Tanzania Journal of Sociology

Volume 11 | Issue 2 Article 9

December 2025

Theorizing ‘Magwangala’ as an Unorthodox Livelihood in Geita, Tanzania

Albert Tibaijuka
tibaijuka.albert@saut.ac.tz

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.udsm.ac.tz/tjso

Recommended Citation
Tibaijuka, Albert (2025) "Theorizing ‘Magwangala’ as an Unorthodox Livelihood in Geita, Tanzania," *Tanzania Journal of Sociology*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 9.
Available at: https://commons.udsm.ac.tz/tjso/vol11/iss2/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by University of Dar es Salaam Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tanzania Journal of Sociology by an authorized editor of University of Dar es Salaam Digital Commons.

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2,
December 2025: 1 - 17

Theorizing 'Magwangala' as an Unorthodox Livelihood in Geita, Tanzania

Albert Tibaijuka

St. Augustine University of Tanzania
Email: tibaijuka.albert@saut.ac.tz

Abstract

The increasing contestation of Magwangala as a livelihood in Geita, Tanzania, invokes a scholarly desire to further the constitution of the term beyond its traditional constructs. Following the present framing of magwangala as a disruptive, hazardous, contentious, and risky engagement; including the sanctions against it and the disparaging remarks upsurging the oppression of its actors, an attempt to advance its comprehension is of paramount importance. Given the nature of Magwangala business and the evident ramifications, its contestation is inevitable and unlikely to yield a uniform understanding. This paper, therefore, draws from the grueling life experiences endured by magwangala dealers in Geita, to illustrate the deep-rooted socio-structural injustices, which unearth the underlying meanings of the practice and are essential in construing an advanced description of the concept. In this matter, the analysis theorizes magwangala as nuanced means of attaining socially prescribed goals, far detached from the institutional conditionalities dispensing repressive policies in the country's extractive industry.

Key Words: Magwangala, livelihood, socio-structural injustice

Introduction

The 1990s mining sectors reforms in Tanzania (Haselip & Hilson 2005; Bebbington et al. 2008), attracted seven large scale mining (LSM) companies in the so-called greenstone belt (Nyakweli 2012:8), investing more than USS 1.5 billion (Lange, 2006) in the country. This area, found alongside the Lake Victoria - Tanzania, possesses substantial gold reserves, estimated at 1275 tons (Curtis & Lissu, 2008). The mentioned reforms made a significant increase of gold production which made Tanzania the third-largest gold producing country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country also saw the increase in gold exports and the contribution of the mining sector to the country's GDP (Curtis & Lissu, 2008).

However, despite being gifted with these mineral riches, and the recorded increase in revenue collection, Tanzania is reported to have received very little economic contribution from its mineral sector. Magai & Marquez-Velazquez (2013); Lange (2011) and Curtis & Lissu (2008); along with other researchers such as Lu & Marco (2010) and Gomezulu & Sumary (2013); depict the nation's income generated from the mining sector as disappointingly low. Over the whole period of booming industry, the government is estimated to have received no more than 9 per cent of the exported value as revenue, while the mining companies kept more than 90 per cent of the total value of the exports (Lange, 2006:2011). Such losses are mostly attributed to World Bank and government-championed tax incentives provisions, low royalty rate, losses transfer, import duty exemptions and other enticements.

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 1 - 17

Apart from the documented little economic contribution, the 1990s mining sector reforms, backed up by the World Bank and IMF (Le Billion, 2008), are also reported to have caused misunderstandings between mining companies and community members. These are in terms of the control of space; access to land and water resources; the defence of human rights; and dissatisfaction over the use of mineral resources (see Peluso & Watts 2001; Bebbington 2008; Yelpaala & Ali 2005). As reported by Hilson (2002a), land use is the leading cause of this misunderstandings because the livelihood of many community members is intrinsically connected to the land on which they live. The eviction of community members from their traditional lands to make way for large scale mining is what led to the disruption of communities and cultures, as well as the loss of livelihoods (Laplante & Spears, 2008).

The nature of large scale mining operations often lead to misunderstanding regarding livelihood security, access to resources, environmental effects, impact on social cohesion and cultural beliefs, and human rights violations, to mention a few (see Bebbington et al. 2008; Hilson & Murck, 2002, Kemp et al. 2010; as cited by Mensah & Okyere 2014:66). In Geita, the large scale mining is characterized by enormous power and relational inequality. The large scale miners wield a considerable amount of resources, legal and financial, while community members are marginal, with limited impact. Poor communication and unfulfilled promises (mainly due to the tendencies of disregarding the interests of community members) are reckoned to be the major factors leading to the documented misunderstandings (Nyakweli, 2012)

Some of the land-related misunderstandings, involved the large scale and small scale miners. The small scale miners were deprived of their livelihoods after being evicted from the mining pits they relied on for many years (see Bryceson & Jønsson 2010; Hilson et al. 2007; Kamlongera 2011). Fisher (2007) observed that most of the evictions happened without the consent of ASMs and were done at the early stage of mining after ASMs' gold prospecting. Due to the scant possibility of getting back their mining pits (or sharing them with the mining companies), the ASMs were left with less livelihood options, and are presently seen deploying various tactics to continue mining. These include trespassing the mining concessions for small scale mining activities or resorting to trading 'Magwangala' (Tibaijuka, 2021). The term Magwangala originates from a bantu language (Sukuma) spoken in southeast of the Lake Victoria, Tanzania. It is a slang used to refer to 'meatless bones.' In present use, the term signifies crushed/excavated rocks from gold mining activities, meaning the rocks which are no longer in their original form ('gold less')- similar to the 'meatless' connotation (Ibid.).

The trading of Magwangala germinated from Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), which is a long tradition in Geita. Since the pre-colonial era, indigenous inhabitants of Geita are known to have engaged in small-scale mining. It has widely been studied (Kitula 2006, Hilson 2009, Lange 2006, Fischer 2007, Jonsson & Fold 2009, Bryceson & Mwaipopo 2009), that ASM, was an important source of income to many people in Geita, until the late 1990s, when it was interrupted by the large-scale mining operations. Due to their longtime experience in small scale mining, the locals in Geita were able to detect that magwangala, which are normally piled up within mining concessions, possess gold nuggets. So, they developed a tendency of going into the mine areas to pick the stones and take them to their own local gold processing

sites. There they retrieve small gold nuggets, and sell the produce to middlemen (*makota*)—business people with connections to gold traders or goldsmiths outside these localities. The magwangala traders, however, are forbidden to collect the stones, for health, safety, security and environmental concerns (Tibaijuka, 2021). First, it is claimed by the mining firms that the excavated rocks contain toxic chemical (cyanide and uric acid) used for separating gold from the stones. Second, by climbing the piled hills to collect the stones, villagers put their lives at risk. They are likely to get injured through possible accidents, and sometimes they fight when looking for stones with potential gold nuggets. Magwangala are also considered hazardous given the use of mercury when separating gold nuggets; the rudimentary tools; and the impact to the environment resulted by extraction procedures in the local reprocessing sites (ibid.). When seen in the mining concessions they are chased away by the guards or sometimes arrested by police officers. Despite these sanctions, collectors do not stop encroaching on mining firms' areas, searching for the stones. The intriguing question, therefore is, why do community members in Geita continue dealing with 'magwangala' despite the oppressive sanctions against the practice?

Literature Review

Historical information obtained from literature on the mining industry in Tanzania indicates that mining activities are "historically traceable to the pre-colonial period and most known activities at the time consisted of mining and working of iron, copper and salt" (see Chachage et al. 1993:90). At present, gold mining is the leading activity of the sector, although it is reported that during pre-colonial times gold was exploited on a limited scale by Arabs, and other minerals were exploited by Africans (ibid.). From the same historical information, however, Kitula (2006) says "there is evidence suggesting that local people, using traditional methods of mineral prospecting, produced minerals centuries before the establishment of the colonial administration" (p. 405). The author is supported by Chachage et al. (1993), who say it is actually the local population of small-scale miners who dominated gold extraction activities in the 1920s. As stated in this study, ASM is a old tradition in places like Geita.

Nonetheless, literature providing historical information on the Tanzanian mining industry indicates that the initial phase of extracting the country's gold resources started during the German colonial administration (1885–1919). It is during this colonial period, under the Germans and thereafter the British, that the indigenous population is reported to have been prevented from extracting gold. Extraction was therefore carried out by colonialists and their companies from South Africa and Britain. Chachage et al. (1993) report that gold extraction in Tanzania increased during British colonial rule in the 1940s and slowly started declining in the 1950s, when it recorded little contribution to the GDP. The author says companies from South Africa and Britain entered the sector in the mid-1930s and by 1965 they were closed down, due to sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime and the low price of gold (p. 93).

Moreover, as Lange (2006) adds, Tanzania's independence from Great Britain in 1961 did not cause significant changes to the structure of the mining sector. The changes started after the Arusha Declaration in 1967, under the nationalization policy (ujamaa) in which the state decided to control the mineral sector and foreign ownership of mining companies was

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 1 - 17

discouraged. During this time, the government established its own firm, State Mining Corporation (STAMICO), to oversee all mining activities (p. 3). The historical information on the mining industry in Tanzania also indicates that over a decade after the Arusha Declaration in 1979, the country began facing a severe economic decline that affected the performance of nationalized mining companies. In addition, information from other sources, such as Barkan 1994; Butler 2004; Campbell 2004; and Rodrick 2006, specify that it is only after Tanzania accepted the World Bank's persuasion that gold mining production in the country increased again.

Following the intervention and recommendations from the World Bank, the mining sector in Tanzania saw an immediate mineral export increase of up to 70 per cent by the late 1990s. In the beginning, it was ASMs who increased production, but they were later joined by foreign investors. Artisanal and Small-scale serves as a livelihood alternative for a good number of Tanzanians, most especially those marginalized by the socioeconomic system in their localities. According to Jønsson et al., (2009), "in Tanzania, small-scale mining is an important industry; the sector constitutes a major employer for mainly unskilled people and supports the livelihood of thousands of families throughout the country, especially in areas with limited income opportunities" (p. 77). Studies exploring the practices of artisanal small-scale miners in Tanzania are also plentiful. Many researchers in this area agree that ASM is by far the country's most important rural non-agricultural, informal sector activity, providing direct employment to many people and generating incomes for hundreds of thousands of others in downstream industries (see Kwai & Hilson, 2010:142; Bryceson & Jønsson 2010).

Despite being attacked for operating in a risky environment, using rudimentary tools, ASMs are reported to make a significant contribution to the economic development of Tanzania and people's livelihoods. Even though the national government, large-scale miners (LSMs) and some other stakeholders in the mineral sector perceive small scale miners differently, but are in effect prospecting for LSMs. They find mineral-rich sites and dig to the depths their technology is capable of, typically to a maximum of 50 metres. Thereafter LSMs take over if the deposit is large enough (Bryceson & Jønsson, 2012). What was to be done and still expected from the mining sector in Tanzania is a set up of an effective supporting system to formalize, safeguard and control the small-scale mining activities. It is through this initiative where contestation such as those emerging from Magwangala dealings are likely to be addressed. This is not the first time that such support is suggested, it is even provided within the legal framework of the mining sector in the country, something which this study turns to.

The Legal Framework for Mining in Tanzania

Starting with the Mineral Policy of 2009, its main objective is to "attract and enable the private sector to take the lead in exploration, mining development, mineral beneficiation and marketing" (URT 2009:6). Its purpose is to increase the mineral sector's contribution to the GDP and to alleviate poverty by integrating the mining industry with the rest of the economy (ibid.). The policy categorically stipulates its intention to strengthen the involvement and participation of local communities in mining projects and to encourage mining companies to increase corporate social responsibilities (Section 4.4[i]). The policy states its intention to

promote safety and maintain hygienic conditions and protect the environment in mining areas. Section 5.5.9 stipulates, in detail, the intent of the policy in promoting the relationship between mining companies and communities surrounding mines. The policy acknowledges the possibilities of involving local communities in the development of mining projects, and that mining companies may contribute significantly to the development of local communities through their corporate social responsibility policies. The policy admits that the involvement of local communities in mining operations ensures the sustainability of projects.

Moreover, the policy speaks of the involvement and participation of local communities during Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies by addressing local community development priorities in order to maximize opportunities for their involvement. The policy declares that EIA helps to plan for the viability of economic activities in local communities after mine closure and categorically states that formal communication mechanisms between investors and local communities need to continue in subsequent phases of the mining project development.

Despite these broad policy statements, the situation on the ground is quite different when it comes to implementation. Although the mining policy clearly stipulates that mineral resources should benefit surrounding communities, the socioeconomic situation of communities living in mineral rich areas such as Geita does not seem to improve. Similarly, misunderstanding caused by denial of the community's participation in managing natural resources are evident. This suggests that the policy requirement to involve community members is perhaps not being met. It is also worth noting here that the mentioned EIA is a legal condition found in The Mining Act 2010 cap.123 and the Environmental Management Act 2004, but it seems not to be fully enforced.

The prevailing image among the community members is that the failure of national government and the mining companies in coming clean on operations in the sector is a proof that the two collude in the witnessed disruptions of livelihood and impoverishment of community members. Such perception from the locals is caused by various reasons. For example, despite the Mineral Policy of 2009 imposing a duty on the government and mining companies to valuate local properties during eviction and to meet compensation costs respectively, the majority of evicted community members complain about the process, unfair compensation, and lack of adequate information on where to present and argue for their cases. Moreover, while the policy proposes an integrated and participatory environmental management (which is also supported by the Environmental Management Act of Tanzania of 2004, section 17 (2) (b)49), environmental hazards, as well as noise, water and air pollution, are witnessed in many areas occupied by LSMs. Lange (2011), who also observed this situation, says this happens while the apparatus set to monitor and evaluate the performance of the mining companies on the environment and compensation processes are reported to have limited resources for exercising their duties (p. 235).

Turning to The Mining Act of of 1998, as amended in 2010, the Act establishes that mineral wealth and its control is all vested in the state (URT 1998: Section 5). Contrary to The Mining Act of 1979, the amended Act permits private license holders exclusive rights of possession of mining operations and the extracted minerals, as well as absolute authority to trade the obtained

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 1 - 17

minerals (URT 1998: Section 43 & 49). The legislation grants mining companies total claims over the minerals found within their lease area. Focusing on the misunderstanding between Community members and mining companies in relation to mineral rights and land use, Lange (2008) explains in detail how the Mining Act places the two parties. For instance, Section 95b stipulates that the holder of mineral rights shall not exercise any of his rights under his license or under this act (...) except with the written consent of the lawful occupier thereof, in respect of: (i) any land which is the site of, or any inhabited, occupied or temporarily unoccupied house or building; (ii) any land within 50 meters of land which has been cleared or ploughed or otherwise prepared in good faith for the growing of agricultural crops or upon which agricultural crops are growing; (iii) any land from which, during the year immediately preceding, agricultural crops have been reaped (11). According to Lange, while the Mining Act in this section appears to give local people good protection, the ultimate power lies with the central authorities. The act states that if the minister and the Mining Advisory Committee think that such consent is withheld "unreasonably", the "need for the consent shall be dispensed with" and the paragraph "shall not have effect" (2008:11). It is worth noting here that, among other mineral rights offered by the 2010 Mining Act, are a 12-month (renewable) primary prospecting license and a 5-year (renewable) primary mining license for ASMs (all issued by the Commissioner of Mining who has been given power by the act). The primary mining license, however, can be converted, upon request, into a special mining license, usually by entering a joint venture with a company that is able to meet the annual expenditure requirements (Nyakweli 2012:55).

What this implies, as Lange further explains, is that areas of land initially acquired for ASM prospecting and mining may after some time become under exclusive ownership of private (foreign owned) corporations and investors. Such stipulations make artisanal and small-scale miners vulnerable to multinational companies, with huge capital and advanced technology, coming to invest in the mineral sector in the country, as it has been witnessed in Geita. The 2010 Mining Act has a very short section on disputes. It gives the Commissioner for Minerals immense power, stating that the commissioner may "decide all disputes between persons engaged in prospecting or mining operations, either among themselves, or in relation to themselves and third parties" (2008:76) in connection with boundaries, compensation, etc. The commissioner makes an order, which can be sent to local civil court to be enforced. Parties in the conflict are entitled to appeal to the High Court within 30 days (Lange 2008:10). However, given the ASMs' scant acquaintance with laws and court procedures as well as limited resources in running legal suits, in most cases they do not opt for appeals. Moreover, as Lange further observes, given the widespread allegations that any person holding the commissioner post is in danger of becoming corrupted, ordinary people do not trust the commissioner as someone who will treat conflicts between large mining companies and local communities in a fair way (ibid.). Thus, many of them shun away from approaching this official when their rights are infringed, and remain helpless.

Methodology

In an attempt to advance the constitution of 'magwangala', particularly by demonstrating how they are construed as a livelihood by individuals who are somewhat marginalized in a social

structure, a specific methodological approach was deployed. This was through the use of qualitative research methods, particularly a case study approach and discourse analysis as a tool for analyzing the accounts, views and perspectives of the community members in Geita, Tanzania, in order to make sense of what they express, implicitly, in connection to 'magwangala' and their social world in general. The study looked at the community members' engagement with magwangala, as a case study of a livelihood struggle within a community experiencing widespread inequality. The study intended to collect social facts, i.e. to unveil the shared norms and values- the way people in Geita make sense of the world they are in- and in this way be able to contribute to the understanding of that what they do, in terms of their dealing with 'magwangala'.

Thus, the study used multiple sources of information, namely, semi-structured interviews, observation, secondary sources, and informal conversation. From the semi-structured interviews, the author was attentive to grasp the viewpoints of the participants, drawn from the accounts, feelings and actions made during the interviews. The observation helped to confirm or disprove views, claims, complaints and activities mentioned by the participants. More so, the author used secondary sources to get other relevant information, for instance, statistical reports and other information on the socio-economic profile of the area. Informal conversations were conducted to get additional information and viewpoints from other stakeholders who are direct or indirectly involved in the subject matter. The main aim of using multiple source of information was to get what Charmaz (2006) calls "rich data"- referred by Yin (2003) as data triangulation. In this way the author collected different views and information from key informants, namely, sixteen (16) community members in Geita; two (2) officials from the local government and two (2) from a mining company called Geita Gold Mine-all selected purposively. The most important aspect considered in choosing the key informants was their ability in providing the most useful information needed to produce pertinent answers to the study. The need of capturing the views and perspectives of the participants is what necessitated the use of discourse analysis as a tool for data interpretation.

The interpretation followed Gee's (2011) discourse analysis, as it focuses on studying how language can be used to do things in the world. Gee provides five theoretical tools that inform discourse analysis from a linguistic perspective. These tools are (a) situated meaning, (b) social languages, (c) figured worlds, (d) intertextuality, and (e) 'Big D' discourse. The study specifically employed the first three tools because they offered a unique chance of using the accounts made by the research participants to show how they use words, phrase and statements to explain their life realities and/or social worlds. In other words, the tools enabled the author to demonstrate how villagers use their expressions to show identities, to make sense of their actions and validate their norms and values. The analysis focused on the accounts of community members to illustrate how they project certain identities, actions, norms and values, which, implicitly, point to their life struggles in that social setting. Based on Gee's 'situated meanings' and 'social languages', the study attempted to reconstruct, from the words and statements made by the villagers in Geita, to show how social actors see and construe their worlds. Gee argues that social actors ascribe meanings to other people, to relationships, to

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 1 - 17

systems of knowledge, etc. People construe the world they live in, and they are at the same time placing themselves in the position of producing those same worlds.

Moreover, Gee's figured worlds refers to 'a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others' (Gee 2011: 170). In more specific terms, figured worlds refer to 'narratives and images that different social and cultural groups of people use to make sense of the world' (ibid.). Here the narratives function as simplified models of how things work when they are 'normal' and 'natural' from a particular social and cultural group. The author employed the figured worlds tool to demonstrate how the accounts of community members in Geita, on their dealing with 'magwangala', point to the said normalcy, and how they intelligibly speak of the urge to earn a living.

Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by the Vice Chancellor of St. Augustine University of Tanzania and the office of Geita District Commissioner. Information about the study was communicated to the participants prior to the interviews and in this way informed consent was obtained. Permission for audio recording and taking photographs was requested before hand and all field work activities were conducted after notifying and seeking for guidance of the village and hamlet leaders.

Discussion on Magwangala Theorization

Drawing from the accounts made by the participants of this study, it is noticed that magwangala occupation is a result of people's lack of means to work out their living as prescribed to them by the existing social system. The expressions from the study participants candidly draw a picture of individuals going through a grueling life experience, precisely because of being left with very limited access to 'appropriate' sources of income, desperately needed for addressing pressing needs in life. The study observes that people dealing with Magwangala, do not simply see them as stones. They are important to them- a source of income.

To answer the question of this study "why do community members in Geita continue dealing with 'magwangala' despite the oppressive sanctions against the practice?", it is better to start by getting a deeper understanding of what in deed constitute magwangala occupation. First, it should be noted that the authorities sanctioning magwangala collectors, follow certain conditions agreed by actors in the mining industry, and are using a particular discourse to justify their actions (if not to protect business interests). As mentioned in the study, it is about health, safety, security and environmental matters- due to the use of toxic chemical during extraction processes; non-advanced and risky local processing sites; and the overall negative aftermath of the trade to the environment. Thus, in so doing, the authorities use notions like laws and regulations to stop people from dealing with the stones.

However, and this is the second point, while doing so, they seem to forget (if not to ignore) the fact that they are denying the magwangala traders, substitute means of accessing basic needs. A starving person will do whatever it takes to get something to eat. The large-scale mining activities in Geita, interrupted the livelihood of the locals and left them with very limited

sources of income. This reduced their abilities to access the basic needs, while still having a life to pursue. Their engagement in trading magwangala, therefore, depict a daring hungry person searching for food. Thus, the warnings about chemicals, environmental degradation, health and safety, security, etc., cannot deter them from collecting magwangala. Putting it differently, the locals also have their own arguments and a discourse which validates their actions. They talk of the shattered livelihood opportunities, hopelessness, and desperation in working out their living as reasons compelling them to lengthen their dealings with magwangala. In that way wishing to see people from outside their local context understand what they do and why they do it that way.

The third and crucial point to note here is that people in positions of power are the very ones who also prescribe the social goals and means of attaining them. The minority like those dealing with the stones in Geita, lack the power to define things for themselves, therefore obliged to accept and follow what is defined for them, throughout their lifetime. In this case, you find people (including the locals in Geita), assuming responsibilities such as setting up a family and providing for it, in terms of children's education, clothing, health care, shelter, and food. Also, holding good ties with relatives and friends, communal obligations, civic participation, membership in different associations, and so forth. This is expected of them by the people in position of power and fellow community members. The ones failing to assume these socially prescribed goals are perceived differently: uncouth, irresponsible, lazy, and the like.

Additionally, the means of attaining the socially prescribed goals, are also defined by the same group of people. A 'civilized' person is expected to be in a particular profession or career- a formal job or business, is necessary. Within this system which defines social goals and means of attaining them, the same group of individuals also make decisions (through unrealistic institutional frameworks such as those in the mining sector) and end up exacerbating social injustice. For example, decisions are made that it is only people of certain professions or who have acquired a particular type of education (e.g., university degrees), who can be employed by the mining companies in Geita. Such conditions are unlikely to most of the unemployed people in the communities surrounding the mines because of their backgrounds as small-scale miners, cattle keepers and farmers, which did not permit them a pursuance of formal education of such levels.

Consequently, individuals in the likes of magwangala dealers in Geita, lack proper access to formal jobs or businesses, hence likely to be perceived as uncouth, irresponsible or lazy. Alternatively, for them to somehow be part of this social group, they resort to Magwangala occupation, as an answer to the missed means of attaining the social goals defined for them. Surprisingly, immediately after deploying the alternative means (trading magwangala), their activities are labeled as hazardous because they do not conform with the professions and/or careers prescribed by those in positions of power. Following this understanding, it comes by no surprise why magwangala business is looked upon as a security threat, or health and safety concern.

Therefore, and this is the fourth point, it is erroneous to label Magwangala occupation as a mere security or health or environmental threat. On the contrary, it has to be construed as an

alternative livelihood- a response to the social injustices that exist within those localities in Geita. In more particular terms, it should come to the open that it is the country's exploitative extractive industry which lay the foundation of the locals' dealings with the stones. People, inherently, have to work to earn a living. Institutional structures, however, determine societies' constitution of human labour. Therefore, the type of work people do is a product of the structures installed. People are possibly born with abilities to engage in different sorts of occupations and can learn to either do what is perceived as hazardous or safe engagement. Thus, the potential of being in safer occupations exists within every person. However, based on the necessities of life and the pervasive uneven and exploitative global economic system, it has come to terms that in some critical situations, individuals are left with no choices other than pursuing what societies regard as hazardous livelihoods.

In Geita, the arrival of mining companies disrupted the wellbeing of community members, which depended on the use of land, largely for farming, grazing cattle, and small-scale mining. According to Da Rosa & Lyon (1977), the nature of large-scale open pit mining is of displacing large volumes of earth and producing massive volumes of waste; contaminating surface and ground water with toxic waste: removing large tracts of forest cover and productive top soil (Hilson 2002; Coumans & Kirsch 2011); spreading mine tailings (Laplante &Spears 2008); dislocating a great part of the communities population (Caruso et al. 2003; Downing 2002; Lawson & Bentil 2014), and imposing substantial impacts on the environment, including the biophysical one (Holden &Jacobson, 2007:477). This nature of operations explains candidly why large-scale mining's conformity to community members' ways of doing things, fail.

So, because the locals are not able to change the situation, or wait for someone else to define alternative means for them, they decide to pursue magwangala business. In the course of doing so, however, they encounter determinists of people's viewpoint on that what they do. Based on the influence of the present social structures, their occupation is categorized as hazardous thus lack support and therefore discouraged. Unfortunately, this is what is considered to be a deterministic ideology (see for example, Marx & Engels 1970; Marx 1974; Rosenthal 1978; Bassin 2003). While those individuals dealing with magwangwala in Geita have abilities to pursue activities perceived as safe, it is the socio-structural settings and necessities for basic needs, family obligations, social involvement, etc., which make them do what they do. In this sense, it is safe to say that magwangala occupation is a socially created phenomenon. Scholars following artisanal and small-scale mining in the area, are also a witness of how the occupation is described as harmful and being done by outlaws, intruders or strangers (See for example Kulindwa et al., 2003; Bryceson et al., 2014; Bryceson 2015; Schoneveld et.al., 2018). However, this is just labelling, orchestrated by those enjoying the riches coming along with the present social structures and are far removed from the magwangala collectors' realities. Importantly, it has to be careful noted here that the most hazardous practices are probably the ones performed by the unjust socio-economic systems like the one which paved way to the large-scale mining in Geita, without adequate engagement and consent of the community members.

Explanatory Power of Magwangala Theorization

The viewpoints, perspectives and experiences of people trading magwangala, help to further the understanding of magwangala business. They explain the reasons why magwangala dealers endure all the pain and show their ability in pursuing a living. Their dealing with the stones may be considered dangerous, dreadful and lethal by people far removed from their life realities, but to them it constitutes life. As they attempt to fit into this social system which define life goals and means of attaining them, magwangala occupation emerges as their solution at a verge of destitution and hopelessness. Much as this solution seems unimaginable to others, to magwangala dealers it's a source of income in its own right.

The intrusion to the mining concessions, disorder, fight amongst themselves, and other chaotic occurrences in the course of trading the stones, are not sufficient reasons for scorning the practice. There are a constellation of issues resulting from the deep-rooted social inequalities, to be held accountable. The multinational mining companies found their way and installed themselves in the communities within Geita (without proper consultations), and consequently, became the locals' ordeal. With the mounting frustrations and desperation, after their income generating activities being disrupted, the locals find themselves left with no options other than deploying 'magwangala' trading as their alternative occupation.

Concluding Remarks:

Policy implication

Though unlikely, policy changes are required not only within the institutions which prescribe social goals and means of attaining them, but also in the mining industry itself. Given the fact that community engagement is a common debate now, and even that policies and guidelines for the mining sector are available as presented in this study, policy revisions to ensure enforcement are crucial. It has to be practically seen that community members are involved in decision making processes from the initial to final stages. In this way, key issues from the perspective of individuals like magwangala traders, will be addressed. This also means people who command authority will be in a position to well understand why people resort to magwangala business, and therefore, likely to support the advancement of the occupation.

Historically, almost in the entire world, communities neighbouring large-scale mining businesses have experienced oppression and discrimination. A change of policies to offer everyone more access to the means of attaining personal and socially prescribed goals is necessarily, though, of course, unlikely. Such a wish, of serving the interests of the majority of the population, requires a political will, strong commitment and close participation of the central and/or regional government. Primarily, policy revision should focus at availing means where all stakeholders in the large-scale mining business (include community members) get choices on how to cater for their (pressing) needs. This will facilitate a mutual co-existence and serve the mining companies from criticism on brutality, oppression, discrimination and the like. To put it in more precise terms, policy revision should be centred on answering social questions first. This is because such an attempt will automatically create cooperation, thus providing a common ground, free from power influences, in dealing with economical, technical and developmental questions, facing both parties.

Tanzania Journal of Sociology Vol. 11, Issue No.2, December 2025: 1 - 17

The business freedom enjoyed by the large-scale mining companies should be revisited. Policies and legal frameworks which allow the mining companies to have excessive dominance in decision making over local communities should be changed. The central and regional governments should be proactive in overseeing the practices of large-scale mining companies, and make sure it campaigns for the wellbeing of its population and not just a few individuals in the economic sector. Allowing the mining firms the appropriation of massive arable land and letting them strangle the livelihood of community members, is probably a strong signal of a weak government. Urgent policy revision is required in the sector, to ensure that communities living closer to large-scale mining operations, are also free to choose their own paths of life.

Policies and the legal framework should also hold accountable all individuals who use excessive force against people like magwangala traders. Punishing people simply because their means of working out a living does not conform with what people in power positions expect, is oppression. When community members employ alternative means of earning their income, the government and the company should not use repressive measures to deal with these individuals. Instead, the two groups should understand that community members have their own perception of circumstances, which is also socially constructed and can be justified. In other words, they are supposed to be culturally grounded to get to understand the basis from which activities such as magwangala trade, originate. If the government and the mining firm would take time to look at these alternative means of attaining social goals, they will find out that community members' actions are reasonable, and that the means used in keeping addressing their life realities are legitimate — and in that matter find a way of accommodating them or change the situations. This will be particularly possible through being more sensitive to the prevailing inequality and socio-cultural differences.

Despite the evident lack of political will, the government should revise all lenient policies and laws favouring the multination mining firms, while discriminating against the locals. The country's need for foreign direct investment should not be an excuse of the embedded mal-practices in the large-scale mining business in Tanzania. On whatever reasons, the government is not supposed to be too generous to foreign investors at the expense of the wellbeing of its rural communities. Officials allowing such discriminatory agreements should be held accountable. Experiences drawn from Geita should be taken as a lesson by all government officials, to enable them be more committed and responsible in promoting strong supervision and transparency in the sector.

Potentials for Further Theorization of Magwangala

Magwangala theory, presupposes that society and its institutions lay foundation for people's engagement in hazardous processing of gold nuggets. Socio-economic structures breeding social injustice, produce daring individuals like magwangala traders in Geita, who can do whatever it takes to make their ends meet. There are many types of studies that could possibly be carried out to prove or disprove this model. For example, direct field observation would be helpful in studying magwangala trading; interviews with the villagers in Geita would also provide evidence of their perceptions and attitude about the trading. Essentially, it's a need for ethnographic research- to understand how magwangala trading is a complex social problem- a

result of years of the powerful taking and keeping means of earning a living away from the marginals.

As it is observed that Tanzania is endowed with vast lands full of minerals, and future exploitation of the reserves is more likely, people living in places where such investments shall take place, are prone to similar or even worse unjust treatment. Therefore, in-depth studies on how best to deal with and/or prevent hazardous occupation like magwangala dealings, thus promoting better social welfare, are fundamental. The expectation is that such studies will offer concrete suggestions on what stakeholders in the extractive industry should do to attain social justice and increase choices on the means of attaining personal and socially prescribed goals. Actionable recommendations should also be provided to ensure the sustainability of the implemented suggestions.

References

Barkan, J. D. (Ed.). (1994). Beyond capitalism vs socialism in Kenya & Tanzania. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Bassin, M. (2003). Politics from nature environment, ideology, and the determinist tradition. A companion to Political Geography, 13.

Bebbington, A., Hinojosa, L., Bebbington, D. H., Burneo, M. L., & Warnaars, X. (2008). Contention and ambiguity: Mining and the possibilities of development. Development and Change, 39(6), 887-914.

Bryceson, D. F. (2015). Youth in Tanzania's urbanizing mining settlements: Prospecting a mineralized future. In African Youth and the Persistence of Marginalization (pp. 85-108). Routledge.

Bryceson, D. F., & Jønsson, J. B. (2012, March 15). Tanzanian artisanal gold mining: Present& future. Paper presented at the Britain Tanzania Society Seminar, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

Bryceson, D. F., & Jønsson, J. B. (2010). Gold digging careers in rural East Africa: Small-scale miners' livelihood choices. World Development, 38(3), 379–392.

Bryceson, D. F., Jønsson, J. B., & Verbrugge, H. (2014). For richer, for poorer: marriage and casualized sex in East African artisanal mining settlements. Development and Change, 45(1), 79-104.

Bryceson, D. F., & Mwaipopo, R. (2009). 12 Rural–urban transitions in Tanzania's northwest mining frontier. Rural-Urban Dynamics: Livelihoods, Mobility and Markets in African and Asian Frontiers, 158.

Butler, P. (2004). Tanzania: Liberalisation of investment and the mining sector: Analysis of the content and certain implications of the Tanzania 1998 Mining Act. In B. K. Campbell (Ed.), Regulating mining in Africa. For whose benefit? (Discussion paper No. 26), (pp. 67–80). Uppsala: Nordic Africa Insitute.

Campbell, B. K. (Ed.). (2004). Regulating mining in Africa: for whose benefit? (Discussion paper No. 26). Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Caruso, E., Colchester, M., MacKay, F., Hildyard, N., & Nettleton, G. (2003). Extracting promises: Indigenous peoples, extractive indus- tries and the World Bank (Synthesis report, May 2003). Forest Peoples Program & Tebtebba Foundation.

Chachage, C. S. L., Ericsson M., & Gibbon, P. (1993). Mining and structural adjustment: Studies on Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Research Report No. 92. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. London: Sage publications.

Coumans, C., & Kirsch, S. (2011). Occupying spaces created by conflict: Anthropologists, development NGOs, responsible investment, and mining. Current Anthropology, 52(S3), S29–S43.

Curtis, M. & Lissu, T. (2008). A golden opportunity? How Tanzania is failing to benefit from gold mining. Dar es Salaam: CCT, BAKWATA, TEC.

Da Rosa C. D., & Lyon, J. S. (Eds.). (1997). Golden dreams, poisoned streams. Washington, DC: Mineral Policy Center.

Downing, T. E. (2002). Avoiding new poverty: Mining-induced displace- ment and resettlement (Vol. 52). London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

Fisher, E. (2007). Occupying the margins: Labour integration and social exclusion in artisanal mining in Tanzania. Development and Change, 38(4), 735–760.

Gee, J. P. (2011). An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method. New York: Routledge.

Gomezulu, E. S., & Sumary, D. P. (2013). Community perceptions on the impacts of mining to the surrounding communities and on the natural resource management: A case study around Buzwagi mining project. TaJONAS: Tanzania Journal of Natural and Applied Sciences, 4(1), 582–586.

Haselip, J., & Hilson, G. (2005). Winners and losers from industry reforms in the developing world: Experiences from the electricity and min- ing sectors. Resources Policy, 30(2), 87–100.

Hilson, G. (2002). An overview of land use conflicts in mining communities. Land Use Policy, 19(1), 65-73.

Hilson, G. (2002a). An overview of land use conflicts in mining communities. Land Use Policy, 19(1), 65–73.

Hilson, G. (2009). Small-scale mining, poverty and economic development in sub-Saharan Africa: An overview. Resources Policy, 34(1), 1–5.

Hilson, G., & Murck, B. (2000). Sustainable development in the mining industry: Clarifying the corporate perspective. Resources Policy, 26(4), 227–238.

Hilson, G., Yakovleva, N., & Banchirigah, S. M. (2007). 'To move or not to move': Reflections on the resettlement of artisanal miners in the Western Region of Ghana. African Affairs, 106(424), 413–436.

Holden, W. N., & Jacobson R. D. (2007). Mining amid armed conflict: nonferrous metals mining in the Philippines. The Canadian Geo- grapher / Le Géographe canadien, 51, 475–500.

Jønsson, J. B., Appel, P. W., & Chibunda, R. T. (2009). A matter of approach: the retort's potential to reduce mercury consumption within small-scale gold mining settlements in Tanzania. Journal of Cleaner Production, 17(1), 77–86.

Jønsson, J. B., & Fold, N. (2009, August). Handling uncertainty: Policy and organizational practices in Tanzania's small-scale gold mining sector. In Natural Resources Forum, 33(3). 211-220.

Kamlongera, P. J. (2011). Making the poor 'poorer'or alleviating poverty? Artisanal mining livelihoods in rural Malawi. Journal of International Development, 23(8), 1128–1139.

Karl Marx, "Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*," in Marx & Engels, *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1974) p. 182.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1970) p. 64.

Kitula, A. G. N. (2006). The environmental and socio-economic impacts of mining on local livelihoods in Tanzania: A case study of Geita District. Journal of cleaner production, 14(3), 405-414.

Kulindwa, K., Mashindano, O., Shechambo, F. and Sosovele, H. (2003). Mining for sustainable development in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.

Kwai, B., & Hilson, G. (2010). Livelihood diversification and the expansion of artisanal mining in rural Tanzania: Drivers and policy implications. Outlook on Agriculture, 39(2), 141–147.

Lange, S. (2006). Benefit streams from mining in Tanzania: Case studies from Geita and Mererani. (CMI Report R 2006: 11). Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Lange, S. (2008). Land tenure and mining in Tanzania. (CMI Report R 2008: 2). Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

Lange, S. (2011). Gold and governance: Legal injustices and lost opportunities in Tanzania. African Affairs, 110(439), 233–252

Laplante,L., & Spears, S. (2008). Out of the conflict zone: The case for community consent processes in the extractive sector: Yale Human Rights and Development Journal, 11(1), 69-116.

Lawson, E. T., & Bentil, G. (2014). Shifting sands: changes in community perceptions of mining in Ghana. Environment, development and sustainability, 16, 217-238.

Le Billon, P. (2008). Diamond wars? Conflict diamonds and geographies of resource wars. Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 98(2), 345–372.

Lu, Y., & Marco, K. U. G. (2010). Gold mining investment incentives in Tanzania: Current issues and the possible remedies. International Journal of Business & Management, 5(2), 99–104.

Nyakweli, E. M. (2012). Foreign direct investment and poverty alleviation in Tanzania: A case of Bulyanhuru and Geita Gold Mines Limited in Kahama and Geita district. (Unpublished PhD thesis). Amster- dam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR).

Magai, P., & Marquez-Velazquez, A. (2013). Taxation in the Tanzanian gold sector: Overview of impacts and possible solutions. Development Southern Africa, 30(2), 279–292.

Mensah, S. O., & Okyere, S. A. (2014). Mining, environment and community conflicts: A study of company-community conflicts over gold mining in the Obuasi municipality of Ghana. Journal of Sustainable Development Studies, 5(1), 64–99.

Peluso. N., & Watts, M. (2001). Violent environments. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Rodrick, D. (2006). Goodbye Washington consensus, hello Washington confusion. Harvard University. Retrieved from http://www.iie.com/publication/paper.cfm?researchID=488 (accessed on 30 October 2009).

Rosenthal, M. (1978). Ideology, Determinism, and Relative Autonomy. Jump Cut, 17, 19-22.

Schoneveld, G. C., Chacha, M., Njau, M., Weng, X., & Jonsson, J. (2018). Uboreshaji wa shughuli za uchimbaji mdogo wa madini nchini Tanzania kupitia ubia na wawekezaji: Fursa na changamoto (Vol. 204). CIFOR.

Tibaijuka, A. K. (2021). Multinational Mines and Communities of Place: Revistiting the Stakeholder Dialogue Discourse in Geita, Tanzania (Vol. 16). LIT Verlag Münster.

URT (2009). The mineral policy of Tanzania, 2009, United Republic of Tanzania.

URT (1998). The mining act, 1998, United Republic of Tanzania, No. 5, Dar es Salaam.

URT (2010). The mining act, 2010, United Republic of Tanzania, No. 14, Dar es Salaam.

Yelpaala, K., & Ali, S. H. (2005). Multiple scales of diamond mining in Akwatia, Ghana: Addressing environmental and human development impact. Resources Policy, 30(3), 145–155.

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case Study Research, Design and Methods, (3rd edition), Thousand Oaks: Sage publications.