowledge that can bring about development." (lviii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Efforts to incorporate practical components into theoretical courses has thus been one limited approach to address the challenges youth face in applying relevant knowledge to their surroundings. From the perspective of one of the coordinators, the other response to this challenge has been the overemphasis of skill-based vocational training. Here, he noted that developing skills in isolation from relevant concepts deepens the challenge of seeing "different processes of community life as integrated". Suggesting that these efforts to address the imbalance by "skilling Uganda" is forcing youth "to think in a box", he articulated the that Kimanya's focus on integration of theoretical and practical knowledge rooted in the reality of community life. The efforts of the PSA programme that is being contextualized through Kimanya's activities (Lample 2018) thus seeks to integrate diverse fields of knowledge as well as supporting youth to develop capabilities that are relevant to incorporate both concrete and conceptual elements. Examples of this run through the programme, including teaching skills of animal husbandry alongside the study of animal physiology, or examining the requirements for establish a village store while also engaging with social and economic theories.

Local tutors from Kimanya described what this integration of theoretical and practical knowledge has looked like practically for their groups. For instance, in describing their experience in agricultural land, one tutor shared:

> "We study very much but we also have practical experience in the field. If there is a question about farmers, then we go meet with farmers in our village. I want to give the experience of new approaches to working with land and have recently made some video

> interviews with local farmers about water management and irrigation. When you look at the schools there are practical areas in the curriculum, but the teachers do not see it as important. What I missed in my own schooling I am finding it in my own experience with the PSA programme. The opportunity I lost I do not want people to lose. This is also what motivates me." (xix; male NGO worker from Bujagali)

Rather than seeing practice as a tag-on to a course, integrating theoretical and practical knowledge through an iterative process of learning and action-research characterised much of what was shared by tutors from Kimanya. For another tutor, the results of these approaches have started to speak for themselves, describing how his group has "started to see the true reality of things" (xxv) as they study something and then immediately apply it to their surroundings as part of the learning process. Importantly, the tutor's remarks on becoming "motivated… to know more" (xxv; female NGO worker from Bujagali) implies that the explicit incorporation of theoretical and practical knowledge both provides youth with the capacity to identify opportunities in their surroundings, but also offers and encourages a pathway of ongoing learning.

Extended to its teacher training programme, this integration of knowledge has recently started to impact the approach of some local teachers who have started to collaborate closely with Kimanya. According to one teacher in Kyabirwa:

> "Recently, I was explaining to pupils how to plant beans. When teaching you are also telling them about spacing in the soil, how you mulch when they have germinated, how to apply the fertilisers, and so on. But this time, after teaching in the classroom I went into the community and when I reached there, I found that they planted the beans but they were not mulched and they had not used the fertilisers. So, I started discussing with them how we can get the fertilisers, we can get natural fertilisers and not artificial ones by using our local materials. I taught them how to get the natural fertilisers. At the end they grasped it and when I returned the next time I saw that they were using the natural fertilisers." (xlv; female adult from Kyabirwa)

While small examples, these efforts illustrate an approach by Kimanya that consciously seeks to nurture relationship with local place through the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. In adopting this approach, the few instances of interaction show a set of

ideas and approaches relevant to the narrative of prosperity described in chapter 6 and important to the analysis of the migration-education nexus for youth in rural Jinja. It is an approach, as suggested by other research (Murphy-Graham 2012; VanderDussen Toukan 2018; Pirroni 2019) that illusory conceptions of prestige gradually disappear and become replaced by purposeful engagement toward social change.

(iii) Empowerment & Agency

Related to the capacity for local action, one additional dimension regarding the role of knowledge in rural education is the emphasis placed on empowerment and agency. However theoretically sound knowledge may be in cultivating rural capabilities or overcoming theoretical and practical divides, coordinators from SOUL and Kimanya articulated the importance of emphasising the principle of universal participation within their educational approaches. From the perspective of Kimanya, one coordinator acknowledged that while it is unrealistic to expect *every* inhabitant to participate in their educational programmes, the programmes should still benefit every inhabitant through the "promoters of community well-being" that emerge from the programme. "One imagines it as an institution for learning… not only within the groups but for all members of the community". (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja). As such, providing enriching learning environments, supporting youth to take ownership of their education, and enabling them to navigate the various processes of community life with resilience and determination were factors described by these alternative approaches to education in rural Jinja.

This vision of knowledge that embraces – and empowers – an entire village was present amongst a number of tutors and tutor training spaces offered by Kimanya in Budondo. Along these lines, one local tutor described:

> "If the educational process we are engaging in begins to take root, I think that the community itself will begin to realise that for development to happen it requires each and every one to be engaged and contributing in different ways based on their capacities, talents and even material means. And not to think that someone else will bring development and put in their community" (xix; male NGO worker from Bujagali)

From this perspective, conceptualising youth agency in the social, cultural, economic, and political environment of Budondo is critical. Thus, an ongoing area of learning expressed by coordinators from both SOUL and Kimanya is the way in which education in Budondo can cultivate agency amongst the youth, so that the process of education for development being set in motion is not confined to the work of the organisation, but increasingly draws on the ownership and capacity of growing pools of rural inhabitants. According to a district coordinator, this ownership manifests itself in several ways, most notably in an orientation towards knowledge that does views progress as the responsibility of all and the expression of agency over passivity.

> "You find that the tutor is there to help raise that consciousness within the participants and the community at large. We have not seen groups ask for things. It is interesting to see how a group takes on ownership. If someone says they want to do tailoring or crafts - it is their idea because they have seen a need. So, with these programmes we want everyone to be asking: 'How can we help each other to take ownership of our projects? What materials are available that we can start with, if it is a craft business? Where can we find beads?' Then as a group they work together and decide what to do with that money. As they try to do a number of activities, the tutors are helping them to be creative and to utilise whatever they have." (lix; male NGO worker from Jinja)

In describing this orientation to generating and applying knowledge, the conversation amongst groups of youth in Budondo become part of a wider conversation within the community. As described by the same coordinator:

> "In our community spaces we hear about the three protagonists - the community, the individual and the institutions. So what role does each play in ensuring this all thrives? How do we help communities understand we need the support of each other? What role does a local leader play in supporting this space, what role do community members play in supporting the space, what roles do the sub-county officials play? When we start asking these questions we get away from saying "ah this project is for Kimanya" but we say "this is for Kyabirwa" or "this is for Bujagali"." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

The suggestion that all educational approaches are part of a wider conception of transformation, as described earlier, resonates with the measured approach taken toward education in the context of the migration-education nexus. Rejecting the view that education is an automatic good opens space for understand its relation to broader patterns of rural livelihoods, as well as the challenges and legitimate possibilities when educational endeavours become connected to broader community dynamics and institutional channels.

The work of Arjun Appadurai (2004) has been used in this thesis to describe how the "capacity to aspire" offers a useful conceptual device for understanding the ways in which individuals and communities map out pathways to future goals and aspirations. At the intersection of empowerment and agency, the capacity to aspire assists with understanding how individuals and communities envision possibilities beyond their immediate circumstances, which can act as a catalyst for transformation in rural contexts. While incorporating the ability to act upon and influence one's surroundings and broader structures, the capacity to aspire offers a helpful mechanism for understanding the potentiality of education to redefine individual and collective trajectories, challenge prevailing norms, and build increasingly resilient and adaptive rural livelihoods.

Tutors from SOUL expressed some of the ways in which they wanted to realise these aspirations, not only for themselves but also for their peers.

> "There are so many youth who are unemployed and some of them are out of school so it means that their hopes of getting another opportunity is difficult… I would like to do more with the youth. At our age we need a lot but sometimes we cannot get it because the opportunities are very low." (xxiv; male youth leader from Bujagali)

The feeling that opportunities for youth are low and that further support is required is somewhat distinct from perspectives offered by tutors with Kimanya, whose tutors described the latency of opportunity that would be realised subject to the right conditions, with emphasis placed on both individual and collective conditions. For one participant, this shift in orientation to knowledge stands in contrast to the conceptions of education described in chapters 5 and 6, with qualifications becoming tickets out of the village. As one participant in the PSA programme offered by Kimanya expressed:

> "I used to think that education helps someone to get what they want, but when I studied the programme from PSA, I'm now learning that someone learns but they do not learn just for themselves." (i; male youth from Bujagali)

With a broader perspective on the role and nature of knowledge in the context of education, this form of "service-learning" offers insight into how a particular orientation toward knowledge nurtures a relationship with rural space (VanderDussen Toukan 2018, p. 826). By placing service as an axis for learning, these alternative approaches to education place service at the centre of the activities. Be it workshops on topics of interest to the community, smallholder production processes, or home visits to raise awareness about public health initiatives, these activities both widen the scope of the programme to the community and enhance the agency of the students, not simply as passive participants of community life, but as active members engaged in promoting its well-being.

Chapter 6 outlined the ways in which technological transfer has become synonymous with a *modernity narrative* in rural Jinja. In responding to this dynamic, coordinators from Kimanya described how one indicator ownership and empowerment was the ways in which youth and adults made technological choices. As one coordinator describes:

> "Someone said you cannot grow a region from a garden… but the PSA programme is helping participants to consider how their technological choices fit within the reality of community life." (lvii; male NGO worker from Jinja)

Developing the capability to make informed decisions about the use of technology – be it fertiliser, mechanical, or digital – implies reading the reality of one's surroundings, understanding its strengths and challenges, and building a long-term vision for its progress. Monocultural techniques, which explicitly use aggressive fertilisers to maximise product yields, are one example of technological choices that are not concerned with the long-term impacts on soil fertility and land use. For another coordinator, this process of empowerment is part of the wider conception of knowledge and the use of science:

> "Though it takes time to change the mindset of an individual - sometimes you find that NGO's still come in and say: I brought these seeds for you to plant but you must do it this way. You have to apply urea and people have been left just at the level of consumers

> of technology but not being involved in the process of structured, scientific learning." (xxxix; male NGO worker from Kyabirwa)

Aligned with these perspectives, a local tutor in Kyabirwa described the task of everyone "becoming scientists" rather than "just consumers of technology" (xl; female NGO worker from Kyabirwa), an orientation toward knowledge that resonates with the concept of transformative agency described in chapter 5 (Bajaj 2009). By cultivating a proactive stance toward individual and collective decision-making, education becomes a potentially strong force in promoting transformative agency. Similar to research conducted on the PSA programme in Colombia and Zambia (Skeaff 2011; Correa and Murphy-Graham 2019), an orientation toward knowledge that emphasises action, service and meaningful contexts for the application and generation of new learning offers insight into alternative approaches to education in rural Jinja that seek to cultivate individual and collective responsibilities toward enhancing rural livelihoods.

Closely connected to this conception of transformative agency and empowerment is the question of ownership of one's educational experience, as well as the decision-making processes associated with engaging with sustainable rural livelihoods. These concepts are deeply intertwined with the capability approach, and offered incisive insight into capability-enhancing opportunities. Importantly, these examples of educational approaches that foster a conception of ownership and empowerment that overcomes individualistic approaches is important, given the conceptual fogginess often associated with capabilities, and the risk that this becomes expressed in education that reinforces such a misunderstanding. Ownership and empowerment as expressed above, for instance, illustrates the personal and collective dimensions of knowledge generation, and focuses on enhancing the freedom to achieve well-being in the context of community life. This important nuance has far-reaching implications for the pedagogical design and approach of education in rural settings, and informs choices made about the tools, resources and materials incorporated by education that support youth to pursue lives they have reason to value.

7.5 Capability to Choose Where to Live

Chapter 5 suggested that meaningful consideration of migration processes in the context of the migration-education nexus should account for both mobility and immobility in the context of

the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja. While the emphasis of this thesis has been on the processes that shape – and are shaped by – rising aspirations to leave Budondo, this section considers the relevance of the insights from alternative approaches to rural education for shaping the aspirations and capabilities for staying in rural Jinja.

Over two decades ago, Jorgen Carling coined the term involuntary immobility to describe the complex nature of migration decision-making (Carling 2002). Based on research in Cape Verde, Carling's innovative two-step approach of aspirations and abilities was used to construct the argument that while many people hold the aspiration to migrate, they often do not have the ability to do so. With the aim of understanding the emergence of migration aspirations and critiquing the barriers and constraints imposed on potential migrants, the article offered new conceptual tools for analysing the impact of globalisation on individual and collective livelihoods across the world. However, an important category made explicit in his paper – but not the core of his investigation – concerned voluntary immobility, a term used to describe the fact that there are many individuals in diverse settings who do not have the aspiration to migrate. What is it that informs this decision-making process? This chapter has initiated an area of exploration that alternative approaches to rural education play a potential role in youth and adults choosing to stay in the village.

Although migration has been accused of a mobility bias in recent years (Schewel 2020), more recently a growing body of research has emerged on the importance and relevance of immobility for understanding spatial dynamics in diverse cultural contexts (e.g., Bélanger and Silvey 2020; Setrana 2021; Debray, Ruyssen and Schewel 2022; Karell 2022; Gotehus 2023). As used in this thesis, De Haas suggests the *capability to choose where to live* (2014; 2021) protects migration analysis from a narrow mobility bias, framing non-migratory and migratory decision-making in the context of the capability approach (Nussbaum 1997; Sen 2001).

Having critiqued the impact of placeless education, this chapter considered the potential role of non-formal education approaches for nourishing a relationship with the rural space and contributing to youth livelihood prospects in Budondo. Avoiding causal claims, it illustrated several themes and experiences relevant to two interconnected conditions in rural Jinja. These conditions, it is suggested, concern the ways in which: (i) educational approaches become contextualised to specific rural settings based on youth opportunity and experiences of formal education; and (ii) meaningful education rests on analysis of rural opportunity and becomes

grounded in the concerns, strengths and aspirations of rural livelihoods at all stages of implementation and refinement.

Studying the relationship between formal education and migration in Ethiopia, Schewel and Fransen (2018) use Young Lives survey data to describe how aspirations toward urban futures are strengthened in primary and secondary schooling. Arguing for a heterogeneous approach to education analysis, the authors go on to suggest that education initiatives are likely to shape migration aspirations in different ways. In this chapter, it is argued that the educational approaches adopted by SOUL and Kimanya-Ngeyo incorporate fundamental pedagogical principles that increase the likelihood of youth and adults choosing to stay in rural Jinja. It is important to note that it is not that these organisations do not take strategic action to ensure youth stay in the village, an approach that seeks to narrow agency and conflates the capability to choose where to live with the functioning of staying. Rather, focus on a conception of change that binds the individual and the collective into one coherent educational approach opens an important layer of the migration-education nexus in the context of rural Jinja.

It is suggested that educational approaches that view personal and collective transformation as interconnected naturally seek out opportunities to develop content and approaches that incorporate the reality of rural surroundings throughout the learning process. By nurturing a vision and experience of dual transformation, youth experience a form of education that challenges the primacy of individualism or collectivism, thereby contributing new insights into some of the narratives of prosperity outlined in chapter 5. For example, locating the *identity narrative* within the context of individual and collective transformation challenges false scales of prestige and prejudice associated with staying in the village, reassuring youth – and their parents – that they are not simply engaged in replicating the past. In this way, it is suggested that education can go some way in enhancing the transformative agency of rural youth and genuinely cultivating the capability to choose where to live.

Similarly, this chapter expressed the view that generating and applying knowledge in meaningful contexts enhances capabilities relevant to rural life. This pedagogical approach, it is argued, shapes both the attitudes of the youth and adults toward their surroundings while adding further texture to the *agrarian* and *modernity narratives* articulated in chapter 5. In particular, the perception that a modern future is to be found in the city falters in the face of approaches to education that incorporate the methods of science, reject overly romanticised

notions of the past, and find meaningful bridges between tradition and modern knowledge through a process of empowering youth to become increasingly conscious of the technological choices they make in light of their rural surroundings.

7.6 Summary

In response to the diversity of educational experiences of youth in Budondo and the well-established argument that education unfolds in diverse ways across each cultural context, this chapter has considered two non-formal approaches to education in rural Jinja that incorporate pedagogical practices and principles relevant to the role of education in enhancing rural livelihoods. It suggests that certain foundational themes and assumptions shape much of educational practice and have a tangible impact on student outcomes. To consider their implications for youth livelihoods, the two suggested themes are *conceptions of transformation* and *orientations toward knowledge*.

Through the perspectives of coordinators and tutors associated with SOUL and Kimanya-Ngeyo, this research highlights the tangible ways in which assumptions and approaches – be they implicit or explicit – come to impact upon the livelihoods of rural youth, particularly in the context of migration-education nexus being considered throughout this thesis.

Taking chapter 5 and 7 together, the argument advanced by this thesis is that the diversity of educational experience in rural Jinja is precisely what needs to be understood in greater detail in order to articulate the spatial implications of the aspirations and capabilities that youth continually reform as they engage in the dynamic future-making imaginaries and practices associated with the current realities of rural livelihoods. Although far from claiming to be the standard for rural education, this chapter has drawn on the experiences of participants and tutors associated with two non-formal educational approaches in Budondo. By highlighting key assumptions of local rural education, the chapter has illustrated the potential complementarity of formal and non-formal approaches to education (Rogers 2005) in the context of the broader transformation of rural livelihoods and offers insight into the role of education in forming capabilities relevant to Bujagali and Kyabirwa, as well as engaging in processes that value local knowledge and experience in the context of educational promise (Nichols 2023a).

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

At the outset, this thesis expressed interest in why rural youth see their future in the city. Drawing on scholarly research and rooted in the empirical investigation of two rural villages in Jinja, it has suggested that many young adults from Budondo come to conceptualise their futures in the city due to the broader social, economic, and political transformations occurring Uganda. Informed by perceptions of diminishing rural significance and expanding urban prospects, these shifts, it is argued, will continue to redefine the relationship between rural and urban livelihoods in Jinja.

This thesis has shown how such transformations do not operate simply at the level of social structures, but also manifest themselves in beliefs, attitudes and values that become internalised by rural youth. Including themes of success, failure, and the promises of the city, these subtle expressions of transformation resonate with the work of Paul Willis (1970), and his description of the ways in which working-class boys from the United Kingdom incorporate wider ideologies in the school setting. These values and beliefs lead to an apparent freedom of choice that expresses strikingly similar sentiments to the hegemonic vision of neoliberal thought. This, I have argued, is no coincidence. Through examination of the ways in which agency has been constrained and capabilities limited, the thesis has articulated a nuanced picture where, much like Willis suggested, internalising wider worldviews is not simply a passive acceptance of ideology. Rather, it has shown that in the face of powerful global forces, youth in rural Jinja continue to demonstrate engaged – albeit uncertain – perspectives on the place *of* rural life and *their* place *in* rural life. The willingness amongst youth to express uncertainty, vigour and desire in the face of ambiguity, tension and dissonance, offers an important and timely reminder that meaningful engagement with youth livelihoods is essential for effective rural development policies.

To understand these shifts at a psychological and structural level, the thesis has positioned migration and education as two key components of youth livelihoods in Budondo, a rural sub-

county of Jinja. Through the examination of experiences relevant to the migration-education nexus and the transformation of rural livelihoods in Jinja, the thesis has articulated a conception of livelihoods rooted in the rural dynamics, educational experience and (im)mobility patterns of young people as they engage in diverse future-making endeavours.

8.2 Scholarly Contribution

This thesis is situated within two bodies of scholarly work: (i) research into the drivers of internal and international migration processes in the context of rural livelihoods and broader processes of social transformation; and (ii) research on diverse forms of education for development and their contested roles in enhancing rural livelihoods. Built around the overarching research question of how aspirations and capabilities are shaped by eductional experience, migration prospects and the broader transformation of livelihoods in rural Jinja, the theoretical and empirical contributions made by this thesis rest on three pillars.

Firstly, it adopts a social transformation perspective in its attempt to understand the drivers of rural-urban migration in Uganda. Through its design, approach and conclusions, this thesis builds on the implications of this paradigm shift, most explicitly articulated and substantiated by Stephen Castles over a decade ago (Castles 2010; 2018). At the time, Castles suggested that such a perspective implies "examining the links between social transformation and human mobility across a range of socio-spatial levels, while always seeking to understand how human agency can condition responses to structural factors" (Castles 2010, p. 1565). This thesis utilises the changing dynamics of education in rural settings as a significant process of transformation for understanding the variability and contextuality of youth migration in rural Uganda. In so doing, it challenges simplistic "for" or "against" perspectives on migration and contributes to embedding migration processes within a more general understanding of the rural-urban livelihoods in Jinja, Uganda.

Secondly, this thesis contributes to an already substantial body of research concerned with the contested role of education in development (Dyer 2001; Unterhalter 2009; Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose and Tembon 2017; Dyer and Rajan 2023). By locating youth educational experiences in the context of Bujagali and Kyabirwa, two rural villages in south-eastern Uganda, the research illustrates the heterogeneity of educational experience at a local level, the tensions created with global narratives, and the diverse impacts it can have on well-being. Drawing on livelihood transformations – and placing the spatial implications of education at

the heart of the thesis – it has offered a textured account of challenges and opportunities facing education in development contexts (McCowan and Unterhalter 2021). From this perspective, the thesis has critiqued approaches to education that are unaware at best – or dismissive at worst - of context and considered emerging insights with regards to educational approaches that are sensitive to rural livelihoods and their spatial implications (Kwauk and Robinson 2016).

Finally, it suggests that both the fields of migration and education in development have experienced new analytical possibilities with the incorporation of aspirations (Appadurai 2004) and capabilities (Sen 2001) in the context of youth rural livelihoods. Such developments, however, have operated largely in silos, with modest interaction between these fields on the conceptual nature and empirical possibilities presented by using aspirations and capabilities to overcome a structure-agency divide in both migration (Bakewell 2010) and education (Archer 1999). In an age of policy coherence, this thesis has challenged this siloed approach, suggesting that it leads to theoretical fragmentation. Beyond advocating compatibility, it has adopted a synergistic approach to aspirations and capabilities, suggesting that it enriches the analysis the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja by detailing individual characteristics in the context of social, economic, and cultural contexts. Beyond abstract synthesis, it suggests that accounting for the structural and agentic dimensions of youth livelihoods in this way enriches conceptual clarity, grounds practical insight, and raises nuanced implications for supportive rural policy and practice.

In light of these high-levels contributions, I illustrate the arguments that have been presented throughout the thesis, demonstrating how both empirical and theoretical elements have contributed to a critical dimension of the discourse on migration, education and development. More specifically, by drawing on the research question framework set out in chapter 1, it demonstrates the ways in which aspirations and capabilities are utilised and enriched throughout the thesis, all in a manner that illustrates its originality, nuance, and rigour .

Given the overarching research question of this thesis is concerned with how the aspirations and capabilities of young adults are shaped by their educational experiences, migration prospects and the broader transformation of the rural livelihoods in which they reside, the thesis seeks to address several components associated with this question.

While setting out the nature of the 'challenge' and the organisation of the thesis, chapter 1 outlines the key theoretical and empirical contributions that are intended by the thesis in the

context of the research questions that guide its theoretical engagement, methodological approach, and empirical insight. Furthermore, the chapter suggests that the incorporation of 'origin' perspectives into the debate on migration, education and development is far more than describing South-South trends, or outlining the situation of countries that experience high levels of out-migration, be it internal or international. Instead, it suggests that an origin perspective locates the perspectives of migrants themselves in a manner that avoids cultural relativism on the one hand, and Western determinism on the other. Furthermore, it suggests that centring the perspectives of rural communities, processes of (im)mobility and individual lives within any given cultural context informs meaningful reflection on the concerns and aspirations of those whom development purports to serve.

In this context, the chapter suggests an original framework to illustrate the crux of the contribution of the overall thesis. While insight is gleaned into the respective fields of migration, education and development, the under-researched nature of this intersection has meant that similar concepts have not been adequately harnessed for holistic analysis and insight. With the overarching goal of sustainable rural livelihoods, the framework suggests that context-sensitive education, a rich understanding of mobility and immobility patterns and prospects both shapes and is shaped by aspirations and capabilities. The significance of this framework for addressing the overarching research questions is the nuanced approach it takes to the relationship between structure and agency. When imbalanced, such analysis overstates the dominance of structural imbalances and the operation of power on the one hand, or the expression of individual freedom and agency on the other. In this framework – and throughout the thesis – the question of how aspirations and capabilities are shaped is considered in detail. However, in addition to articulating the very real ways in which education shapes the values and aspirations of young people, the thesis aligns with research conducted by Corbett (2016), Schewel (2019) and Nichols (2023a) by setting out the possibilities and power of transformative agency (Bajaj 2009; Correa and Murphy-Graham 2019) in the face of robust structural challenges.

8.3 Migration-Education Nexus: Conceptualising Aspirations & Capabilities

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 offer a particular perspective on migration and education as a foundation for examining the migration-education nexus in rural Jinja. Given the focus of the thesis concerns the specific ways in which migration occurs *through* educational experience in

the rural setting, both chapters focus on canonical works and foundational assumptions within the fields of migration and education.

By demonstrating elements of commonality across two vast fields, this approach does not seek to provide a comprehensive account of each field or indeed to analyse broader conceptions of development that bear relevance to emerging empirical themes. Rather, by focusing on key philosophical and theoretical positioning, as well as the context of Uganda, chapters 2 and 3 enable the thesis to provide the rigour and justification for the use of aspirations and capabilities as a bridge for the intersection between migration and education. That is to say, the thesis seeks an original contribution in the synergy that it establishes between migration and education and the reciprocity for both fields from such an analysis.

Through the well-established capability framework (Nussbaum 1997; Sen 2001) the distinction between functionings and capabilities provides important nuance for analysis into the relationship between migration and education in Jinja, Uganda. In particular, both chapters incorporate several thinkers into this analysis and apply it to a Ugandan context. In so doing, the thesis begins to address some of the sub-questions of this research, by avoiding theoretical eclecticism and conceptualising, with nodes of clarity, the intersectional possibilities posed by the use of aspirations and capabilities in the context of the migration-education nexus. Furthermore, by drawing on the work of Sen (2001), Urry (2007), De Haas (2021), Carling (2002), Appadurai (2004) and Freire (1970) as sources of insight, these chapters seek to conceptualise the migration-education nexus within processes of im(mobility) and the broader transformation of rural livelihoods.

To advance the rigour and originality of the project, this thesis integrated multiple qualitative methods in its research design. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the study incorporates a combination of qualitative methods in a manner that focuses on three core principles of its social enquiry: participation, perception, and immersion. Based on a critical realist approach, the thesis outlines the context, participants and methodological choices made throughout the project. Given the stratification of reality, and the desire to unravel layers of its social dimensions, the chapter emphasises the role of positionality and reflexivity for unconvering relevant biases and assumptions related to conducting empirical research in rural Jinja.

One particular example of the important role of such an approach is delineated in chapter 4, and it relates to the subtle ways in which methodological individualism can shape what is felt to be the "correct" way to conduct research into a given cultural context, particularly when

approached with specific research questions in mind. Through the use of reflexivity for adjusting to nuanced cultural expressions and values, the chapter itself offers a response to the sub-question on how processes of education and migration are connected to broader processes of community life. That is to say, in a culture where the collective is more present and visible, as illustrated by the reflections on methodological collectivism, there exists a strong case for exploring new approaches to empirical research and, in particular, for learning about the role of collaborative focused ethnography (Knoblauch 2005) and participatory rural research (Chambers and Conway 1992). In addition to facilitating a richness of empirical data, the methodological and ontological considerations highlighted throughout this thesis illustrate the tensions and interactions between the individual and the collective. By drawing on a range of sophisticated methodologies, it contributes to a growing body of empirical approaches that seek to foster methods that are adapted to relevant cultural contexts in a manner that does not perpetuate cultural relativism.

8.4 Migration-Through-Education

The central contribution of this thesis is that the migration aspirations and capabilities of rural youth are often potentiated by the experiences of formal education in rural Jinja. Illustrated by the experiences, perceptions, and questions of youth themselves, the research aims to disrupt the notions of accessibility and homogeneity. Rather than conduct a simple cause-effect analysis of 'levels of schooling' and 'levels of migration aspirations', of all 'youth' in rural Jinja, the research engages with the textured ways that aspirations and capabilities are expressed and continually re-shaped in the context of wider process of rural transformation. The migration-education nexus, and the scholarly contribution in this thesis of "migration-through-education", thus represents a diversity of experiences and contestations amongst youth in Bujagali and Kyabirwa.

This responds to the overarching research question of this thesis, namely: how are the aspirations and capabilities of young adults shaped by their educational experiences, migration prospects and the broader transformation of rural livelihoods? Details of this argument are further outlined in chapter 5 of the thesis, which advances the claim that migration aspirations are potentiated by formal educational experiences in rural Jinja. By analysing the emergence of migration aspirations and spatial implications of educational experiences, further insight into the ways in which youth are engaged in meaningful future-making endeavours is expressed, demonstrating how frequently these futures are imagined in the city.

In building on the concept of 'migration-for-education' (Crivello 2011; Dustmann and Glitz 2011; Chandrasekhar and Sharma 2014) as one component of the migration-education nexus, it is argued that approaching the migration-education nexus from an alternative (yet complementary) perspective holds particular significance for how we conceptualise the interaction between educational experience and migration aspirations, as outlined in the first sub-question of the research. Termed 'migration-through-education', this concept seeks to build on the work of some key scholars, including Corbett (2007), Schewel and Fransen (2018), Rao and Patil (2022) and Nichols (2023a), each of which offer incisive analysis of diverse cultural contexts and the ways in which the likelihood of migration is increased by the rise of formal education. The thread running through this emerging body of research is that formal education does not have the social interest or political will to meaningfully cultivate capabilities relevant to rural livelihoods. In addition to seeing educational experiences as heightening migration aspirations, attention has been given to how and why formal education in rural settings – through its curriculum, portrayal and promises – is associated with rising migration aspirations.

In addressing the ways in which rural education and rural-urban migration are connected to broader processes of community life, as expressed by a sub-research question of the thesis, this thesis examines the perceptions and strategies that families in Budondo employ concerning the futures of their children and the role of education. Families often strategise to have some of their children migrate, seeking diverse income sources and galvanised by allure of the city as a symbol of success. Rural opportunities, it illustrates, often seem less attractive, especially when compared to the perceived prosperity of urban life.

Going further on the sub-question concerning the relationship of the migration-education nexus to the broader processes of community life, a notable observation expressed throughout this thesis is that individual aspirations, especially among the youth, are coloured by underlying assumptions about rural livelihood deficits. Rural living, especially in a neoliberal entrepreneurial context, is often associated with 'backwardness' (Biriwasha 2012; Corbett 2016). With this backdrop, it is argued that education becomes a tool that is interpreted as transcending the barriers associated with rural life (Nichols 2023b), regardless of whether it delivers on those promises.

With youth identity in Budondo deeply intertwined with perceptions of community life, it is argued that youth perceptions are in a state of flux, highlighting the need to appreciate the cultural significance attached to education (Appadurai 2004) and the prevalent expectations of what formal education can bring to the community (Crivello 2011).

Drawing from varied perspectives, including those of youth, community leaders, and district officials, the chapter sheds light on the intimate relationship between education and migration. As youth envision their futures, it is argued that formal education often contributes to their aspirations toward urban dreamscapes and forms part of a wider body of research concerning migration as part of broader processes of social transformation (Castles 2010; 2018). Far from problematising migration, such a perspective is formed through the chapters analysis of educational experience and rural circumstances. Fundamentally, the arguments advanced in this chapter avoid binary "for" or "against" perspectives on migration and locate the empirical insights within the operation of relevant social, economic, cultural and political forces.

Moreover, empirical analysis of educational experiences of youth in rural Jinja highlights a key scholarly contribution of this thesis. Indeed, despite the welcome developments in drawing on aspirations and capabilities in the context of migration processes and the dynamics of rural life, as outlined in Chapter 2, it is often the case that such aspirations and capabilities are often treated as a black box of enquiry when it comes to rural research. That is to say, often how aspirations and capabilities are stimulated, formed, and re-shaped, though complex as an endeavour, lies at the heart of the questions of this thesis, and the broader questions facing sustainable livelihoods in rural and urban settings.

to better understand the practices and perceptions of education, as well as the conditions and circumstances that impact upon migration processes,

8.5 Toward Vibrant Rural Livelihoods

Having considered the role of formal educational experiences in heightening migration aspirations, another key contribution of this thesis is it grounded analysis of these same global forces within the contextual realities of Budondo, locateing the migration-education nexus within four narratives of prosperity that have come to shape various processes of community life.

In so doing, this analysis begins to articulate relevant conditions and dynamics underpinning the relationships between diverse forms of education, capabilities and labour opportunities in rural Jinja, which is the third sub-question of the thesis.

Locating itself primarily from the perspectives of Jinja's inhabitants, Chapter 6 draws on the work of MacIntyre (1984) to evaluate the role of communal narratives, identifying four key narratives based on the extensive fieldwork of the thesis. In an attempt to go deeper into the stratified layer of social reality, as facilitated by a crticial realist approach, these narratives offer insight into the concerns, hopes, and aspirations of the rural inhabitants of Bujagali and Kyabirwa.

By illustrating the narratives of rural prosperity, the thesis draws on various research methodologies, including wealth ranking, transect walks and participant observation, to offer a holistic view of the participants experiences and the principles of participation, perception, and immersion infused the ways in which these narratives came to be understood, Of significant note is the emphasis on the agrarian economy's challenges in the face of modernisation, and the uncertainty of younger generation. Interestingly, while Budondo is known as the ‘food basket’ of Jinja due to its agricultural productivity, many youth approach agriculture with scepticism. This resonates with previous research from Biriwasha (2012), Katz (2004) and White (2012), all of whom describe it as a generational challenge specifically connected to education. The narratives suggest that the association of farming with the previous generation's struggles creates a belief that it is an automatic path to hardship. The prevailing sentiment is that those who end up in agriculture have failed to achieve greater ambitions, a perspective perpetuated by some educators who use it as a cautionary tale to motivate academic excellence.

One of the central themes highlighted throughout the thesis, and most explicitly in Chapter 6, is the importance of understanding local histories and socio-cultural contexts to truly grasp the dynamics shaping the aspirations of youth in rural Jinja. Notably, while advancements labelled as “modern” are taking place, they don't always align with the enhancement of individual capabilities, leading to a sense of insufficiency and isolation among the youth. This perspective and scepticism toward impositional notions of progress demonstrates the centrality of conceptualising the kinds of transformations that are to be desired in rural settings. In so doing,

these questions raise the fundamental question on the operation of power and who is allowed to contribute to the formation of such a vision.

In light of the broader empirical analysis of the thesis, its contribution demonstrates in explicit terms the ways in which migration is intrinsically linked to overarching processes of social transformation. Far beyond a slogan, illustrating the mechanisms, contradictions, tensions, dualities, and uncertainties associated with social transformation has also emphasised a more fundamental question. If, indeed, migration is part of social transformation, then what is driving that transformation, and what thoughtful consideration and practical intervention is required to ensure such transformation truly enhances the capabilities of those whom development purports to serve. At a more concrete level, this thesis has engaged with this wider philosophy of change by examining the ways in which decisions about migration deeply influenced by perceived opportunities in both rural and urban contexts. By exploring, from the perspectives of rural youth and adults, the promises and practices promoted by educational experiences in the village, bigger questions on conceptions of the good life, the governance of rural-urban dynamics, and the relationships that define the individual, the insitutitons and the community are unearthed.

While the specific insights and conclusions are rooted in the context of rural Jinja, the insights generated from these chapter have implications for other rural settings, where global challenges and opportunities are experienced by rural populations the world over as they navigate the complexities of tradition, modernity, and development. Irrespective of specific, the research underscores the importance of understanding local narratives to inform effective policies and interventions.

8.6 Capability to Choose Where to Live

While the thesis seeks to transcend ‘for’ or ‘against’ perspectives on migration, the key normative claim that runs through this project is that an organising principle of education in development should be *enhancing the capability to choose where to live.* Naturally, enhancing this capability is not to be confused with enacting specific functionings (i.e. staying or moving), nor is it to be conflated with the idea that education should stop people from moving from rural settings. Rather, this normative claim seeks to engage with foundational concepts in modern society that bear relevance to the decision-making processes of youth in rural Jinja and their perceptions on ‘freedom’, ‘choice’, and ‘modernisation’. Given the complex nature of these

themes, their fusion with culture, and the competing philosophical positions that have been adopted for each of them, the thesis approaches the ways in which this capability to choose where to live has been eroded or enhanced, by incorporating theoretical and empirical insight into the ways in which young people are exposed to various conceptions of prosperity, and the manner in which norms are cultivated through their educational experience and wider cultural values.

Having considered the interplay between education and migration within the context of rural Jinja, the thesis underscores that many young adults, through their formal educational experiences, feel distanced from their rural roots, having been exposed to narrow, globalised educational frameworks that fail to resonate with local realities. Such formal education often doesn't address the intricacies and nuances of rural livelihoods, making youth feel alienated from their own community and surroundings. As such, the thesis sets up a fundamental consideration when it comes to visions for new dynamics between migration, education and development in Uganda, and more generally. Put simply, it begins to unravel the key question: if diverse forms of education play a significant role in *shaping* the aspirations and capabilities of young adults toward particular ends, what, then, should be the characteristics of educational approaches that seek to enhance capabilities and foster sustainable rural livelihoods?

To begin the conversation on this complex arena of endeavour, the work of SOUL Foundation and Kimanya-Ngeyo are highlighted as two organisations who perceive and navigate the challenges of decontextualisation in Budondo and are striving to ensure their pedagogical approaches are sensitive to rural livelihoods. This attempt aligns with the work of Ladson-Billings (1995) on culturally relevant pedagogy and Corbett's (2016) critique of placeless education, which suggests education comes to erase the nuance and opportunity of rural livelihoods. As they argue, context-sensitive education should be concerned with strengthening identity and enhancing rural livelihoods, but what this entails precisely is not always clear.

Chapter 7 builds on these perspectives, critiquing "placeless" education and considering alternative approaches adopted by non-formal education that nurture a connection with the rural environment and contribute to youth livelihood prospects in Budondo. Taken together, the experiences of these organisations suggest an educational approach that is grounded in rural circumstances, reflecting youth opportunities and experiences, and concerned with conceiving of the rural space as one of vibrant opportunity.

Most critically, the thesis highlights that consideration of alternative educational programmes does not adopt a narrow dualist perspective that pits formal and non-formal education against one another in the context of rural development. Rather, fundamental themes and concepts that pertain to educational programmes that enhance the *capability to choose where to live* is the key scholarly contribution that emerges, highlighting in particular the interaction of structural considerations with agentic process, and emphasising the notion of transformative agency as central to meaningful conceptualisation (Bajaj 2009).

The organisations highlighted in the thesis adopt pedagogical principles that have the potential to influence the decision of the youth to remain in rural Jinja. Rather than establishing causal claims toward this relationship, the core argument advanced is that education should be transformative, bridging individual and collective aspirations, and be rooted in local realities, thereby giving youth a genuine choice about where they wish to live.

While highlighting the need for more contextually relevant, grounded, and transformative educational approaches in rural Jinja, the thesis argues that theoretical and policy-oriented approaches that seek to simplify migration and education obtain a partial picture, at best, and also present the distinct possibility of distorting the drivers and mechanisms of migration. While this analysis is rooted in the specific educational and cultural milieu of rural Jinja, the poorly understood elements of the migration discourse highlight its far-reaching implications. In this regard, a key contribution of the thesis is that absolute positions that education automatically gives rise to migration aspirations, or that development leads to less or more migration, fail to consider the distinctions, nuances and complexities associated with development endeavours in a given socio-cultural context. Instead, the simple point advanced throughout the thesis is that diverse approaches to education have diverse impacts on youth and adults and can play a pivotal role in shaping migration decisions, fostering a sense of belonging, and ensuring that the youth can genuinely cultivate the capability to choose where to live. Having considered the foundational assumptions of educational approaches along the lines of *conceptions of transformation* and *orientations toward knowledge*, the final empirical chapter contributes to a growing interest in greater coherence between formal and non-formal education in rural settings. While acknowledging some of the institutional differences, the research highlights the ways in which conscious pursuit of capability enhancement in rural

Jinja has the potential to shape the aspirations of youth along alternative futures and to reorient the relationship a young person has with their community.

8.7 Summary

The thesis has sought to conceptualise the aspirations and capabilities of young adults in rural Jinja. In so doing, it has demonstrated the subtle ways in which aspirations and capabilities are part of wider collectivities, and while acknowledging the nature of the challenges, has argued for the importance of engaging with these elements of culture that come to bear on individual and collective decision making.

At the heart of this effort has been the desire to understand the conditions, especially as they relate to educational experience, through which the capabilities of youth are genuinely enhanced. So often, language that is employed to describe youth and their livelihood aspirations fail to adequately address the challenges they face, or to foster conditions that enable them to pursue valuable "beings" and "doings" in the context of wider transformations. When such conceptions of youthhood become further compounded by competing definitions on the politics of human migration, and global scepticism toward the future of the rural livelihoods, it is suggested that such uncertainty risks failing to meaningfully support youth in their decision-making processes. For youth who do find themselves in rural settings and grappling with significant decisions regarding not only *what* their future might be, but also *where* it might be, this often results in processes of disempowerment that fail to realise the potential of young people. By repeatedly encountering deficit perspectives in relation to their surroundings and livelihoods, youth are thus forced to fit within global narratives and suggestions of 'success', despite expressing nuance and uncertainty when meaningfully engaged. From the perspective of a youth community leader in Budondo, the failure to understand youth and bemoan their plight results in the weakening of ties between institutions and communities.

> "We hear a lot that youth are a fragile community but we do not see any support. The youth are being taken for granted. They are not being prioritised. They are not catered for. There is a word that shakes my heart when I hear institutions calling the youth a marginalised group. I don't know but if you call me a marginalised person [laughs] as if I am a vulnerable person. You hear them speak in parliament, saying 'you know, these vulnerable youth'. WE? [laughs] Sincerely, we are not vulnerable. It looks

> awkward to say a youth is vulnerable. I see youth as people characterised by their growth and energy, right now if you told me there was an opportunity, if you say, 'play football', I would try! If you say, 'try carpentry', I will try! If you say 'lets do fishing', I will try! Right now, I am still characterised by this trait. I can try adapt to any situation. If people say in parliament that I am a vulnerable youth, sincerely it is not true. So, the definition by politicians of the youth is a big challenge."

Conveying frustration with the way youth are perceived by society and institutions, the claim that young people are fragile is a mischaracterisation of their challenges. Ironically, by labelling the youth as "marginalised" or "vulnerable", I argue throughout this thesis that the use of such terms diminishes their place and power in forging meaningful rural livelihoods. Instead, my empirical research indicated that young people are eager to take on challenges, seize opportunities, adapt, and express vitality. The portrayal of youth by institutions as "vulnerable" is misleading and problematic and part of a wider challenge faced by the need to redefine the relationships between three protagonists of society at large – the individual, the institutions, and the community.

This thesis seeks to overcome this challenge be centring the perspectives of the youth on the question of the migration-education nexus and the transformation of rural livelihoods in Jinja. While addressing broader views on youth livelihoods, the thesis also offers a considered account in contrast to the "migration crisis narrative", a concept that persistently dominates mainstream media and political discourse for both internal and international migration. Globally, this crisis narrative obfuscates the experiences and realities of potential, current and return migrants, turning mixed migration into a homogenous group and often using it as a political instrument. Regrettably, this crisis is taken for granted as the backdrop against which normative debates regarding migration, rural development and migration prospects unfold. This thesis intervenes in contemporary debates about migration by bringing education and rural livelihoods into the frame of normative considerations, with the key suggestion that enhancing the capability to choose where to live represents a critical marker for progress in such contexts.

Focusing on the migration-education nexus in particular, the thesis defamiliarises commonly accepted assumptions about migration by resituating it within a widened context of social transformation. By examining the role of education in how youth conceptualise their urban spatial imaginaries, it avoids offering a normative case for staying or leaving, asserting that

meaningful engagement with the questions of youth (im)mobility requires critical examination of the dynamics and practices of diverse cultural contexts, interest in understanding youth rural livelihoods in the context of global forces, and genuine commitment to supporting youth to develop the capability to choose where to live, a freedom that is continually informed by new visions and versions of individual and collective prosperity. Such an approach, it is suggested, embeds social forces into grounded analysis and provides an essential evidence base for the social, economic and political infrastructure to devise appropriate internal and international approaches for local, national and international development, all of which seek to centre the aspirations and capabilities that individuals, families and entire communities have reason to value and are given the chance to develop along meaningful pathways.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Participation Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Participant Information Sheet

“Migration, Education and Village Life in Uganda”

Invitation to take part in a research study: You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to consider the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take the time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Purpose of the research study: This research is focused on the factors that influence human migration, with an interest in the relationship between education and migration in rural villages. Many questions are now being raised as to future of our villages. The pattern of rural livelihoods is complex and there is much to be learned about what is happening in relation to education and migration. This research seeks to understand this from the perspective of rural Jinja.

Participation: Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any time. Participating in this study may also increase your knowledge of how interview research is done.

With your permission, some of the interviews conducted will be recorded using a dictaphone. The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis to provide the basis of the research findings. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Interviews will last a maximum of 90 minutes, questions will be open-ended and you are free to answer as you wish. The interviews wish to discuss your understanding of life in Budondo, experiences of migration and education and local aspirations for the future. There are no known risks associated with this study. You decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time until July 2019. You do not have to give a reason.

Should you decide to participate in participant observation, this would involve me ‘hanging out’ in an informal way in a manner with which you feel comfortable. This can include any of your daily activities that are relevant to my research (e.g. work, education, trips to town, etc).

Confidentiality/anonymity: The information you provide will remain confidential. Only the researcher will have access to it. Regarding anonymity, your signed consent form will be stored separately from your completed interview transcript and your transcript will be given an identification number that cannot be linked to your name. The data may be included in academic papers; however, this will be done without disclosing your name or identity at any time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY: Contact Stephen Agahi-Murphy at s.murphy1@leeds.ac.uk or 00777477799482 or Professor Caroline Dyer at c.dyer@leeds.ac.uk. If you have further concerns about this study and want to contact an independent person you may contact Matthew Wilkinson, postgraduate research administrator in the School of Politics and International Studies at the University of Leeds, m.wilkinson@leeds.ac.uk.

This research is funded by the Leeds Anniversary Research Scholarship at the University of Leeds.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the above information. Please complete the corresponding consent form if you wish to take part in this research.

Appendix 2 – Participant Consent Form

Consent to take part in Migration, Education and Village Life in Uganda	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I understand the information sheet dated 23rd February explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I am free to contact the lead researcher, Stephen Agahi-Murphy, on 00447477799482 whenever I wish to discuss the use of my participation. If I request the information to not be used, it will be destroyed in both paper and digital format.	
I give permission for the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I give permission for the researcher to participate in some of my daily activities, as decided by myself and in areas of life that are relevant to the research (e.g. work, education, trips to town, etc).	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form	
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	

I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of researcher	
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix 3 – Participant List

Locality	Identification	Category	Gender	Date	Formal Education	Non-Formal Education (KN/SOUL)
Bujagali	i	Youth	Male	11.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	ii	Youth	Male	11.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	iii	Youth	Female	11.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	iv	Youth	Male	11.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	v	Youth	Male	14.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	vi	Youth	Male	14.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	vii	Youth	Male	21.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	viii	Youth	Female	21.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	ix	Youth	Female	21.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	x	Youth	Female	21.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	xi	Youth	Male	23.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	xii	Govt. Official	Male	23.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	xiii	Youth	Male	26.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	xiv	Youth	Male	28.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	xv	Govt. Official	Male	28.4.19	Y	
Bujagali	xvi	Youth	Female	30.4.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	xvii	Youth	Male	7.5.19	Y	
Bujagali	xviii	Youth	Female	7.5.19	Y	
Bujagali	xix	NGO	Male	11.5.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	xx	NGO	Male	11.5.19	Y	Y

Bujagali	xxi	Youth	Female	12.5.19	Y	
Bujagali	xxii	Youth Leader	Male	22.5.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	xxiii	Youth Leader	Female	22.5.19	Y	
Bujagali	xxiv	Youth Leader	Male	22.5.19	Y	
Bujagali	xxv	NGO	Female	3.6.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	xxvi	NGO	Female	3.6.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xxvii	Youth	Male	14.4.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxviii	Youth	Male	14.4.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxix	Youth	Male	14.4.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xxx	Youth	Male	25.4.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xxxi	Youth	Male	25.4.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxxii	Youth	Female	30.4.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxxiii	Govt. Official	Male	2.5.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxxiv	Youth	Male	15.5.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xxxv	Youth	Male	15.5.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xxxvi	Youth	Male	15.5.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxxvii	Youth	Male	17.5.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxxviii	Youth	Male	17.5.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xxxix	NGO	Male	25.5.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xl	NGO	Female	25.5.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xli	Youth	Male	29.5.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xlii	Youth	Female	29.5.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	xliii	Youth	Female	15.6.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xliv	Youth	Male	15.6.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xlv	Focus Group Adult	Female	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	xlvi	Focus Group Adult	Female	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	xlvii	Focus Group Adult	Female	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	xlviii	Focus Group Adult	Male	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	xlix	Focus Group Adult	Male	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	li	Focus Group Adult	Female	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	lii	Focus Group Adult	Female	23.6.19		
Kyabirwa	liii	Focus Group Adult	Female	23.6.19		
Jinja	liv	Youth	Male	17.6.19	Y	
Jinja	lv	Youth	Male	19.6.19	Y	
Jinja	lvi	Govt. Official	Male	2.7.19	Y	
Jinja	lvii	NGO	Male	5.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	lviii	NGO	Male	7.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	lix	NGO	Male	9.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	lx	Youth	Female	11.7.19	Y	
Jinja	lxi	Youth	Female	11.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxii	Focus Group Adult	Male	19.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxiii	Focus Group Adult	Male	19.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxiv	Focus Group Adult	Male	19.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxv	Focus Group Adult	Male	19.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxvi	Focus Group Adult	Male	19.7.19	Y	

Bujagali	lxvii	Focus Group Adult	Female	19.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxviii	Focus Group Adult	Female	19.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxix	Youth	Male	21.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxx	Youth	Male	21.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxxi	Youth	Male	21.7.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	lxxii	Youth	Male	23.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxxiii	Youth	Male	23.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxxiv	Youth	Male	24.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxxv	Youth	Male	25.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxxvi	Youth	Female	27.7.19	Y	
Bujagali	lxxvii	Youth	Female	29.7.19	Y	Y
Bujagali	lxxviii	Youth	Male	29.7.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	lxxix	Youth	Female	29.7.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	lxxx	Youth	Female	29.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxi	Youth	Female	30.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxii	Youth	Female	22.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxiii	Youth	Female	22.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxiv	Youth	Male	22.7.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	lxxxv	Youth	Male	22.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxvi	Youth	Male	26.7.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	lxxxvii	Youth	Male	26.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxviii	Youth	Male	26.7.19	Y	
Kyabirwa	lxxxix	Youth	Male	26.7.19	Y	Y
Kyabirwa	xc	Youth	Female	26.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	xci	NGO	Male	29.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	xcii	NGO	Female	29.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	xciii	NGO	Male	29.7.19	Y	Y
Jinja	xciv	NGO	Male	29.7.19	Y	Y

Appendix 4 – Ethical Approval

The Secretariat
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT
Tel: 0113 343 4873
Email: ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Stephen Agahi-Murphy
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT

Social Sciences, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee
University of Leeds

5 October 2024

Dear Stephen

Title of study: **Educating to Leave: The Migration-Education Nexus and Transformation of Rural Livelihoods in Jinja, Uganda**

Ethics reference: **AREA 18-120**

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the Social Sciences, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your response to the Committee's initial comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 18-120 Summary of Response 4.4.19.docx	1	04/04/19
AREA 18-120 Ethical Review Form 4.4.19.docx	3	04/04/19
AREA 18-120 Participant_Information_Sheet_v3.docx	3	04/04/19
AREA 18-120 Participant_consent_form_v2.doc	2	04/04/19
AREA 18-120 Ethical Review Summary of Response.docx	1	25/03/19
AREA 18-120 Participant_Information_Sheet_(Focus Group)_v1	1	25/02/19
AREA 18-120 Participant_consent_form_(Focus Group)_v1 (1)	1	25/02/19
AREA 18-120 Participant_consent_form_(Focus Group)_v1	1	25/02/19
AREA 18-120 Interview_Schedule_v1	1	25/02/19
AREA 18-120 Fieldwork_Risk_Assessment_Form_v1	1	25/02/19

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation and other documents relating to the study, including any risk assessments. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie
Senior Research Ethics Administrator, the Secretariat
On behalf of Dr Kahryn Hughes, Chair, AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee

CC: Student's supervisor(s)