

A Thorny Business

– A Study of How Workers on Kenyan Fairtrade and Conventional Cut Flower Farms Experience Their Working Conditions: The Cases of Timau Region

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Abstract

Roses and other cut flowers from Kenya can be found in innumerable European and Asian supermarkets, floristry shops and online mail-order firms. The importance of the floricultural sector is fundamental for the Kenyan economy. However, during the last two decades, international media and scientific reports have pointed out the problematic working conditions and negative environmental impacts of the industry. In response, at the beginning of the 21st century, the international Fairtrade initiative came into the picture to improve the problematic production impacts of the sector. The Fairtrade initiative has a broadly positive reputation and quantitative data show an improvement in production manners. Nevertheless, it remains unclear if and how Fairtrade is perceived and experienced by ordinary workers on a subjective level. This study examines whether Fairtrade initiatives are an attainment for general workers or if they are considered as more of a top-down development approach. Through a qualitative, phenomenological inspired research design, a comparison of working conditions on a Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade cut flower farm is done on a local micro level. Results show that the Fairtrade initiative on the examined farm is perceived and experienced as rather negative and inhuman while, on the contrary, workers on the non-Fairtrade farm reported their conditions as positive in comparison. Also, the empirical data shows that this specific Fairtrade farm might not be an individual case in Kenya. Due to weak compliance with international Fairtrade standards and national legislation, workers and worker's unions point out lacks in the Fairtrade system in the cut flower business in general. Therefore, starting from this study's results on worker's subjective negative experience of their working conditions, a broader, mixed method study on a meta level is required. Meanwhile, the Fairtrade initiative should re-evaluate its standards and inspection systems to prevent the dilution of its own standards and reputation.

Keywords: Working Conditions, Kenya, Fairtrade, Cut Flower, Lifeworld, Phenomenology

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Table of Content

TABLE OF FIGURES	8
GLOSSARY	9
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION	10
1. Introduction	10
1.1. Objective and Research Question	11
1.2. Thesis Outline	12
1.3. “Being in the world” and “The antithesis of all objectivism” – Phenomenological Paradigms	13
1.3.1 Phenomenology and the Concept of Lifeworld	13
1.3.2 Application of Phenomenology Paradigms.	14
1.4. The Concept of Fairtrade	14
1.4.1 The Historic Outline of the Fair Trade Movement	14
1.4.2 Fairtrade Structure and Functionality, Standards and Certification	16
1.4.2.1 The Fairtrade International System	16
1.4.2.2 The Fairtrade International Standards and Certification	18
1.5 Research Design and Methodology	18
1.5.1 The Field Work	20
1.5.2 Data Analysis	21
1.5.3 Limitations, Validity and Reliability of the Study	21
1.6 Background Information on Kenyan Cut Flower Industry	22
1.6.1 Agriculture – Kenya’s Economic Backbone	22
1.6.2 Floriculture – An Economic Success	23
1.6.3 Suitable Growing Conditions for Cut Flowers in Kenya	24
1.6.4 Critique and the Fairtrade Implementation	26
CHAPTER II – FINDINGS	27
2. Empirical Data and Findings	27
2.1. The Organizational Profiles	27
2.2. The Employees – General Information, Salary and Safety Regulations on the Farms	28
2.2.1. Salary and Working Hours	28
2.2.1.1. Salary: The Case of Batian Flowers Ltd.	30
2.2.1.2. Salary: The Case of Timaflor Ltd.	31
2.2.1.3. General Expenses	31
2.2.2. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Safety	32
2.2.2.1. PPE and Protection of Labor: The Case of Batian Flowers Ltd.	33
2.2.2.2. PPE and Protection of Labor: The Case of Timaflor Ltd.	34
2.2.3. Fairtrade and Corporate Responsibility	34
2.2.3.1. Fairtrade and Corporate Responsibility at Batian Flowers Ltd.	35
2.2.3.2. Corporate Responsibility at Timaflor Ltd.	36

CHAPTER III. – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	36
3. The Lifeworld of the Employees and the Perceptions of their Working Conditions	36
3.1 Means of Communication	37
3.1.1 Neocolonial Tendencies in Labor Conditions and Lack of Advocacy	37
3.1.2. Emotions and Rhetorical Figures	37
3.2. Management Complaints and Medical Discomfort at Batian Flowers Ltd.	38
3.2.1 The Lack of PPE	38
3.2.2 The Issue of Pesticides	40
3.2.3 The Problem of Patient Transport and Lack in Assumption of Costs	42
3.3 In Contrast: Satisfaction at Timafloor	43
3.4 Independence – The Dream of an Own Business and Own Piece of Land	44
3.5 The Aspect of Gender	45
3.6 The Imagined Definition of Fairtrade and Complaints	46
3.6.1 The Perception of “Unfair”: Wrong Expectation of the Fairtrade Initiative	46
3.6.2 Subsidies of Commodities and Preconditions for Support Programs	47
3.6.3 The Fairtrade Community Program	48
3.6.4 The Audits – Violation of Fairtrade Legislation	49
CHAPTER IV	50
4.1 Conclusion – Which Lessons Were Learned?	50
4.2 The Meaning of Phenomenological Paradigms	51
5. REFERENCES	52
6. APPENDIX	57
6.1. Appendix I. – Guiding Questions of Semi-structured interviews	57

**”We are not supposed at all to speak about anything wrong
against the working conditions on the farm.”**

(Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020)

Table of Figures

Figure 1: The Fairtrade International (FI) System and organizational structure	17
Figure 2: Research area of Timau with Timaflor Ltd. And Baitan Flowers Ltd.	19
Figure 3: Growing flower export volumes from 2010 to 2017	24
Figure 4: Flower production areas in Kenya	25
Figure 5: Locator map of Mount Kenya Region with research area of Timau	25
Figure 6: Graphic presentation of Interviewee's 03 pay slip from December 2019	29
Figure 7: Uniforms and Protective Clothing according to the CBA for Greenhouse Woman and Man	32
Figure 8: Fairtrade International Standards: 3.6.1. Workplace Safety	39
Figure 9: Fairtrade International Standards: 3.6.23. Re-entry intervals after spraying	41
Figure 10: Law for medical treatment of employees	42

Glossary

A.E.A.	Agricultural Employers Association
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FI	Fairtrade International e.V.
FLO	Fairtrade Labeling Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
HDI	Human Development Index
KPAWU	Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chapter I - Introduction

1. Introduction

Facing the increasing numbers of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the imbalance between rich and poor, Global North and South became more omnipresent than ever during the last ten years. Migrants are not only displaced by violent conflicts but rather driven by poverty¹ within their home region, searching for better opportunities in the Global North (UNHCR, 2019, p. 5). Through the fast process of globalization, revenues of global trade increased during the last decades. Certainly, the distribution of resources is unequal between regions and nations, which has led to a strong marginalization of several countries, especially in sub-Saharan-Africa (Dohmen, 2017, pp. 6-7). Therefore, despite the *UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992* with the agreement of all former 178 UN-members to follow the path of sustainable development², the international trade system does not comply with sustainability paradigms (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 63). Especially producers of the Global South^{3/4} lack access to markets, which leads to stagnation of growth and development. As a result, many people, especially in Africa, are still captured in poverty (ibid. p.21).

In 2017, the German minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gerd Müller, declared a new African-Recovery-Program, applying the model of the Marshall-Plan, called the *Marshall-Plan with Africa*⁵ to mitigate inequalities in Africa due to global markets' situation. This initiative, which caused a great media echo in Germany, is added to a long queue with other concepts and initiatives on national and international levels to tackle the problem of global imbalance (Stiglitz & Charlton, 2005, pp. 2-4). The Marshall-Plan with Africa aims specifically to support African countries in their implementation of national reforms towards Western standards, including human-rights or anticorruption. Also, European companies enforce investments in African structures. Simultaneously, African countries were granted a higher level of power in co-decisions as well as equitable trade policies (BMZ, 2017; Dohmen, 2017). A paradigm shift within the international development cooperation was intended. However, Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGOs), experts, as well as the media criticize development plans like the Marshall Plan with Africa as recovery ideas included in the

¹ According to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the complex, dynamic and multidimensional term *poverty* describes different kinds of deprivations of basic needs like permanent access to food, health care, education and also includes humane working conditions, exercise of basic liberties and political, economic and social participation. In doing so, poverty is divided in *absolute* and *relative poverty*: *Absolute poverty* describes the state where a human being is unable to fulfill its basic needs while *relative poverty* defines the ratio of poverty to its periphery (BMZ, 2010-2020). Since the level of food security or health are difficult to measure in absolute terms, several approaches crystallized. The World Bank defines humans as poor if their daily spending capacity is below 1,90US-Dollar. The United Nations uses the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to measure the degree of deprivations of a household according to health, education and standard of living, which is more holistic. Furthermore, the Human Development Index (HDI) describes the state of development on a national scale through taking the level of education, expectation of life, spending capacity or alphabetization into account (BMZ, 2010-2020; Happ, 2016, p. 13). According to official statistics by the World Bank, the number of people who are living in absolute poverty decreased between 1990 and 2015 worldwide (World Bank, 2019). However, statistics based on the 1,90US\$ line, are criticized since "piles of evidence that people living just above this line have terrible levels of malnutrition and mortality" (Hickel, 2019). Therefore, Hickel stresses, that international scholars are calling for the minimum line of 7,40US\$ per day to fulfill the basic needs and to depict the global poverty statistics more truthfully (ibid. 2019).

² The so-called Brundtland Report from 1987 defined the term 'Sustainable Development' as a human ability „to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs“ (UN - United Nations, 1987, p. 15). The wide acceptance of the need for a concept of sustainable development in all institutions related to global development was the result of the UN Conference on Environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The three-dimensional concept of sustainability should have been part of all development questions (BMZ, 2010-2018).

³ Countries like India, Brazil, South Africa, China and parts of South-East Asia were able to become more integrated into the global trade. However, despite growing economic data, only a minority or parts of their populations benefits from such global trade and market integration (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 21).

⁴ 'Global South' is a critical concept which "refer(s) to economically disadvantaged nation-states and as a post-Cold War alternative to "Third World" (Mahler, 2017) including, broadly, the regions of Asia, Oceania, Latin America and Africa (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 12). The shift from "Third World" to "Global South" is considered as a paradigm shift from "a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power" (ibid. p.12). Therefore, the term is used as allegorical application to identify and to entitle patterns like development, privilege and prosperity across regions which makes the term function as a metaphor for underdevelopment (ibid. p.13). "It references an entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained" (ibid. p.13)

⁵ https://www.bmz.de/en/countries_regions/marshall_plan_with_africa/index.html

plan fail to take unequal global-trade policies into account and, instead, focused on German, or general Western, economic interests (Grefe & Köckritz, 2017; Caldwell, 2016; Müller, 2017).

Ideas and initiatives like the Marshall-Plan with Africa are now pretending to address a newly treated problem which has been obvious since the 1950s. Ever since, the failures and disservices of the unequal global-trade system are well known. People around the world had been guided by the vision of an equal trade system free of marginalization for a long time. Therefore, various initiatives have already been attempting to establish alternatives on different levels. This global movement, which became structuralized, institutionalized and globalized mainly during the 1990s, is broadly described as Fair Trade⁶. The first ideas and visions about Fair Trade arose in the late colonial⁷ and early post-colonial era with the general aim to establish equal trade and economic rules for all. The ambitious vision of a global Fair Trade is not yet reached, but more and more initiatives are working on its establishment (Dohmen, 2017, p. 9 ff.).

According to the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), “Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue [and] transparency (...) that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to (...) marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South” (WFTO, unknown). The general Fair Trade framework includes standards about permanent employment contracts, sanitary and social hedges as well as environmental obligations, e.g. reducing chemical inputs. The array of products as well as the international connection of different networks and organization of certification increased since 1990 and is still experiencing growing sales outputs (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, pp. 80/86-87). For instance, the business volume of Fair Trade labeled products in Germany increased from around 50 million Euros in 1995 to 978 million Euros in 2015 (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 125). Therefore, an alternative trade system linking producers, retailers and consumers, which is, however, not uncoupled from the unequal conventional system, is being established.

Originally, the idea of Fair Trade merely concentrated on small handcraft producers from the Global South. Later, agricultural products produced by smaller cooperatives were also taken into the array of products. However, since it was recognized that some agricultural products like tea, banana or cut flowers were mostly produced by large plantations, Fairtrade International started to open its alternative trade system also for private enterprise companies with high revenues (Dohmen, 2017, pp. 101-102). The Fair Trade paradigm shift towards private enterprise companies facilitated the consumption of labeled products for consumers in the Global North. Today, the majority of supermarkets in Europe offer labeled products, especially coffee, cocoa, tea, and cut flowers (ibid. 107-109). However, this notable paradigm shift can also be lead back to the increasing awareness towards negative environmental and social impacts of large-scale producer, including the international cut flower business. The first Fairtrade labeled cut flowers originated from Ethiopia and Kenya and were sold in Germany in 2005. By 2014, over 50 percent (%) of the Fairtrade labeled cut flowers were produced in Kenya (Fairtrade Deutschland, 2015, p. 74).

The following study “A thorny business” investigates the perceived working conditions on a particular labeled Fairtrade cut flower farm in Kenya and contributes to the evaluation of the validity claim of the Fairtrade certificate.

1.1. Objective and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine how workers on Kenyan cut flower farms experience and narrate their working conditions. The study is based on the collection of workers’ narratives from a Fairtrade and a non-Fairtrade cut flower farm in Kenya. The narratives are also put in comparison with protective working laws and legislation.

⁶ Fairtrade (written in one word) is an organization aiming to certify products. Fair Trade (written in two separate words) describes an idea of a specific, equal commercial relationship. Fair Trade is not a patented term (Happ, 2016, p. 23).

⁷ More in-depth information about the early colonial roots of fair trade thinking are provided by Frank Trentman and his work: „Before ‘fair trade’: empire, free trade, and the moral economies of food in the in the modern world“ (2007).

Therefore, the following thesis sets out to investigate the perceived working conditions by workers in the cut flower industry within the Mt. Kenya region and catchment area of Timau. Differences and similarities between Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade farms are analyzed. A major aim is to identify whether the perception and reception of criteria like Fairtrade standards, which are created by stakeholders from the Global North, match subjective experiences of people in Kenya in the Global South. Furthermore, the concept of Fairtrade will be framed (explanatory notes) and critically examined. The research questions that guide the study are the following:

A: How do the workers of Batian Flower Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. experience the working conditions, and how does it affect their lifeworld?

B: How do these experiences relate to the views of the workplace and certification information, and do the workers of Batian Flowers Ltd. experience and perceive any advantages of the Fairtrade certification?

C: Are any differences between Fairtrade and non-Fair-trade labeled cut flower farms recognizable? If there is a gap between the workers perceptions and the information by the certification organizations, why is there such a gap?

Due to three reasons, this study is considered essential for not only Fairtrade research but also the broader research area on global production development. *Firstly*, an introductive literature study across scientific papers and media articles which indicates the production area of Timau is unattended, since the Kenyan Naivasha Region is considered as the main and more important production area and therefore more into scientific and media focus. *Secondly*, the impact of Fairtrade is more often analyzed through a quantitative research design lens. Such designs are mostly determined by usage of numerical data to appraise objective theories generating variables through statistical processes. However, the quantitative research lens focuses on trend description instead of individual lifeworld perceptions and, therefore, lacks depth and a holistic approach. With its qualitative approach, this study might have a contribution towards a paradigm shift within the field of Fairtrade impact research, looking at the cut flower industry with a more in-depth and decolonial perspective. *Thirdly*, this study intends to uncover possible gaps within the implementation process of Fairtrade guidelines to challenge the credibility of the Fairtrade system.

1.2. Thesis Outline

After having presented the introduction and the research's objective and questions, the following paragraphs will introduce the theoretical framework of the thesis as well as guiding concepts and methodological descriptions. As the interviews are analyzed through a phenomenological inspired lens, the concept of lifeworld and phenomenological paradigms are explained. Furthermore, to understand the concept and system of Fairtrade, a historical and organizational overview of Fairtrade's work will be given. Furthermore, methodological descriptions of how the study imposed its empirical data on the ground in Timau, Kenya and the research design are presented. The first chapter is closed by background information about the historical and current status of the Kenyan cut flower industry, which frame the research setting. In the second chapter, findings from the conducted field research are shown. Firstly, the organizational profiles and background information of its employees as the object of research are illustrated. Secondly, the empirical data and all findings from the grounds are presented by being structured into various subgroups of working conditions including salary and working hours, personal protective equipment and safety, and Fairtrade & Corporate Responsibility. Within the third chapter, the empirical material is analyzed and discussed through a phenomenological inspired lens in the third chapter. The lifeworld of the workers is shaped by topics which

were dominantly mentioned by the research participants such as the means of communication, management complaints, the dream of independence, aspects of gender, imagined definition of Fairtrade, and further sub-categories. *Finally*, the results of the research questions are summarized and reflected in a conclusion. Also, a short recommendation for future research is presented, as well as improvements for the working conditions on Kenyan cut flower farms. Theoretical outline and guiding concepts will be illustrated in the following: Phenomenological paradigms and the concept of Fairtrade are framing the following research.

1.3. *‘Being in the world’ and ‘The antithesis of all objectivism’*⁸– Phenomenological Paradigms

The analysis of the interviews was inspired by phenomenology, trying to understand the experiences and perceptions of the workers at the cut flower farms. Through their narratives, parts of the workers’ lifeworld and subjective perceptions could be put into focus.

1.3.1 Phenomenology and the Concept of Lifeworld

Phenomenology can be broadly understood “as the study of structures of experience, or consciousness” (Smith, 2013) focusing on how we experience the world around us. The focus is not on objective, structural aspects, but rather subjective worldviews, experiences and first-person perspectives, whereby things we are experiencing and how we experience them are taken into consideration. (Smith, 2013; Fischer, 2012, p. 14). In other words, “[...], phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity” (ibid.). Since the “intentionality of consciousness refers to the search and identification of subjacent, subjective elements of consciousness which surpass the intention of understanding reality from a single point of view” (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 102), phenomenology is the rehabilitation of experiences in a scientific way through in-depth description. Therefore, this study focuses on the narrated perception of working conditions which only illustrates parts of the workers experiences.

Phenomenological paradigms strive to overcome the dualism of distinguishing the knowledge of researching subjects (philosophers or scientists) with the researched objects (ordinary people), which is present in Western discourses. As a consequence, life’s copiousness is not only reflected when scientifically unifying and universal laws are formulated by conventional science (Jackson, 1996, p. 7). When thinking with a phenomenological lens, the facts of (inter-) subjective consciousness are emphasized. However, such facts of consciousness shall not be reduced on biogenetic determinations, antecedent conditions, unconscious principles or (further) invisible causes (ibid. p.10). As Jackson (1996) states: “This is not to say that human experience is without preconditions [...] rather it is to suggest that experience of these preconditions is not entirely preconditioned” (ibid. p.10.). The philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1979 in Jackson, 1996) frames phenomenology as “an investigation into the structures of experience which precede connected expression in language” (ibid. p.2). Phenomenology puts the focus on lived experiences rather than theoretical knowledge (ibid. p 3/6). It is conceptualized how socioeconomic and political paradigms of a macrolevel are implemented on an intersubjective microlevel within daily life contexts (ibid. p6). This means for this study, that the empirical material will be discussed from the actors’ level (microlevel), connected and completed with formal rules and regulations from the macrolevel.

The *lifeworld* as an integral part of phenomenology is not a fixed-term, but rather an open socio-philosophical concept. It frames the complexity of human individuals’ experiences and perceptions of the world they live in and how they make sense of it (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012, p. 90ff). Husserl (1962) defined the lifeworld as the spatiotemporal world of things outside empirical and scientific paradigms which makes

⁸ Quote by Gadamer (1975 in (Jackson, 1996, p. 16)

experiences tangible for observers, instead of only the experiencing subjects (Fischer, 2012, p. 29). In this sense, the lifeworld conceptualizes the daily life as a place of sensual experiences of the intersubjective here and now.

The presented study cannot illustrate the workers' lifeworld as a whole but focuses on the experienced working conditions concentrating on lived experiences from the workers and how they are formulated. Nevertheless, the working environment makes up a great part of their lifeworld. Through being inspired by the concept of lifeworld, subjective perception of working conditions outside numeric scientific data can be depicted.

1.3.2 Application of Phenomenology Paradigms.

According to Creswell (2013 in Padilla-Diaz 2015), phenomenological paradigms are required if human experiences of a purposive sampling are being intended to be understood through the articulation of their lived experiences. "The role of the phenomenological investigator or researcher is to "construct" the studied object according to its own manifestations, structures and components" (Ponce 2014 in (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 104).

To be able to grasp people's experiences of their lifeworld, Padilla-Diaz recommends open and semi-structured interviews.

"These two types of interviews allow the researcher to address the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of aperture for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible. The detailed descriptions or interpretations, brought by the participant in the profound phenomenological interview, should be as representative of experienced reality as possible" (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 104).

A phenomenological analysis referring to Padilla-Diaz (2015) focuses on *what* and *how* interviewees express in their narratives. The context, in which the narratives and the actual speech acts are embedded, is interpreted in order to analyze its content (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 105). This study collects objective facts from the workers' realities such as their monthly salaries and interprets how they are narrated and therefore subjectively perceived. The analysis of the subjective dimension is inspired by phenomenology.

1.4. The Concept of Fairtrade

1.4.1 The Historic Outline of the Fair Trade Movement

The history of the first Fair Trade⁹ initiatives can be traced back to the early post-World War II years. The US-based Christian charity organization 'Ten Thousand Villages' initialized the purchase of hand crafts from Puerto Rico and started to sell those within its own network. During the early 1960s, different organizations like Oxfam UK and the Dutch Catholic Fairtrade Organisatie (S.O.S. Wereldhandel) began to purchase hand and art crafts from the Global South and started a shop network in Europe as well. These church-based initiatives aimed to be "doing good" and functions merely as charity programs (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, pp. 80-81). Also, with the opening of a World Shop in the Netherlands in 1969, the movement remained mainly church-based, but came more into public focus due to its western consumption structures and their destructive impacts, or political paradigms. According to von Hauff & Claus (2018), this was also the beginning of the German Fair Trade movement, which increasingly became a solidarity movement. Through the purchase of fairly traded coffee from Guatemala, the array of products grew constantly globally. Due to political restrictions, countries with limited access to the global market were considered by the movement to provide

⁹ Fairtrade (written as one word) is an organization aiming to certify products. Fair Trade (written in a separated way) describes an idea of a specific, equal commercial relationship. Fair Trade is not a patented term (Happ, 2016, p. 23).

an outlet market. By the mid-80s, solidarity and alternative trade thinking increasingly became part of a Western lifestyle. Various Western movements started to scrutinize its own consumption habits. Also, producers from the Global South grew more and more to be business partners rather than charity recipients (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, pp. 82-83). During the 1980s, international and national initiatives, unified under the self-given label of “Alternative Trade Organizations” (ATO), founded strategic organizations, such as the “European Fairtrade Association” (EFTA) among others (ibid. p.83). However, two different approaches emerged to promote fairly traded products: *Firstly*, an independent organizational model for equal trade was developed. As a consequence, organizations focusing on Fair Trade established their own integrated trading and value chain as well as integrated direct marketing (Happ, 2016, p. 23). According to Happ (2016), the aim was to abdicate conventional retail sales. This rather idealistic philosophy was supported by Oxfam, GEPA¹⁰ or the World Shop initiative. *Secondly*, a different approach, which is focus of this study, intended to use existing distribution structures and label as them fair trading companies through certifications. This approach is based on the assumption and belief that existing producers shall be guided into fair and equal structures rather than establishing entirely new patterns. Subsequently, since 1988, various national certification initiatives were established (Happ, 2016, pp. 22-23; von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 88)¹¹. In 1992, the German certification initiative “Transfair e.V.” was founded by several church-based organizations. To structure all those national labeling initiatives in 1997, the head organization “Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International” (FLO)¹² was launched and, ever since, is known under the name “Fairtrade International” (FI). (Happ, 2016, p. 23). The certificates offer a guarantee of fair produced products. The Fairtrade process includes evaluation and certifying systems, focus on fair production, and equal yield distribution (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 85). The proponents of the certification approach aligned in with conventional trading chains and cooperation’s. A first step into the mainstream was made by the formal association of the international Fairtrade system. Nineteen national Fairtrade organizations agreed on one concrete, mutual corporate design: the Fairtrade logo, which increased the recognition factor, especially within the European market. A new and broad channel of distribution was opened up through cooperation with the global operating German discount supermarket chain “Lidl” in 2006¹³. This cooperation denoted the inclusion of Fairtrade products into the conventional mainstream grocery shopping and commercialization (ibid. p.86-87) Thus, this procedure was the final splitting of the Fairtrade movement into an integrated trade chain with direct and own marketing and purchase approach (World Shops) and, on the other side, the cooperation with conventional trading chains. The later enforced the implementation of the certification approach, which considered itself as mediators between business partners (Happ, 2016, pp. 23-24; von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 87). On the other hand, as the direct-marketing approach increased its international interconnectedness and institutionalization, in 2008, the ‘International Fair Trade Organization’ WFTO was founded¹⁴ (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, pp. 86-88).

Up to date, both, Fairtrade Initiative (FI) and the World International Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) aim to support small scale producers of handcrafts and agricultural products to put their products on the international market in order to improve their livelihoods. In addition, Fairtrade International (FI) also supports

¹⁰ GEPA – founded in 1975, Europe’s largest Fair-Trade organization, imports products from Africa, Asia and Latin America and is directly processing and merchandising the products (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 104).

¹¹ However, this certification offensive can also be understood as a response to the failure of the international coffee convention in 1989 and decreasing purchase rates. As result of the failed coffee convention, every country was allowed to produce its own amount of coffee, reducing the income of small holder producers within the Global South. The ATO recognized the need of a growing sales volume (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 84).

¹² The FLO is also described as Fairtrade International (FI). The FLO/FI aimed at transferring competences, know-how, standards, and certification systems on an international level. All national organizations, producers and further stakeholders are integrated into the development process of Fairtrade standards by the FLO/FI. The headquarters of the FLO is in Bonn, Germany (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 88).

¹³ The cooperation with conventional trading partners was criticized, since those stakeholders, especially discounters, were in focus because of their social and environmental dumping performances. Nonetheless, Fairtrade products became part of large purchase chains and were increasingly recognized by consumers within the Global North.

¹⁴ The precursor organization “International Federation of Alternative Trade” (IFAT) was founded in 1989. Today, the WFTO synergizes stakeholders from the whole Fair Trade economy like producer cooperation, export and marketing partners, tradespeople. In 2015, the WFTO consisted of 364 members like the GEPA. The distribution of such traded products is organized by so-called world shops in the form of integrated direct marketing, and not through the FI-label, which uses conventional marketing, distribution methods and structures (supermarkets, discounters). Despite the different approaches, the WFTO and FI are cooperating in the form of the working group “FINE” (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, pp. 103-104, 107).

the implementation of Fairtrade paradigms into conventional, hired labor businesses and bigger production sites such as plantations. The guiding principles and targets of Fairtrade International (FI) are: 1. "Make Trade Fair", 2. "Empower Small Producers and Workers" and 3. "Foster Sustainable Livelihoods" (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 89). Producers often gain access to information about market developments, quality requirements and prices through middlemen, which creates dependencies. Therefore, Fairtrade International initializes the export to the Global North through avoiding intermediaries (ibid. p.89-90) The detailed standards and requirements between producers, importers and all further stakeholders might vary on a national level but are always guided by Fairtrade International principles.

1.4.2 Fairtrade Structure and Functionality, Standards and Certification

As mentioned, FI and FLO target the purchase of labeled products through conventional structures (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, pp. 107-108). However, the whole system of Fairtrade is organized by various organizations, actors and stakeholders. In this case, the Fairtrade International (FI) System is the focus of this study, since only FI puts cut flowers on the market.

1.4.2.1 The Fairtrade International System

Currently, Fairtrade International (FI) does not trade with products directly, but mostly certifies producers which produce according to Fairtrade standards, including hired labor enterprises. Today, according to von Hauff & Claus (2018), FI consists of 26 Fairtrade organizations from 22 countries, three regional producer networks, associated members, and eight marketing organizations. Once a year, the general assembly, consisting of all members such as labeling initiatives and producer networks, reconciles member applications. Since 2011, 50% of its representatives must represent the producer networks and organizations. The general assembly organizes several committees, for instance the standard committee where FI standards are defined (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 105). Furthermore, the producer organizations are supported by FI through a specific counseling as depicted in figure 1 (see figure 1: p. 17). The producer networks are consulted when standards are defined. Also, the guidance in local languages facilitates the implementation and interpretation of the product specific standards and improves market access. To be accepted by and to become a member of the FI, producers must pass through inspections. If the standards are implemented into the production process, annual so-called *audits* are conducted (ibid. p.105-106). The independent certification company FLOCERT-GmbH¹⁵ uncoils the audits by proxy of FI. When auditor reports are made, the FI certification committee ratifies the application. After a successful application, producers are licensed to label and sell their products with the Fairtrade certification. This implementation is monitored regularly, and the certification license must be renewed annually (ibid. p.106). The producers of the FI system are categorized into three different types: Small scale producer organizations, contract production, and hired labor producer.

¹⁵ <https://www.flocert.net/de/>

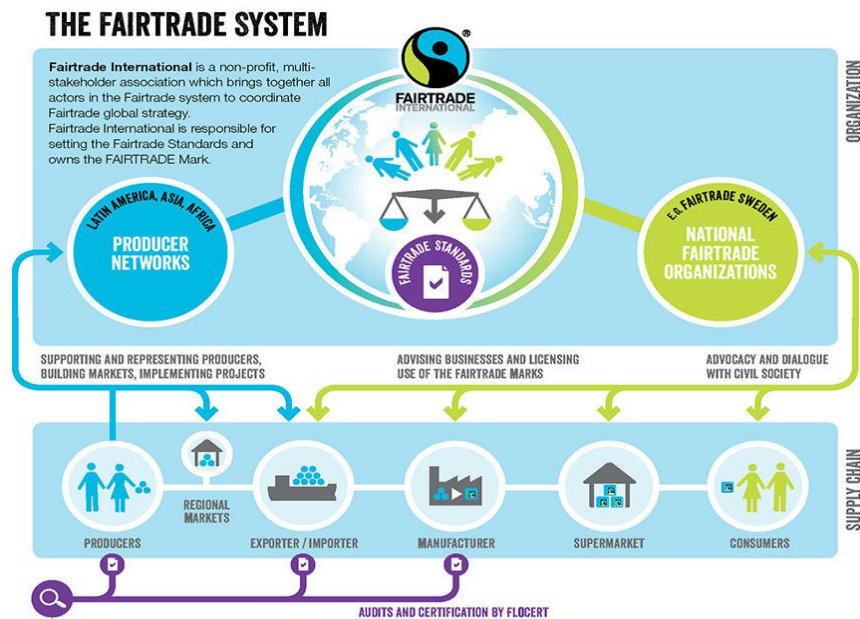


Figure 1: The Fairtrade International (FI) System and organizational structure. This chart uses Fairtrade Sweden as example for a National Fairtrade Organization. However, this could also be Fairtrade Germany or others. Author: Fairtrade International. Source: https://cifal-flanders.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Fair-Trade-Advocacy-Office_What-is-Fair-Trade_ENG_2018.pdf

The small-scale producer organizations, often peasants within family networks organized through a cooperative system, produce most of the Fairtrade products. Cooperative networks are accepted by FI if its members produce without waged workers. FI attaches importance of the democratic cooperative structure while the size of such cooperative producer networks might range from small village communities to several thousand farmers (Happ, 2016, pp. 29-30). Since the development of such cooperative networks and infrastructures requires specific know-how and time, FI offers the opportunity of contract production (ibid. p.30). “As a temporary measure, they can join Fairtrade if they have a partnership with an organization (such as an exporter or NGO) that will assist them to form an independent organization” (Fairtrade International, unknown).

Since an array of products cannot be produced by smaller cooperatives due to high technological requirements, FI supports plantations and factories since the early 1990s (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 96). These products include highly perishable products, such as cut flowers, but also clothing and sporting goods. Purpose of including those productions sites is to enable factory and plantation workers the arrangement of fair working conditions. Since large companies are structured differently, FI standards and formalities are stricter. Therefore, workers’ unions as well as an inclusive and employees-overlooking managements are required (Happ, 2016, p. 32). The hired-labor approach comprises standards according to occupational safety, health services, freedom of assembly and employment contracts. Within this structure, workers of a company form a so-called Premium Committee, obtained through a democratic process, consisting of workers and management members. The Premium Committee distributes the Premium¹⁶ allowances, generated by the sale of each and every product of trading stakeholder, to the workers. Those trading stakeholders settle a reserve

¹⁶ The Fairtrade Premium is a unique selling point of Fairtrade which cannot be found at market-based, conventional and profit-oriented enterprises. The Fairtrade Premium is “a 5-15% surcharge [on every product] that is paid separately and used to finance local development projects” (Happ, 2016, p. 29). To distribute and apply such Premium resources, a so-called “Joint Body”, consisting of workers and management representatives is established through democratic processes. Fairtrade regulates, that this Premium must benefit the workers well-being and shall not be invested into the companies’ business as well as compulsory commitments (e.g. Personal Protective Equipment). Furthermore, the Premium shall not be misused as cash given to the recipients if it is not a loan without interests. The Joint Body is admonished to spend the Premium through democratic processes for social projects within the community. For instance: micro lending, educational trainings, premises or infrastructural projects (ibid.p.33-35). Despite not all Fairtrade products being covered by the minimum price regulation, the Fairtrade Premium is paid for every product.

price to the producer organization and a specific Premium price to the Premium Committee (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 96).

1.4.2.2 The Fairtrade International Standards and Certification

The head organization “Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International e.V.” (called Fairtrade International FI) is responsible for the development and evaluation of standards and certification awards. Every single standard was developed according to the production methods of each specific product. The catalogue of standards must be implemented into the production process by each stakeholder¹⁷. Besides production requirements covering social, economic and environmental paradigms, guidelines¹⁸ to improve existing conditions in future, are also an integral part of the Fairtrade catalogue (Happ, 2016, p. 26; Gårdman, 2008, p. 14). Furthermore, two different “sets of Fairtrade standards [exist]; one for small farmers and another one for hired laborers on plantations and in factories, which is the one applicable for the flower industry” (Gårdman, 2008, p. 14). The FI-standards are driven by the paradigms of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Additionally, in conformity with Gårdman (2008), the producer organizations must comply with national legislature as well as Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) whereupon differences within those have to be laid out to workers’ advantages. The implementation of the generic and product specific standards is monitored by annual FLOCERT auditors (ibid. p.14). The most important standards are minimum prices¹⁹ and the Fairtrade Premium.

1.5 Research Design and Methodology

Economic, social and environmental impacts of the Kenyan flower industry were the focus of numerous studies and researches during the last decades (Chemirmir, et al., 2017; Achieng, 2015; Alig & Frischknecht, 2018; Gitonga, 2010; Kazimierczuk, et al., 2018). Jonathan Happ (2016) for instance investigated the impacts of Fairtrade labels on the Kenyan flower industry within the Naivasha Region (Happ, 2016). However, like the study by Tsimbiri et al. (2015) on health impacts of pesticides on cut flower production sites in Naivasha, the topic was mostly researched through a quantitative research design (Tsimbiri, et al., 2015). Such designs are helpful to determine the usage of numerical data to appraise objective theories and to collect variables that can generate statistics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 51-52). Certainly, a quantitative design might provide numeric trends, but is not beneficial when investigating individual focus group perceptions in depth, which is intended by this research. Therefore, a qualitative research design was needed to examine the subjective perception of Fairtrade’s impact on Kenyan cut flower farms.

The field research was conducted in Timau, Mt. Kenya Region, Kenya between 20th of January 2020 and 17th of February 2020. Object of the researched cases were the narratives from workers on two farms in Timau: Batian Flowers Ltd., Fairtrade-labeled farm, and Timaflor Ltd, non-labeled farm.

¹⁷ Mixed products must consist of at least 20% of produced and traded ingredients (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 109).

¹⁸ It is stressed, that all standards are minimum requirements. Furthermore, the standards include details as to how this can be implemented (Happ, 2016, pp. 27-28)

¹⁹ The minimum price is essential to protect small-scale farmers subject to fluctuating world-market prices. Due to this fluctuation, world-market prices might be less than production costs. However, this is not practical for all products since large companies bargain individual purchase quantities at the direct market. This also counts for the cut flower industry (Happ, 2016, pp. 28-29).



Figure 2: Research area of Timau with Timaflor Ltd. And Baitan Flowers Ltd. . Source: Google Maps; Editing: Thomas Beutler

A phenomenologist approach frames the research design since the study intends to understand the perceived working conditions on flower farms in-depth. Focus is also on how the interviewees make sense of their lifeworld. To understand how individual workers experience and narrate their working conditions and describe the working conditions embeddedness in their lifeworld, it is important to be attentive to the informants own terms, the emic concepts and terms, and not let a priori categories erase the meaning of the emic terms (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 46; Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, to study the workers' understanding of their situation, the phenomenological concept of lifeworld will be used to analyze the empirical data and interpret the participant's narratives. Furthermore, phenomenology permeates both, the theoretical and methodological approach of empirical data collection. Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted within the interviewees' everyday environment. Open-ended questions were used to grasp the overarching narratives, as well as more concrete answers to questions about individual perceptions of working conditions on the farms (see appendix I). The research focuses on the perception of the participants and fulfills a qualitative instead of a quantitative mixed method approach. By doing so, a more profound insight can be given on a micro level.

First methodological part of the research design was a preparative, broad literature review and analysis including newspapers, articles, policy and scientific papers, and books. The literature study served to understand the setting of the workers' lifeworld's, on a meso and macro level. Furthermore, policy papers like the Fairtrade guidelines served as objective reference and set the basis for later-on comparisons between subjective perceptions and objective paradigms.

During the field research in Kenya, personal observations through transact walks within the interviewees' space of movement were conducted during or after the interviews. Those observations were included in analysis and background findings. In terms of empirical data collection, narratives and voices from workers about their working conditions on cut flower farms were collected on the ground. This acquired in-depth qualitative information on working conditions. Human rights situations, in which the workers are situated, could also be depicted. Therefore, people working at Batian Flowers Ltd. and workers from a non-labeled farm were interviewed. Generated interviews were transcribed and, later on, compared to each other as well as to objective references such as Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade working condition guidelines. Subsequently, the analysis (see 1.5.2.) will investigate if the subjective individual perceptions of the interviewees deviate from the objective Fairtrade criteria. The narratives will also depict if differences will expose the different farms within the subjective and individual workers' experiences and perceptions of working conditions. The analyses

will externalize if and how Fairtrade standards and paradigms are received and experienced by the audience of the workers themselves.

All interviews were transcribed with assistance of the software MAXQDA - 2018 (VERBI, 2018). MAXQDA - 2018 was chosen since the program provides a wide range of functions, similar to a coding system. The transcribed interviews were interpreted inductively

1.5.1 The Field Work

During the field research, workers from the Fairtrade farm Batian Flowers Ltd. as well as workers from a random picked non-Fairtrade farm within the catchment area of Timau^{20/21} were acquired and interviewed. A facilitator was essential due to the personal experience that workers from Kenyan flower farms are fearful of talking about their situation, especially to foreign, white people, since they might be considered as informants in the eyes of their employers. A local journalist, Clifford Gikunda, assisted in locating interviewees. He also functions as a translator the interviews. He is a Kenyan journalist who mainly writes for several Kenyan regional and national newspapers as a freelancer focusing on agricultural topics. Since he was born and still lives in Kithaku, a village close to Meru at the hillside of Mt. Kenya, he speaks fluent English, Kiswahili, Kikuyu and the local language of Kimeru. In preparation, Gikunda went to the villages and settlements by himself with the aim of the establishment of contact and trust building²². Gikunda translated every type of communication, including the interviews, since most of the interviewees had difficulties in speaking English²³. In addition, Gikunda was present throughout the whole field research process on the ground and supported this process with analytical discussions and explanatory notes of the cultural context. Therefore, cultural bias between the researcher and interviewees could be reduced. Most of the interviews were conducted at the interviewee's homes. This also enabled the observation of behaviors within private settings.

Due to working hours, all workers could only be interviewed during the late afternoon between 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm. Furthermore, since the workers feared to talk, the intention was to conduct the interviews with all Batian workers as soon as possible. This was to reduce the likelihood that the farm management would obtain information about those workers since their individual experiences might have been contrary to the farm's reputation. There was a risk that the workers' fear would restrict the freedom of speech even outside the plantation site.

Interviews with nine workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. and six workers from Timaflor Ltd were conducted within eight days. The participants were chosen in order to represent a range of different positions, ages, sexes and family situations. All of them agreed to take part in the data collection voluntarily. Their personal data is kept anonymous by using pseudonyms. The interviews started with questions about sociodemographic data and living conditions. Afterwards, seven open-ended, guiding questions were asked (see Appendix).

The questions aimed for the collection of data in form of deep and concrete information about the workers' lifeworld in general and their individual perceptions, whereby focusing on their embedded individual consciousness of the working conditions. In addition, the questions were formulated and posed to avoid leading questions to create a comfortable and trustful interview atmosphere, but also to put the workers narratives into

²⁰ Since Kenyan cut flower producers were found to be discreet, the non-Fairtrade labeled farm (Timaflor Ltd.) was picked after consultations with networks, informants, and workers on the ground. Finally, Timaflor Ltd. was chosen due to two reasons: *Firstly*, the facilitator C. Gikunda and Batian workers informed us that Timaflor workers are living within the same settlements, which simplified the building of trust through the personal connections between Batian- and Timaflor workers, as well as all further logistics. *Secondly*, as it was stated earlier, Timaflor Ltd. is considered as the best employer within the whole region. This created the interesting and contradictory arena of contented non-Fairtrade and discontented Fairtrade workers.

²¹ Both cut flower producers, Batian Flowers Ltd. And Timaflor Ltd. did not reply to any interview requests on the ground and via e-mail.

²² Some of the first interviewees remembered us, which was helpful to build trust, and they subsequently agreed to talk about their individual working condition experiences.

²³ To create a comfortable interview situation, the interviewees were confirmed to talk in their own, individual mother tongue.

focus rather than the researcher's questions and interpretations. The length of the interviews varied from 15 to 60 minutes, depending on the interviewees' volition to provide insights.

In addition, one interview with the Representative of Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (KPAWU) was arranged spontaneously and held at his office in Athi River, Nairobi County. The attempt to conduct interviews with farm or industry representatives in Kenya as well as political stakeholders or Fairtrade representatives in Kenya and Germany failed. Interview requests were sent out to various stakeholders. Yet, all of them remained either un-answered or declined.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

A first-hand analysis of the empirical data was done in form of notes about personal, subjective observations and thoughts (etic perspectives). Field notes were also enriched by Gikunda's short reflection and his identifications of potential ethnocentric biases. His perspective about the local context helped to scrutinize the researcher's role and perspective as subjective observations by the researcher during the interview settings could be confirmed or challenged with insights from Gikunda.

The profound semi-structured and open-ended interviews (emic terms), were recorded. The translated passages in English language were used for further work in this study. All English audio material was transcribed word-by-word, using MAXQDA. Afterwards, core statements and topics were tagged to codes and keywords. The transcribed interviews were interpreted inductively.

Structuring codes, consisting of frequently used keywords and key-topics, were used as major analyzing points and enabled a back and forth working between the themes and the database. The ten codes were developed to generate cross-sectional connections of the most important data. Those *in-vivo* terms functioning as code were, for instance: *medical transport, umbrella, management complaints or school fees*.

Coded interview material, narratives and statements, was then placed into the research context and aligned with the researcher's observations and field notes. The imposed data was, on the one hand, analyzed through the phenomenological lens (*what* was expressed and *how*) in order to find explorations referring to the advantages and success of the implementation of Fairtrade standards. On the other hand, the workers' narratives were put into comparison with each other to depict if and how the working standards are perceived in different ways by workers on labeled and unlabeled farms. Furthermore, within the discussion chapter, the empirical data (subjective narratives) will be compared with and embedded in objective criteria of the Fairtrade standards and official Kenyan regularities and legislation. Additionally, the empirical data is put into context with thematic literature.

1.5.3 Limitations, Validity and Reliability of the Study

The following study has a high reliability, even though only portraying subjective narratives, due to various reasons. *Firstly*, any information narrated about working conditions and situations on the farm can be understood as independent and truthful descriptions of reality. Due to their voluntary participation in the research, false statements as a consequence of pressure of the company or similar are implausible. All interviewees, especially Batian workers, feared job loss and discrimination because of their participation in the study. Therefore, any negative statement about their work, can be considered as accurate information. *Secondly*, the illustrated experiences by the interviewees are supported by overlapping narratives. Different interviewees reported shared and similar lifeworld's, perceptions and experiences in their working environment. *Thirdly*, Batian Flowers Ltd.'s management declined to participate in the research. The lack of transparency of the company supports the workers' negative statement. It seems like Batian Flowers Ltd. has many reasons to attempt to conceal the working conditions on the farm and, as a consequence, was not willing to provide transparent statements. In contrast, the workers of Timaflor workers presented a more positive picture of their working conditions. Their statements aligned with various conversations off-the-record .

Several community members (also non-workers) confirmed the generally positive reputation of Timaflor in the region.

However, the research was also constrained by several limitations. The main barrier of communication was language. The assisting journalist functioned as a translator from Kiswahili or Kimeru into English and vice versa. As in any translation process, this could have led to a potential loss of information. The recordings were also disturbed and interrupted through different noises by children, traffic, or animals within the interview settings. This has led to a loss of information during the process of transcription. Additionally, due to cultural bias, potential misunderstandings might have occurred in the interviews themselves as well as interpretation and analysis of the material. The data bases on the researchers trust in the interviewee's statements and the interpreter's translations.

Finally, the complex relationship between experiences and narration must be mentioned as well. Narratives are always a reconstruction of experiences from the past which means the past, is reformulated at the present through narratives. Therefore, narratives of former experiences are not a one by one simultaneous translation of such experiences since they were reviewed and probably scrutinized by the individuum. "When reconstructing a past (the life history) presented in the present of a life narrative (the life story) it must be considered that the presentation of past events is constituted by the present of narrating" <https://core.ac.uk/reader/58388>.

1.6 Background Information on Kenyan Cut Flower Industry

1.6.1. Agriculture – Kenya's Economic Backbone

Since 2014, Kenya is declared to be a middle-income country as its economic growth rates have steadily increased and the country passed the official threshold, set by the World Bank. Despite high un- and under-employment as well as soaring corruption rates, the middle-income class is growing steadily, leading to an increasing spending capacity (CIA, 2019). In accordance with the neighboring countries Uganda and Tanzania, in Kenya, the agricultural sector also remains the economic pillar. The sector contributes around 24% to the gross-domestic-product (GDP) and is the major employer beside tourism. Around 75% of Kenya's population is directly or indirectly financially linked to the agricultural sector (Chepngeno, et al., 2019, p. 4; CIA, 2019). However, according to official data (CIA, 2019), three quarters of agricultural outputs are based on livestock as well as small-scale and rainfed agriculture. The sector produces agricultural products such as cash crops like tea or coffee, as well as food crops like wheat, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables, and, for the spectrum to be completed, dairy products, meat and fish production (ibid.).

The Kenyan agricultural sector can roughly be divided into the horticulture sector, which includes fruits, vegetables as well as cut flowers for international markets; cash crop production like tea or coffee; and livestock and grain cultivation (Happ, 2016, p. 49). While the horticulture sector is dominated primarily by export-oriented, large-scale enterprises owned by international companies or white and Indian Kenyans, the grain and livestock cultivation is dominated by Kenyan small-scale farmers producing for local markets. This small-scale production is essential for Kenya's level of food security and nutrition (ibid. p. 49). The growing large-scale, export-oriented agricultural sector, on the other hand, contributes to increased economic growth rates and foreign exchange earnings (Chepngeno, et al., 2019, p. 4; CIA, 2019).

The sector's subdivision into a dualistic agricultural sector is, according to Whitaker & Kolavalli (2006), a (post-) colonial heritage (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 352). At the time of political independence, the development of grain and livestock cultivation was subject to a different set of governmental regulation than the horticultural sector. During the colonial era²⁴, in 1902 (Morgan, 1963), European settlers established large,

²⁴ On the 1st July 1895, the region, which is known as Kenya nowadays, was declared a British colony. The first anti-colonial movements during the 1920s has led to African political activities between 1944 and 1960 which guided the country to independence in 1963 from the United Kingdom (Embassy of the Republic of Kenya, 2011).

export-oriented farms within so-called “scheduled areas”. The given organization at that time excluded local African communities, as European-owned farms gained beneficial taxations due to the cultivation of specific crops (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 352). The highland regions between the cities of Nakuru and Nanyuki/Timau became the core of the European settlements, since the Rift-Valley provided perfect agro-climatic as well as profitable soil conditions and resources (Laurien, 2018, pp. 112-113). After independence in 1963, the so called governmental Kenyanization programs aimed to bring the economy back into Kenyan accountability and leadership, since large-scale enterprises and the whole economic backbone were owned by Kenyan Europeans and Asians during the colonial era. The ‘Kenyanization’ program also affected several parts of the agricultural sector²⁵. However, compared to some agricultural sub-sectors like cash crops (coffee, livestock and grain cultivation), the horticultural sector was not governmentally regulated because in “pre-independence days, horticulture was practiced only on a very small scale” (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 352). Also, the perishability of horticultural crops impeded effective governmental control and regulations. Therefore, the horticultural sector circumvented the Kenyanization program after independence (ibid. p.352). This has led to the persisting control of the horticultural sector by European and Asian-rooted Kenyans (Happ, 2016, pp. 49-50)

1.6.2. Floriculture – An Economic Success

The origins of the Kenyan cut flower industry are rooted in the favored horticulture sector after independence. Due to international trade agreements between Kenya and Great Britain, as well as modern logistics enabling quick air transportation, European farmers experimented to cultivate cut flowers in Kenya during the 1970s (Happ, 2016, pp. 50-51). Floriculture also became an interesting investment target by Kenyan elites which also led to favored governmental handling of the sector, especially since such investments generated reams of job opportunities and foreign exchanges (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, pp. 352-353; Happ, 2016, p. 50). As a consequence, floriculture became an important sub-sector of the horticultural sector during the 1980s (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 343) and was growing steadily during the 1990s. This growth was also determined through the liberalization of international stock exchanges and the fall of international trade barriers, which simplified the import of production inputs as well as international investments (ibid. p.342). Happ (2016) also stresses the changes within the export countries. British chains of flower retail stores in particular discovered cut flowers as a profitable, high demand product, which made cut flowers available in supermarkets. The paradigm shift that cut flowers can not only be bought at florist shops, but also in supermarkets increased the international demand and created new outlet markets for the Kenyan floriculture sector (Happ, 2016, p. 51).

Today, the floriculture sector with its cut flower industry is one of the Kenyan agricultural main pillars. The aforementioned economic liberalization during the 1990s increased the “flow of resources, technology, and technical manpower across the border, largely driven by market forces, to take advantage of Kenya’s favorable agro-climatic conditions and low costs for semi-skilled labor” (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 353). As a consequence, the cut flower industry still generates highly important foreign exchanges up to today’s date (Kenya Flower Council, 2019). According to governmental data, the industry directly contributes around 1% to the national GDP and has an economic effect on around 2 million livelihoods. While Kenya exported 10,946 tons of cut flowers in 1988, the numbers increased to 159,961 tons in 2017 (see figure 3, p.24), which underlines its economic importance (ibid.). The economic growth can be traced back to liberal economic order as well as – compared to Kenya’s neighboring countries – good traffic infrastructure²⁶ (Jákli, 2019, p. 15).

²⁵ Referring to Himbara (1994 in Whitaker & Kolavalli (2006)) large-scale enterprises where disintegrated into small plots for Kenyan small-scale farmers. This process became part of the ‘Kenyanization’ processes (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 352; Happ, 2016, pp. 49-50).

²⁶ The international flower transfer logistics requires highly technological, reliable and effective infrastructures since a permanent cooling chain from the farm site to lorries and airplanes is necessary due to a flower value loss of 15% per day. The flower’s dormant state facilitates the international transfer of the perishable, sensitive product within 24-48 hours from production to consumer level and determines the vase life of the final product

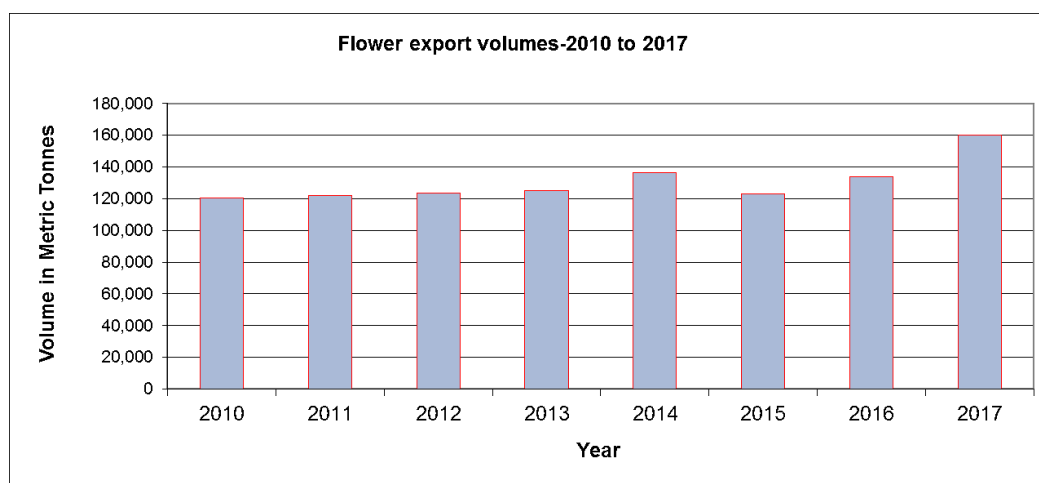


Figure 3 Growing flower export volumes from 2010 to 2017. Author: Kenya Flower Council. Source: http://kenyaflowercouncil.org/?page_id=94

The European Union, in particular its countries Germany ²⁷, Netherland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Italy, France, along with non-EU country Switzerland, are the main export markets for Kenyan cut flowers (Odhong & Omolo, 2014, p. 3). Indeed, the Middle East and Asian countries like Japan and Korea have also become outlet markets as of late (Chepngeno, et al., 2019, p. 4). All in all, Kenyan cut flowers are exported into over 50 countries (Mamias, 2008). However, the produced main varieties of flowers, roses, alstroemeria, lilies and carnations, are also sold on a small scale by pavement vendors or specific shops and local markets within Kenya's large urban areas of Nairobi and Mombasa (Odhong & Omolo, 2014, p. 3; Kenya Flower Council, 2019). Nevertheless, the cut flower industry is a modern, globalized phenomenon determined by high technological infrastructure and not a local Kenyan cultural good. Happ (2016) stressed that flowers as a gift or symbol of affection as well as decorating rooms or graves is not rooted in Kenya. Only through globalized developments have cut flowers slowly gained a significance within the growing Kenyan upper- and high-middle class just as in the western world (Happ, 2016, p. 49).

1.6.3. Suitable Growing Conditions for Cut Flowers in Kenya

Since all kinds of cut flowers are highly perishable, careful handling and management is necessary at every step in the value chain, from production and harvesting, over shipping to the final sale. The quality of a cut flower is measured according to its size, color, further visual effects, possible diseases and its post-purchase²⁸ performance (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 337). However, the agro-climatic conditions "such as temperature, light intensity, length of the day, and water availability" determine the parameters which regulate the marketability and profitability of a produced cut flower ((ibid. p.337). Rainfall or windy conditions might stress the flowers. If those agro-climatic conditions are close to optimum, the environmental modification costs to the producer can be reduced, since the operating costs and capital investments are low and less technical skills are required. For instance, production costs increase drastically if artificial environmental conditions

(Fredenburgh, 2019). Only the highest quality is traded internationally and since the final product "cannot be visually evaluated in the market, buyers put great stock in reliable sources" (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 338).

²⁷ On average, Germans spend 37€ per year and capita on cut flowers. Yet, the local production covers merely 20% of the German demand. Therefore, four out of five flowers must be imported, especially roses. The main hub for the international flower market is the Dutch stock exchanges. Around 77% of the transacted flowers on the Dutch stock exchanges are imported from South America or Africa with the most important producers being Ethiopia and Kenya (BR - Bayern 1, 2019).

²⁸ Post-purchase performances include the durability and endurance at vases, and whether the buds and florescences open accurately (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 337).

have to be monitored through technological parameters like heated greenhouses, in order to create moderate day to night varying temperatures and plentiful sunlight (ibid. p.337-338).

“Conditions in Kenya are close to ideal for rose production, so the specifications for greenhouses used for roses are minimal. In Europe, greenhouses typically have the capacity to heat during the winter, whereas Kenyan greenhouses need only protect the plants from the elements and capture daytime heat. Most Kenyan greenhouses are simple covered structures that protect the plants against rain and wind” (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 354).



Figure 4: Flower production areas in Kenya. Author: Kenya Flower Council; Source: http://kenyaflowercouncil.org/?page_id=100

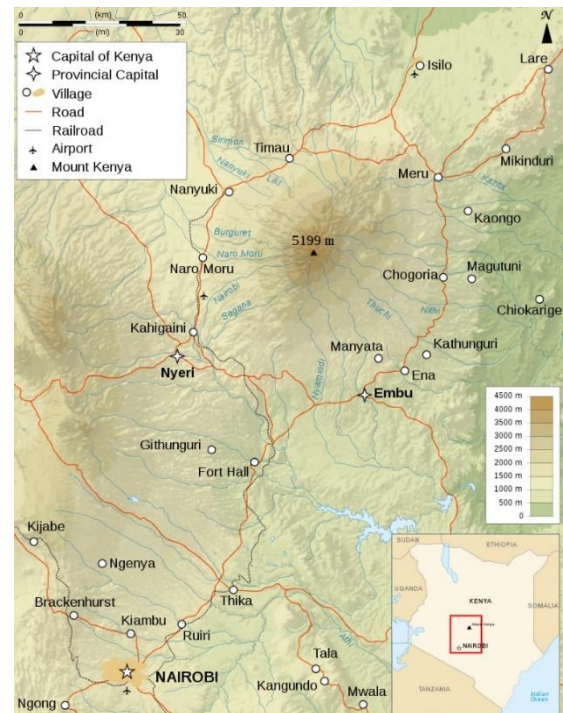


Figure 4: Locator map of Mount Kenya Region with research area of Timau. Author: Mount_Kenya_Region_map-fr.svg: Pinpin (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported); Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount_Kenya_Region_map-en.svg

Therefore, due to a high rate of fresh water availability, favorable climate conditions, as well as proximity to the capital Nairobi, the Lake Naivasha region within the Kenyan Rift valley became the heartland of the Kenyan cut flower industry (Jákli, 2019, p. 15). However, due to land pressure in Naivasha, the Mt. Kenya region and its highlands from Thika to Timau towards the Mt. Kenya, between 2000-3000 meter above sea-level and its fertile soils also attracted the industry (ibid. p.15). Furthermore, the regions around Nakuru, Eldoret, Kericho and Machakos/Athi River, south of Nairobi, are also important floricultural production areas (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020; Kenya Flower Council, 2019). Besides convenient climate conditions, Kenya also has offered low wages²⁹ for foreign large-scale investors during the last 20 years (BR - Bayern 1, 2019) Today, large-scale enterprises, operating on 20-100 hectares, are dominating the Kenyan

²⁹ Another driver which boosted the globalization of cut flower production are the low costs of labor within the Global South, since especially harvesting and further post-harvest processes like packing are highly labor intensive to confirm the required quality of each individual flower (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 338). Flowers need to be monitored, irrigated and fertilized several times per day. Furthermore, they must be harvested and trimmed selectively which cannot be mechanized (Happ, 2016, p. 52).

floriculture sector and producing cut flowers all year around (Happ, 2016, p. 52). Kenya has become a leader in African cut flower production, which has led to a “spillover effect, serving as a model for the development of flower industries in other Sub-Saharan African countries, including Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Tanzania” (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 335)³⁰.

1.6.4. Critique and the Fairtrade Implementation

However, the industry was and still is criticized for low environmental and social standards (Mook & Overdevest, 2019; BR - Bayern 1, 2019; Leiphold & Morgante, 2013). Kuiper & Gemählich (2017) describe the global reporting about the negative environmental and social impacts of the Kenyan floricultural production during the early 2000s, especially within the Naivasha region, as “apocalyptic” scenarios (Kuiper & Gemählich, 3/2017, pp. 33-35). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), like the WWF, reported about the issue of excessive usage of freshwater and its pollution while working inhuman conditions were analyzed critically, also in gender aspects³¹ (KHRC, 2012). Furthermore, media reports worldwide pointed out negative environmental and social impacts of the cut flower industry in Kenya (e.g. (A Blooming Business, 2009; Lawrence, 2005; Fredenburgh, 2019; Beutler, 2017; Vasinovic, 2015; Mwakugu, 2003).

As a response, the Max Havelaar Foundation³² in Switzerland initiated a pilot project to certify six Kenyan flower farms in 2001 to improve the environmental and social impacts (Mauthofer, et al., 2018, p. 28). Also, since 2009, large-scale cut flower producers with wagedworkers can gain area-wide Fair-Trade certifications through the implementation of various social and environmental standards (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 97). In 2018, 40 flower farms in Kenya were successfully certified by Fairtrade and more than 425.000.000 stems were sold. 28% percent of all sold roses in Germany were Fairtrade certified in 2019 (Mauthofer, et al., 2018, p. 28; Dohmen, 2017; Fairtrade International, 2019). With respect to flower production, certification standards consist of around 140 criteria, whereby one third covers environmental³³, one third social, and finally, one third economic trade aspects (BR - Bayern 1, 2019). Besides the application of higher standards to improve the working conditions, the Fairtrade premium, which is generated through higher selling prices, is supposed to circle back to workers, producers and their communities. Such bonuses would, for example, be invested in social facilities to improve the communities’ standard of living. The implementation of Fairtrade standards is monitored by the certification enterprises FLOCERT (ibid.). Today, Kenyan Fairtrade farms employ over 30,000 people, which amounts to around 30 % of all Kenyan flower workers. Fairtrade premium creates around 7.5 million US-Dollar, which aims to support the workers’ communities annually. The market for Fairtrade flowers is still growing globally (Fredenburgh, 2019).

Generally, media (BR - Bayern 1, 2019) as well as scientific research like Happ (2016), Alig & Frischknecht (2018) or Mauthofer et.al. (2018), indicate that Fairtrade certifications have improved the environmental and social impacts of Kenyan cut flower production³⁴.

However, the following study investigates the perceived working conditions by workers from the Fairtrade flower farm Batian Flowers Ltd. to analyze if the Fairtrade approach reaches the workers on the ground. The study is based on empirical data, gathered during field research from January – February 2020 within the Timau / Mt. Kenya Region in Kenya, 2020.

³⁰ Such spillover effects included the transfer of human resources like farm managers or technical experts from Kenya to other African countries (Whitaker & Kolavalli, 2006, p. 335).

³¹ Happ (2016) stresses that most jobs do not need any specific education, which has led to most female workers for whom it would be more difficult to find jobs in other sectors. Furthermore, existing stereotypes that woman are better at handling flowers determine such phenomena (Happ, 2016, p. 61).

³² <https://www.maxhavelaar.ch/fr/quest-ce-que-fairtrade/a-propos-de-max-havelaar.html>

³³ The study by Alig & Frischknecht (2018) indicates that Fairtrade roses from Kenya “have the lowest or one of the lowest impact of all environmental impacts analyzed, except for the water scarcity footprint, where they exhibit the highest values” (Alig & Frischknecht, 2018, p. 1). However, Fairtrade roses in Kenya show lower pesticide residues compared to Kenyan conventional roses (Alig & Frischknecht, 2018, p. 1).

³⁴ So far, only few scientific reports (for example: Gitonga 2010) were published taking the Timau cut flower production area into focus.

Chapter II – Findings

2. Empirical Data and Findings

In the following section, the empirical data will be presented. Empirical data material consists of 15 interviews with workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd, one interview with a representative from the workers union KPAWU and the document of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), which was handed out by the KPAWU member L. Ombiro (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020). The thematic categories, which structured most of the interviews were based on the CBA. Subject of the analysis are the following thematic categories: salary and working Hours, Personal Protective Equipment's (PPE), corporate responsibility, welfare and Fairtrade. All interviewees were anonymized. The names, which are used in the data, are pseudonyms³⁵.

2.1. The Organizational Profiles³⁶

*Batian Flowers Ltd.*³⁷ is located approximately seven kilometers west of the small town of Timau, on the North-Western slopes of Mount Kenya, within Meru County and around 2450 m above sea level. In 1997, Batian established the cut flower production of roses, scented roses, chrysanthemum, alstroemeria and florinca on a small production site of 2 hectares. Nowadays, cut flowers are produced on an area of 35 hectares, including greenhouses, and the company employs more than 600 people. The production is assisted by modern technologies, like drip irrigation systems, barcode track and trace systems, as well as automated climate control systems (Batian Kenyan Flowers, 2005-2016). The Fairtrade Germany producer profile³⁸ underlines the positive social and environmental impacts of Batian Flowers. For instance, Batian provides its own enterprise social insurance, interest-free loans, financial workshops, basic medical provision and individual counseling about family planning. Furthermore, the Fairtrade premium is supposed to improve working and living conditions in the community (e.g. subsidized gas cookers to avoid charcoal), scholarships, and special women's empowerment programs (TransFair e.V., unknown).

The history of *Timaflor Ltd.* can be traced back to the first steps of the Kenyan floriculture development. The Dutch company founder Simon van der Burg was one of the first flower producers in Kenya to cultivate roses since 1974. On a production site of around 5 ha, carnations were produced. The company has expanded to a size of around 100 ha, and, at present, employs approximately 2,000 people. In 2018, an additional plantation with an area of 10 ha was established. After harvest, all roses are exported to the Netherlands and sold via the Dutch auction Royal FloraHolland (Timaflor Ltd., 2020). Timaflor Ltd.³⁹ is not certified by Fairtrade. Yet, according to its own statement, the company attempts to increase the degree of social and environmental sustainability by the implementation of various initiatives into the daily routine. Thus, Timaflor is labeled by several MPS⁴⁰ certificates like MPS A+ to cover environmental impacts and MPS – SQ which verifies the implementation of improved working conditions (ibid.).

³⁵ Since the workers are fearing job losses as a sanction by the farm management of Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. because of providing subjective insights, **most names are changed into random pseudonyms**. Any accordance with those pseudonyms and persons who are linked in one way or another to those companies will be by chance. This procedure shall also prevent the interviewees from discrimination or any kind of harassment by the farm management or others. Furthermore, the sex of every interviewee is mentioned within its reference. This shall facilitate the understanding of their subjective perspective to outside readers. Only interviewees agreed in publishing their names: the KPAWU-member L. Ombiro and L. Wangara-Kinyua: "I'm not worried, this information can be used, I'm ready to speak up" (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020).

³⁶ Since official representatives of Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. were not willing to become part of the field research through interviews or observational farm walks, the organizational profile is based on information provided by the company's website, as well as the official online Fairtrade producer profile.

³⁷ <http://www.batianflowers.com/>

³⁸ <https://www.fairtrade-deutschland.de/produkte-de/produzentenfinder/produzent/detail/die-blumenfarm-batian-flowers-limited-in-kenia.html>

³⁹ <https://www.timaflor.com/en/>

⁴⁰ The MPS – Group is a Dutch labeling enterprise, aiming to certify the horticulture sector. Producers are able to fulfill several conditions and standards within different areas like social or environmental focuses, to gain an MPS – certificate (my-MPS, unknown).

Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. have direct access to the A2 highway, which connects Kenya's neighboring countries Tanzania in the South and Ethiopia in the North. Therefore, a good infrastructure is present for the transport of cut flowers to Kenya's most important International Airport, Jomo Kenyatta, in Nairobi.

2.2. The Employees – General Information, Salary and Safety Regulations on the Farms

All in all, nine workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. and six from Timaflor Ltd. were disposed to participate in this research. Seven interviewees were female, and eight males aged from 21 – 52. Beside interviewee Jelani, who was born in Nakuru County and interviewee Charles from Nyeri County, all interviewees are originally from the same Region around the Mount Kenya. 80% of the interviewed workers are married and 87% have children. The number the family's children range from one to five. Further information about sex and age of their children are not available.

All informants are working as hired laborers. No employees from supervisor or management levels were interviewed. The majority (9) described their occupation as “general worker”, while two named their job as “flower attendants” and “packer”. Further jobs are: “harvester” (1) and “security guard” (1). However, interviewees Johan and Charles (general worker and flower attendant) specified that they sometimes, for a period of eight weeks work as sprayers inside the greenhouses (Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020; Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020).

Most workers of flower farms in the area live in formal and informal settlements along the A2 highway, West of Timau. The settlements and villages around the farms, where the interviewed workers live, are Maritati, Ngusishi, Kwangaanga, Miamoja and Timau. Due to the highly frequented highway, workers can reach their working stations by public transport. Minibuses, so-called ‘Matatus’ and motorbike taxis called ‘boda’, connect villages and settlements. As the settlements and villages are rather spread apart, many workers do not live in walking distance to other residents or their working destination and pay up to approximately 2,000 KES⁴¹ (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020) of their monthly salary for public transport.

Housing is for most workers a wooden or corrugated metal hut equipped with basic furnishings. Mostly, the huts are subdivided into two small rooms, separated from each other by a plastic canvas, cardboard or pieces of other material. Families consisting of 4 or more members share huts with approximately 10 m²-15m². Electricity access is limited in this area – often ensured through small-scale solar panels. Sanitary infrastructure and fresh water sources are shared by various settlement inhabitants and, sometimes, only accessible on mandatory costs. The workers live in materially deficient surroundings, perceiving their homes as “slums”^{42/43}.

The general level of well-being can be summarized as rather low by all workers from Batian Flowers Ltd., while all interviewed persons from Timaflor expressed and communicated a higher level of contentment.

2.2.1. Salary and Working Hours

Answers by the interviewees to the questions about their income varied somewhat, depending on their working experiences, but also on how they perceived the interview question. Some provided their information in talking about their basic salary either with or without deductions. But the gross wage ranged from 11,000 KES to 14,000 KES per month, depending on their individual deductions through the Savings and Credit Cooperative

⁴¹ 1 USD = 107,262 KES (Kenyan Shilling); status: July 2020; Source: <https://www.xe.com/de/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=KES>

⁴² Slums are heterogenous spaces within urban areas which makes it difficult to define this term, i.e. “not all slum dwellers suffer from the same degree of deprivation” (UN - Habitat, unknown). However, the United Nations characterizes such areas with the lack of basic services like sanitation facilities and access to fresh, clean water, waste management systems, rainwater drainages, electricity supply as well as surfaced roads. Furthermore, such settlements are characterized by a high population density living in inadequate building structures, often within informal areas. The irregular and informal settlements lead to unsecure tenures which creates special injustice. However, slums are described as an urban and not as a rural setting (UN - Habitat, 2003, pp. 11-12).

⁴³ This statement by interviewee 02 was mentioned off-the-record, after the regular interview was conducted and was used metaphorical to illustrate how their homes are perceived.

Organization (SACCO)⁴⁴. Only interviewee Elias stated that he had a monthly salary of 19,000 KES, corresponding to his job as a security guard with a CBA minimum wage of 9,164 KES and extended working hours of 12 hours per day, five days per week (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020).

Mentioned working hours align with the CBA as security guards can work 56 hours per week, spread over six days. All other employees are allowed to work maximum 46 hours per week, also spread over six days while “any extra hours worked above normal working hours shall be paid as overtime” (A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. 4). The overtime will be compensated by one and a half of the normal hourly rates while overtime during public holidays or rest days must be compensated twice the normal hourly rate. The overtime is “part of the managements” discretion but shall be paid in cash through payroll or equivalent time-off on mutual agreement” (ibid. p.4). Every employee is also entitled to one rest day within a period of seven days with complete wage adjustment (ibid. p.4).

Basic : 9.032,** KES	
House Allowance:	2.100 KES
Transport Allowance:	1.450 KES
Holiday:	695,1* KES
•Gross: 13.278,** KES	
Pension Relief:	200.00 KES
Income Less Relief(s) Kshs:	13.078,00 KES
Taxable Income Kshs:	13.078,00 KES
Chargable Tax:	**** KES
Personal Relief:	**** KES
Deductions:	
NSSF:	**** KES
NHIF:	**** KES
KPAWU Agency:	**** KES
Bereavement Fund:	75.00 KES
SACCO:	8.113,00 KES
• Deductions Total:	9.1**,** KES
NET PAY: 4.14*,** KES	

Figure 5: Graphic presentation of Interviewee’s 003 pay slip from December 2019.
To keep the interviewee’s privacy, some numbers were made unrecognizable.
Author: Thomas Beutler, Source: Interview 003 (Interview 003 - Kovu - male, 2020)

The working hours between Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. are slightly different, but within the legal framework provided by the CBA. According to Interview 11, workers must work 7,6 hours every day at Timaflor Ltd., while Batian Flowers Ltd. expects eight hours or more from their workers (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020). Timaflor Ltd.’s workers specify their working hours from 7:30 am – 4:30 pm, which might depend on their specific occupation. Therefore, sprayers at Timaflor Ltd. are working for 5 hours per working day with complete wage adjustment for 8 to 12 weeks before they move to a different, less hazardous department (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020; Interview 12 - Jabari - male, 2020). Most of the Batian workers specify their working hours from 7am until 3:40 pm (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020; Interview

⁴⁴ SACCO = Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization. This credit organization is owned, managed and governed by its members who are bonded with each other in one way or another, for instance through the same employer. This member-driven organization functions as a bank for all its insiders. All members save their money together, which also enables the access to loans with interest to every member (UCSCU, 2020). The workers of Batian Flowers Ltd. are also running a self-organized Sacco which is described as “table bank” which seems to be used in high frequency to get a loan with slight interest or to save money over years (Interview 08 - Nwadike - male, 2020; Interview 12 - Jabari - male, 2020).

02 - Nala - female, 2020). Therefore, according to the available empirical data, the amount of regular working hours between Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. does not differ substantially.

2.2.1.1. Salary: The Case of Batian Flowers Ltd.

All interviewees were asked: “Do you like your job and how do you perceive your monthly salary?”. All interviewed workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. expressed their displeasure since the salary is perceived as too low to cover all basic monthly expenditures. Nevertheless, most interviewees said that they like their job despite their salary.

“I like my job, but my salary is too low, and it is not that I really like to stay there, but because I have nothing else to live on for my livelihood, I must work. It is not that I like it, but I have no option. So, like, the family I’m married to, is poor. They don’t even have a piece of land. So, I have nowhere to go [...]. So, what I’m doing is I’m trying to see if I can own at least a quarter piece of land where I can put up a house” (Interview 05 - Amani - female, 2020).

“I like my salary; it is not enough but it assisted me to educate my children. [...]. No, it is not enough. I think it is not enough for what I work, and I feel overworked for the hours that I work. [...]. I think what makes my salary goes higher is because of the overtime. It is not of the salary, it is because of the overtime (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020)

Nala indicates her basic salary with 9035 KES and describes it as a “mockery” since she perceives it to be too low to cover all basic needs (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020). At this point, it has to be mentioned that for some workers from both farms, especially males, the salary from the cut flower farms is not the only income they receive, since they own or have access to a piece of land. Therefore, the cultivation and usage of land for agricultural purposes generates extra revenue and becomes part of an income diversification strategy. For instance, Johan keeps livestock and runs a small dairy business. The dairy provides the household with milk and an extra income (Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020).

“I will not even say it is enough to educate my children. So usually I have other sources of income. I do some farming and I keep livestock. [...]. My wife works on my farm. She stays at my chamba⁴⁵. So, the wife does not stay with me. She lives at my village in Tigania” (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020).

“And from the same money I earn, I’m able to rent some pieces of land, I do some cultivation for my personal gains. [...]. Some is for my subsistence for my family and I also sell some to the local market” (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020).

However, all in all, the monthly salary at Batian is perceived and experienced as too low by the workers. Still, the workers also consider a regular income as fundamentally important. The workers’ statements are also strengthened by the KPAWU representative Laurence Ombiro who claims a doubling of the current monthly salaries to fulfill the basic needs:

Q: So, people are earning 14.000 KES, plus or minus...

A: minus....

Q: including housing allowances etc...is that amount enough to survive?

A: In fact, our problem with my union when it comes to negotiation of salaries, what those employees are being payed are peanuts. And life is very difficult for them. I feel on my side, as I said, we are not perfect as a union [...]

Q: So how much should a worker earn to fulfill the basic needs to survive?

⁴⁵ Swahili word for „field“

A: At least, if the workers are earning...average...30.000 KES...it is around how many dollars ...

Q: 300 US-Dollars?

A: Yeah 300. That would make a worker feel...it can make the life of our members better. At least people afford a decent life. At least decent life... (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020)

2.2.1.2. Salary: The Case of Timaflor Ltd.

The collected data indicates that the gross wages do not seem to differ significantly between Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd.. As figure 6 depicts, the worker Kovu gross wage of December 2019 was 13,278,** KES (Interview 03 - Kovu - male, 2020), while Timaflor Ltd.'s workers stated an average gross wage of 14,000 KES. Still, the salaries at Timaflor Ltd. are perceived as adequate and even higher compared to Batian Flowers or other farms in the region, which is stressed by all interviewees. The workers of Timaflor Ltd. were also asked if they like their job and how the salary is perceived:

“Because there is no other job that is available, I really must work on what is available. The only best thing about is, is to look for a company that has a higher salary. [...]. Yes, I like it.... So, beside Tima there is no company around which is paying as much as Tima, so I think for me it is ok...” (Interview 08 - Nwadike - male, 2020)

“I love my job. The company pays well. And there is no other company anyways which is paying better than Timaflor” (Interview 14 - Asante - male, 2020).

The worker Charles has been working for Timaflor as a general worker since 2015. Before this date, he had worked as a supervisor at Batian Flowers Ltd. His experiences confirm a pay gap between the two employers.

“The differences are like in the salary. The salary at Batian, even if you are a supervisor and a general worker at Timaflor. A general worker at Timaflor earns more than a supervisor at Batian. And the work at Batian is very difficult” (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020).

Despite relatively small differences in the amount of money which the workers gain as salary, the perception of the two companies differs greatly. Timaflor is perceived as fairer. Timaflor also tends to remunerate their head count in the shape of various events which seems to affect the well-being of the workers as well:

“Like for Christmas in December, they give each worker 5000 Bob as a bonus. There can even be a party. Then they would give out solar daylight, t-shirts and they make a party for the workers. End of the year party” (Interview 08 - Nwadike - male, 2020).

2.2.1.3. General Expenses

The salary is spent by the workers on basic expenses like housing, rentals and food. In general, workers try to save a small amount every month to generate reserve funds for unexpected expenses like illness or transportation. A male, childless worker from Timaflor, is able to save 6,000 KES per month, which reflects a large proportion of his income (Interview 12 - Jabari - male, 2020), but this seems to be an exception. In most families, children's education is financed by the worker's salary:

“Yes....So my salary goes to educate my children and to cater for my closer family like amenities like food and I pay for their accommodation.” (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020).

In some cases, remittances are sent to other parts of Kenya to support the extended family, especially to the parents (Interview 14 - Asante - male, 2020).

“And from what I get, it assists my family, but not only to my married family, to my extended family

like my parents. I support them. [...]. Like in my closer family, I have three children in school, one of them is secondary school, form 3. The other one is in form one. and the other, the younger one is in primary one. And I assist my parents who are at home (Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020).

Irrespective of whether the workers are discontented at Batian Flowers Ltd. or contented at Timaflor Ltd., the dream of one's own business has great significance to many of the interviewed workers. The business ideas range from small-scale agricultural investments, land ownerships or the opening of a shop (Interview 06 - Imani - female, 2020; Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020).

“According to where I have been working, I have been saving some money that can assist me in future. So that I can get some better plot of land and put up rentals and then I can be earning some money from process of the rentals” (Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020).

“In future, I have my piece of land where I come from in Nyeri county. And I have equipped it with everything. When I finish working for this company. When I see my children have gone through school, I will go back home and I will start my business on my farm” (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020).

2.2.2. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Safety

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) regulates that serviceable protective clothing must be issued to the employees when unserviceable protective clothing is returned before a new issue is made. While the employer is obligated to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the employees are liable to sanctions if the PPE is not used adequately. If the PPE is not cleaned by a laundry service, the employer must provide soap to wash the PPE. PPE used for any work with chemicals or other hazardous substances or materials, should be washed, cleaned and stored at the place of work (A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. 9). Furthermore, for all departments, the PPE are apportioned, for instance:

Occupation	Quantity	Frequency
<i>Security Guard</i>		
Jungle green uniform	2 pairs per year	2 at once for twelve months
Safety boots	2 pairs	1 every six months
Whistles	Once a while	Once a while
Cap	2 per year	2 at once for twelve months
Raincoat	2 per year	1 every six months
Army coat	1 per year	Once per year
Torch and Battery	1 at a time	One every six month and battery one monthly
Shoe Polish and Brush	1 pc at a time	Monthly
<i>Greenhouse Woman / Man</i>		
Green dust coats	2 per year	2 at once for twelve months
Gumboots	2 pairs per year	1 every six months
Plastic Feeders	2 pairs	1 every six months
Hand gloves	3 pairs	1 every four months
Scarf/Caps	2 pairs	2 at once
Dust masks	One at a time	1 every operation

Figure 6: Uniforms and Protective Clothing according to the CBA for Greenhouse Woman and Man. Author: Thomas Beutler. Source: Collective Bargaining Agreement (A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. appendix).

The frequency of how often the PPE is changed is not fully stipulated, since the case of damaged PPE is not listed in the CBA.

2.2.2.1. PPE and Protection of Labor: The Case of Batian Flowers Ltd.

Current and former workers of Batian Flowers Ltd. perceive the quantity and frequency of PPE as inadequate. Lucie, who worked at Batian Flowers Ltd. from Dec. 2010 until May 2019, complained about the PPE situation at Batian:

“[...] So many people fall down because of exhaustion, they are unwell, and those people need to be carried by their colleagues all the time to the clinic. So if I would have been a manager one of the things I would like to do, I would change how the company is looking at these employees, treat them in a more human manner to ensure the supervisors are not badly to the people talking to them with respect and I would also ensure, that we have good working gears. Because there are no good working gears and protective clothing to work with at the company. [...] They are running out in most cases and are in a bad state. [...] I was given protective clothes like gloves, once per year. We got them in May every year. If you are working and they are finished before May, it is your problem. Then you have to work with your bare hand, the company can't give your other gloves. [...] So sometimes I could have gloves to work, but if you don't have gloves, you still must work even at the alstroemeria⁴⁶ without gloves. And your skin starts reacting, it starts wounds and bleeding and becomes generally rough. (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020)

The statements above by Lucie were independently strengthened by Interviewee Zahir:

“Yes, we have PPE, but...Sometimes we don't have enough. We need gloves. Sometimes they are running out and we are not given new ones. And there are such problems always at the farm. So, my personal story is, I'm unwell with my stomach or something.... I have had a problem with my stomach. My stomach started aching. I went to some hospital and I was given some medication. So I get to a point where a surgery was done and another one at my left hand because it was getting swollen and I couldn't tell why it was getting swollen” (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020).

One of the workers, Elias, who is a security guard, confirms that he gets his PPE only once a year but without shoe polish. However, according to his statements, the company provides a repair service, but the empirical data does not clarify if this service is free of charge for employees (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020). The worker Zahir labels the sanitary situation at Batian Flower Ltd. as critical and “sometimes, people are [even] working at the company until they die” (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020). Furthermore, workers are fearing the application of chemicals:

“We are not very sure about the minimum risk level of the chemicals. So, when we are working, we are not sure that the chemicals were supposed to be within several hours or what...But as we are just taken to the greenhouses. And I suspect from those greenhouses that I contracted my stomach problem at the farm. [...]. They usually do it as a very big secret because you will never see the containers for the chemicals they use in the flowers. So, I don't know...So our flowers we are working on, are alstroemeria. It has its own problems to...It is very reactive to our health and bodies” (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020).

⁴⁶ During the introductory journalistic investigations in 2019, Batian Flowers Ltd. workers told us about the problems, especially with alstroemeria flowers, since this species seems to provoke strong, painful skin irritations. Whether this is caused by biophysical constitution of the plant or can be led back to the strong input of chemicals, is unknown.

2.2.2.2. PPE and Protection of Labor: The Case of Timaflor Ltd.

According to all interviewees, Timaflor Ltd. always provides PPEs to its workers. When items are damaged or outworn, they are changed regularly. Interviewee Johan, working for Timaflor Ltd. since 2010, confirms that the safety of the workers is given a high priority:

A: Inside the company [...] there is a department which is called Health and Safety which is in charge of PPE. So, you can never work without PPE. When you are cutting flowers, you are given gloves to prevent you from being pricked by the flowers. They also give us dust masks, [...]. Even the sprayers are very well protected with protective clothing. So, I would say, [...] they are very keen on the minimum risky levels. So, the risky levels are very well, they must work at specific time before people can go into the greenhouses.

Q: And the re-enter intervals to the greenhouses are strict?

A: Yes.

Q: And everybody follows the rules?

A: Yes, everybody. the supervisors must follow up, [...].

Q: How often do you get your new PPE?

A: After they are run out, you apply for a new one. And you are given right away. Especially the people who are working with chemicals. As soon it is done, they are given protective clothing right away. [...]. I had never such a problem. If you go to the company you must be screened, to know if you have been exposed to any chemicals. Because they spray within every month. They change the people who are spraying and bring in new people. And they are keeping screened the chemical levels. And in case it is high, they are changed.

(Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020)

Sprayers at Timaflor. start working at 6 am until 11am. This is, *firstly*, to reduce the direct exposure of the sprayers to the chemicals and *secondly*, to reduce the indirect exposure of the general workers in the greenhouses after spraying. The interviewed sprayers from Timaflor confirmed that they were provided with non-damaged and therefore adequate PPE. To reduce the risk level of any dermatological or aerial absorption of toxic particles, the working hours are limited to 5 hours per day for maximum 8 weeks. As mentioned before, the re-entry times into the greenhouses after spraying are met (Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020; Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020). The sprayer Charles also reports that all sprayers are requested to attend a specific workshop in order to learn how to use the protective gear. It is also added that sprayers are passing through medical checkups every third month (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020). Charles reported an accident with a motorbike, which does not seem to have happened during his working hours. But the company paid all the treatments and sick leave which has decreased the level of worrying. However, the empirical data do not provide information regarding why the company and not the national health insurance fund covered the medical expenses. This participant holds Timaflor's management responsible for the good health care (ibid.). That information is confirmed by Timaflor worker Jabari, who additionally states that the company funds hospital stays at the Cottage Hospital in Nanyuki, which is a private clinic with high standards (Interview 12 - Jabari - male, 2020).

2.2.3. Fairtrade and Corporate Responsibility

Workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. were asked how they consider the statements of their employers written on the company's website about their Fairtrade and corporate responsibility initiatives and engagements. Furthermore, workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. were also asked if they have heard about Fairtrade and how it is experienced. Finally, some interviewees were also asked how they would define Fairtrade.

2.2.3.1. Fairtrade and Corporate Responsibility at Batian Flowers Ltd.

All workers from the Fairtrade labeled cut flower producer Batian Flowers Ltd. declared their displeasure about the Fairtrade initiative on the production site⁴⁷. Beside the security guard Elias and the worker Zahir, no interviewed person was able to explain the (potential) benefits of Fairtrade (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020; Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020). Nobody considered Fairtrade as a beneficial initiative, because the arduous and hazardous working conditions were not improved through Fairtrade implementation. Generally, it was expected that the Fairtrade certification of Batian Flowers Ltd. in 2015 would improve life and working conditions. The improvement was expected, for instance, in the form of partial absorption of costs for school fees or other expenses. In summary, Fairtrade is perceived as a business initiative for the company or Fairtrade itself. This is shown through the fact that the Fairtrade initiative sells items like water tanks and solar cookers to workers from Batian Flowers Ltd.. Workers can apply for internal loans without interest to fund these items. The money will be deducted from their gross wage. However, all workers stated that those items are not co-financed or subsidized by Fairtrade. The workers must muster the whole purchase price.

“So, Fairtrade gives out some goods, some commodities, and I have applied. But since I got sick, I haven’t received anything from Fairtrade. They took my chance and gave it to somebody else. [...] there is nothing that is free from Fairtrade. [...] Everything you get from Fairtrade; you must pay for it” (Interview 03 - Kovu - male, 2020).

Fairtrade is perceived as something which directly contributes to visible improvements, free of charge.

“I have heard about Fairtrade. We have Fairtrade at the Farm. So, they buy commodities and sale them to workers. [...]. I don’t think Fairtrade is doing anything else. But last year for instance, we benefitted with getting an umbrella. And they pay for school fees for our children, but they deduct it from our salary. [...]. I’m not aware of anything what they have done to assist the community. I have nothing to say about Fairtrade. I don’t see them doing anything. I just think they are stooges of the management!” (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020).

The worker Zahir states that there is no difference for the workers if the commodities sold by Fairtrade are bought at the farm or at any other market, since they are not subsidized. Therefore, Fairtrade is perceived and experienced as something non-beneficial, too. However, Zahir knows about the basic function of Fairtrade and the premium money since he attended a workshop about Fairtrade⁴⁸. Therefore, he knows, that *“there is some money that is extra in the market. And that is the money what is supposed to come back to benefit the workers. But apart from the talk, we are not seeing anywhere on the ground.”* (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020). Interviewee Nala reinforces and shares the aforementioned experiences and perceptions by all other Batian Flowers Ltd. workers. The only visible benefit by the Fairtrade initiative seems to be an umbrella. But she traced her disadvantage back to her union membership:

“So, for the last years that I have worked, the only thing I have benefitted from Fairtrade is this umbrella. Nothing else [laughing]. [...] I can also not benefit from Fairtrade, because I’m in a worker’s union which negotiates for better rights for workers. When you are at the bad books with the management and the supervisor, you do not benefit from Fairtrade. I have applied for a gas cooker, I never got it. I have applied for another cooker. I never got it. Even school fees I didn’t get, because I’m at the bad books. The only thing I got is this umbrella because everyone got this umbrella” (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020).

Lucie and the worker Elias agree with the complaints, spelt out above, but also bring up some Fairtrade community projects. Smaller things like the construction and reparation of primary school classrooms within

⁴⁷All interviewed workers declared that they have heard about Fairtrade before in one or another way.

⁴⁸More detailed information about such workshops were not provided by the interviewee

different surrounding settlements were funded by Fairtrade (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020; Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020).

Finally, the general atmosphere at the farm is described as fearful, since the workers are exposed to harassments and discrimination by their supervisors and management members (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020; Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020; Interview 03 - Kovu - male, 2020; Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020; Interview 06 - Imani - female, 2020). The worker Zola for instance, complains, that the supervisors “insult you, she is shouting at you. She can tell you anything. It is inhuman” (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020).

2.2.3.2. Corporate Responsibility at Timaflor Ltd.

Timaflor is not Fairtrade certified, but holds different MPS certificates. The Timaflor workers in general stated that they have a good relationship with both their supervisors and the management level. Furthermore, the corporate responsibility standards are perceived as high. Most of the interviewees stressed the good, all-embracing and free medical service. Charles, who works as a sprayer, said that sprayers receive medical checkups every third month at the clinic at the farm site. In case of emergencies or acute discomfort, the patients are transferred to bigger hospitals, which are funded by the company (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020). The worker Jabari also mentions that the Timaflor Management supports the internal SACCO system, which gives the workers access to a safe and to loan money (Interview 12 - Jabari - male, 2020).

Chapter III. – Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of empirical data by the use of an phenomenological inspired approach basis on Padilla-Diaz is characterized by explicit textual analysis (*what is expressed*) and implicit structural analysis (interpretation of *how* it was expressed; *what is behind* the narratives, *what* was neglected) (Padilla-Diaz, 2015)⁴⁹. Elements, which were filtered unintentionally by the interviewees, and their constructed meaning are analyzed. It is also to be uncovered “what are some events evidenced through the stories without the person being aware of ” (Smith & Osborn in (ibid. p.106). The participants acted through language and how they spoke, i.e. gestures, intonations, etc. . Within this chapter, the research questions shall be addressed by exploring how the working conditions affect the lifeworld of the participants and how such experiences are related to their views about the workplace and certification information. Finally, the analyzed findings will be discussed by comparing official statements and sources to the subjective perceptions. The Collective Bargaining Agreement, and the International Fairtrade Standards, which determine the formal working condition framework, will be consulted as a data source, as well as information obtained from preparative literature study.

3. The Lifeworld of the Employees and the Perceptions of their Working Conditions

As illustrated within the findings section, the Timaflor workers demonstrate a higher level of well-being compared to Batian workers. This higher level of well-being is shown by the fact that they did not talk about stress, potential fears, angers and worries. Hence, worries about the unsafe working conditions or fear of job releases does not appear to be an integral part of their lifeworld. This is also demonstrated by the fact that the workers who were interviewed at Timaflor did not talk as much and complain to the same extent the Batian workers.

⁴⁹ See also: Chapter I - 1.4 : Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Means of Communication

3.1.1 Neocolonial Tendencies in Labor Conditions and Lack of Advocacy

Verbal expressions and the spoken elements and testimonials used by Batian workers indicate a feeling of powerlessness towards their negatively perceived situation. Descriptive narratives show a high externalization of power (*“she insults you; she is shouting at you. It is inhuman”*) and a lack of confidence as well as a lack of potential insurrection or even advocacy (*“She can tell you anything”*) (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020). The absence of self-defense or insurrection towards inhuman treatment by the management can be led back to the dependency of a regular income and the necessity to keep the job. Workers cannot risk losing their job as it is the only way to cover basic needs and finance children’s education.

Nevertheless, powerlessness seems to be internalized and experienced as a natural and unchangeable factor in the workers’ life. Neocolonial belief systems are rooted in the perception of workers’ worldviews. Neocolonial tendencies and hierarchies continue to shape labor conditions on floriculture farms (Styles, 2019, p. 147). The expectation of the “white man”⁵⁰ taking the role of the provider and being responsible for the financial security of black workers (*“The white man who is employing us is not giving us any money for education”*) (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020) as well as the usage of terms such as “slavery” when talking about their working conditions are some examples which could be found in the interviews. According to Styles (2019), “colonialism involves the seizure of territory and resources, but it also involves the colonialization of the mind and the self”. Individuals have limited control over their sense of self which is also shaped by the forces they are subject to, such as power relations, historical processes and discourses. In this sense, the identity that person is conscious of and has agency over, is a constructed and evolving sense of who the individual is in relation to others (Styles, 2019, p. 20). Through the interviews, narratives and hidden postcolonial paradigms related to questions of identity come into focus.

3.1.2. Emotions and Rhetorical Figures

One means of expressing perceptions of the management is the repetition of the expressive term “unfair” by worker Amani to communicate and stress her feelings (Interview 05 - Amani - female, 2020). However, further expressive terms to illustrate the problematic relationship between the workers and the management are: “inhuman” (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020), self-descriptions as “miserable person” (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020) or supervisors being responsible for “forced labor” (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020). Workers feel pressured to work despite being sick or injured. They also feel treated inhumanly on a personal level by the management and supervisors, which increases disaffection towards the management significantly on the Batian farm. In contrast, their narratives are characterized by words such as “love” and “good” which contradict the illustrations of problematic situation on the farm. The terms “I love” or “I like” occur in many interviews. However, it can be interpreted, that the formulations “I like my job”, “It is a good job” or “I love my job” should not be understood as a literal bond of affection to their jobs, but rather reflect the necessity of the job in order to have a regular income. In many cases, the expression of “I love my job” is not followed by the description of pleasant working conditions (which might indicate the affection for the job) but point out the effects of the job. Therefore, the affection is directed rather towards the money and life standard coming with the job (being able to provide for the family, afford education, etc.) than the job itself. There is a tendency for this scenario especially for Batian workers.

The way of speaking and emotions shown during the interviews with Batian workers changed between unaffected and worried, to angry (About Fairtrade: *“I just think they are stooges of the management”*

⁵⁰ Many upper-level farm managers and owners are (male) white Kenyans, ancestors of colonial, European settlers and expatriates from South Africa, Netherlands or United Kingdom (Styles, 2019, p. 147).

(Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020). Especially when talking about the refusal of benefits, displeasure is expressed in an irate manner (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020; Interview 03 - Kovu - male, 2020).

Some interviewees also adopted an ironic theme (*“I don t think Fair Trade is doing anything else. But last year for instance, we benefitted by getting an umbrella. And they pay for school fees for our children, but they deduct it from our salary”* (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020). *“So, for the last years that I have worked the only thing I have benefitted from Fair Trade is this umbrella. Nothing else [laughing]. I have nothing else to say about fair trade except the umbrella”* (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020)). The irony or sarcasm was often accompanied by cackling (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020; Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020). Irony – within the area of conflict between literary studies and philosophy – is the technical, hidden simulation of insincerity or to play an act (Kohvakka, 1996, p. 239) and “is also something that has a different or opposite result from what is expected” (Cambridge University Press, 2020). Irony was an unconscious derisive means to put up with the miserable situation in the resigned way the workers at Batian are facing in their lifeworld. Simultaneously, the protagonists retract their power over their own emotions. In other words, irony and sarcasm are methods to deal with difficult surroundings, devoid of mental disruption.

Metaphors used in the interviews illustrate especially the image of low pay (non-adequate salary is describe as being “peanuts” (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020)) and bad working conditions (even called “slavery” (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020)).

3.2. Management Complaints and Medical Discomfort at Batian Flowers Ltd.

One integral part of the workers lifeworld from Batian Flowers are complaints about the farm management. While all nine interviewed workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. complained about the management, the six Timafloor Ltd. workers gave more positive views. Therefore, it appears that Timafloor Ltd. takes the individual needs of its employees more into consideration than the Fairtrade labeled Batian Flowers Ltd. The complaints about the management by Batian workers are closely related to the weak Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), labor safety, medical needs and indiscriminately releases mentioned above .

The topic of medical discomfort came up by most interviewees (Batian: six out of nine) and was expressed in detail when medical problems are an essential part of the participants lifeworld, due to sickness or injuries. This also illustrates the inadequate health care system within the region in general. However, medical discomfort was only expressed by Batian workers, which raises the consideration of a defective health care situation, in combination with precarious and unsafe working conditions being the main reason for medical discomfort.

3.2.1 The Lack of PPE

Interviewees from Batian drew a connection between their own poor medical situation and the state of PPE and work safety at Batian. Three Batian participants reported a momentous accident on the farm and insufficient direct health care or absent assumption of costs. Two other interviews stated that their individual physical disturbance was not regarded by their supervisors, which has led to a strong physical discomfort. Due to a high level of manual work on flower plantations, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)⁵¹ becomes an integral and fundamental part of the well-being and health⁵² of the workers. The CBA leans on the Occupational Health and Safety Act but implements several paragraphs to adapt the national law to the specific

⁵¹ According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), Part IV, article 16 of the *Occupational Safety and Health Convention 1981 (Convention - C155*, ratified by 60 countries, *not Kenya*), employers are required to provide protective clothing and equipment to prevent health effects and the risk of accidents (ILO, 1981 [1997-2017]; ILO, 1996-2020). This might include different kind of gloves depending on the case of work, helmets, safety footwear, high-visibility clothing, safety harnesses, goggles (ILO, 1996-2020).

⁵² According to Chemirmir et al. (2017) who are quoting Hughes (2007), the term *health* is described as the act to protect the body from mental and physical unwellness resulting from work. Safety is defined “as a protection of people from physical injury” (Chemirmir, et al., 2017, p. 6) which also includes the maintenance of all work related facilities to protect the employees (ibid. p.6). Furthermore, it is stated that safety hazards might cause violent harm immediately while health hazards can lead to delayed and cumulative health deterioration (ibid. p.6)..

needs of the branch. The Occupational Safety and Health⁵³ Act from 2007 (revised 2010) No:15 § 101. (1) dictates the following rules for all branches in Kenya:

“Every employer shall provide and maintain for the use of employees in any workplace where employees are employed in any process involving exposure to wet or to any injurious or offensive substance, adequate, effective and suitable protective clothing and appliances, including, where necessary, suitable gloves, footwear, goggles and head coverings” (Kenya Law Reports - KLR, 2010 [2007], p. 74)

However, the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) as well as the Kenyan Occupation Health and Safety Act are not fully concrete, which opens space for subjective, arbitrary interpretation. Since the working conditions on large production sites within the Global South are often inadequate and a threat to the physical and mental health of the workers⁵⁴, the Fairtrade initiative intends to counteract such circumstances (von Hauff & Claus, 2018, p. 97). However, the international Fairtrade standards for hired labor does not close the gap of damaged PPE as well. The Fairtrade International standards require the instructions shown in Figure 8.

3.6.1. Workplace Safety

- *Your company makes work processes, workplaces, machinery and equipment on the production site as safe as possible and minimize any inherent health risks by adequate control.*
- *To ensure safety:*
 - *Risk areas and potential hazards are clearly identified by warning signs in appropriate languages and include pictograms if possible;*
 - *Safety instructions and procedures including accident prevention and response are in place and communicated to staff;*
 - *All hazardous machinery and equipment is equipped with adequate safety devices;*
 - *Protective guards are placed over moving parts;*
 - *Safety equipment is provided to all workers who are instructed and monitored in its proper use;*
 - *Equipment for chemical spraying is stored properly*

(Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 34)

Figure 7: Fairtrade International Standards: 3.6.1. Workplace Safety. Author: Fairtrade International; Graphic Editing: Thomas Beutler; Source: (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 34)

Furthermore, the article 3.6.19 of the Fairtrade catalogue is similar to the CBA, declaring that all PPE which is used with hazardous materials has to be cleaned and stored separately from the working site, and it must be arranged that workers do not bring such PPE to their homes (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 38). Finally, article 3.6.24. demands that all employers have to provide “proper tools and suitable work clothes for all workers appropriate to their tasks and replace them regularly free of charge” (ibid. p.39).. This somewhat more specific paragraph binds the employers to change the PPE regularly, but the term regularity is still not fully defined, especially in the case of damaged PPE outlying the frequency rule provided by the CBA.

It appears that such safety conditions are not secured at Batian Flowers. PPE only seems to be contributed once a year, and it is not clear if reparation is even covered financially by the farm (Interview 07 - Zahir - male,

⁵³ According to Alimario (2011) in Chemirmir et al. (2017), Occupational Health and Safety “is generally defined as the science of anticipation, recognition, evaluation and control of hazards arising in or from the workplace that could impair the health and well-being of workers” (Chemirmir, et al., 2017, p. 6). This is a constant process to reduce and remove conditions including behaviors which threaten human health and safety at any working place (ibid. p.6).

⁵⁴ According to ILO statistics, in 2017 approximately 2,78 Million fatal work-related injuries and illnesses and around 7600 work related deaths globally were counted (ILO, 1996-2020).

2020; Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020). The lack of PPE at Batian Flowers Ltd. increases the exposure to physical injuries. The whole sanitary situation at this farm is critical and, in some cases, even inadequate, especially as there seems to be an insufficiency of medical check-ups. The worker Kovu, who was heavily injured after an accident, and unable to move, complains that the inadequate clinic at Batian is only providing pain killers, which is perceived as insufficient and also sheds bad light on Fairtrade labeled Batian Flowers Ltd. (Interview 03 - Kovu - male, 2020). The CBA dictates that First aid kits have to be available at the farm all the time (A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. 15). However, various cases indicate the connection between insufficient PPE as well as ignorance of safety guidelines and physical health by the farm management. For instance, an interviewee stated that “*sometimes people are working [even with injuries and sicknesses] at the company until they die*” (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020). Additionally, workers are not fully aware of the risks. In this sense, the workers’ suspicion that the use of chemicals might be responsible for their health issues, needs to be acknowledged (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020; Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020; Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020).

The findings about Batian’s PPE facilitations are in strong contrast to former research (Gårdman, 2008). J. Happ (2016) concluded better PPE facilities on Fairtrade labeled farms in his research on impacts of Fairtrade certifications in the Naivasha Region (Happ, 2016, pp. 110-112).

3.2.2 The Issue of Pesticides

According to Gitonga’s (2010) study which analyzed the socio-demographic characteristics and common health problems of cut flower farm workers within the region of Timau, functional application and availability of protective clothing and equipment, determines the degree of exposure to health problems. It is stated that most of the workers with a low educational level are given consistently insufficient or non-existent training or workshops about basic safety rules at their working station. The non-compliance of the re-entry hours after spraying chemical production inputs like pesticides, in greenhouses especially, are a major threat to the health of workers (Gitonga, 2010, pp. 10-11). Therefore, “respiratory problems and gastrointestinal problems top the illness list of these workers like in other areas where floriculture is done” (ibid. p.11)⁵⁵.

If the entering of greenhouses occurs too early, chemical particles are a major sanitary threat. Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies chemical farm inputs in six categories: Ia and Ib classifies extremely or highly hazardous⁵⁶ chemicals, while II and III categorizes moderately and slightly hazardous pesticides (WHO, 2009, p. 5). On Kenyan flower farms, depending on the current situation, several toxic chemicals might be blended with each other (Happ, 2016, p. 30). For this reason, too, Fairtrade International regulates the re-entry periods into greenhouses strictly:

⁵⁵ The quantitative study about health and safety practices on cut flower plantations within the Kenyan North Rift Region by Chemirmir et.al. (2017) also indicates that health and safety standards on flower farms are low, which is causing accidents since adequate PPE is often not provided which also causes stress (Chemirmir, et al., 2017, pp. 8-9). This leads to the conclusion that the farm management is not taking the health and safety standards into account adequately, which also means that experts from outside to implement health and safety rules and laws on the farms are not consulted (ibid. p.10).. Furthermore, the entering of greenhouses after spraying chemical production inputs like pesticides represents one of the major risks to the well-being of workers on cut flower farms. The pesticides are required to combat pests, fungus and to enrich the soils. Happ (2016) stresses that some of those chemicals which are used on Kenyan cut flower farms are prohibited within the European Union (EU) (Happ, 2016, p. 29).

⁵⁶ At the highest level of danger, at class Ia, a dermatological absorption of 4 grams might be fatal to an adult human body. Ib requires an absorption of 4-16 gram (Happ, 2016, p. 29).

3.6.23. Re-entry intervals after spraying

- After spraying pesticides, the applicable re-entry intervals as defined by the manufacturer are strictly followed. In the absence of a re-entry interval defined by the manufacturer or in case the manufacturer does not refer explicitly to cultivation practices used by the company (such as use of greenhouses) conditions the following re-entry intervals based on World Health Organization (WHO) acute toxicity categories apply:
 - Highly hazardous pesticides (WHO Ib): 24 hours;
 - Moderately hazardous pesticides (WHO II): 12 hours;
 - Slightly hazardous pesticides (WHO III): 6 hours.
 - Unlikely hazardous pesticides (WHO U): 4 hours.
- In all cases, the full re-entry intervals are observed, and the foliage is completely dry before re-entering.
- The calculation of the re-entry interval starts at the end of the spraying. During the re-entry interval access to the area is not allowed and is marked by signs.
(Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 39)

[The lists of prohibited (red), restricted (orange) and flagged (yellow) pesticides can be found at: Fairtrade Standards for Hired Labor p. 64 – 78]

Figure 8: Fairtrade International Standards: 3.6.23. Re-entry intervals after spraying. Author: Fairtrade International; Graphic Editing: Thomas Beutler; Source: (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 39)

Fairtrade initialized a red list with 120 pesticides, which are prohibited to use. To reduce the usage of toxic chemicals, Fairtrade also requires the implementation of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM)⁵⁷ approach. Alig & Frischknecht (2018) analyzed the environmental impacts of the Kenyan roses and determined:

“The Fairtrade roses from Kenya show similar environmental impacts as average Kenyan roses. [...] . In Kenya, Fairtrade roses have a lower pesticide use than average roses. However, the amount used does not reflect the effect of the pesticides in the environment and therefore does not indicate the environmental impact” (Alig & Frischknecht, 2018, p. 1).

Concerning the utilization of chemicals, the Kenyan Occupational Health and Safety Act (article 86) obligates employers on the indication of chemicals, as well as the education of correct handling according to the original manufacturer order (Kenya Law Reports - KLR, 2010 [2007], p. 70).

Batian tries to keep information about chemicals nontransparent (“a big secret, because you will never see the containers for the chemicals they use in the flowers” (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020)). Since cut flowers require the application of toxic chemical inputs, the protection of the workers is necessary not only through PPE, but also through educational programs for risk elucidation. Indeed, such legislative conformity is costly for the employer. Batian flower might need to play the game of putting increases in profits above the health of workers.

All in all, the inadequate outfit of PPE and education increases the risk potential of industrial accidents, which can lead to an inability to work, followed by inadequate medical assistance and a lack of sick payment. Insufficient medical care on the production site and disproportionate heavy workload with – at least partial – compulsory labor, endanger even the minimum level of well-being of the Batian workers. The descriptions by the Batian workers paints Batian Flowers Ltd. in a bad light since the company potentially failed, based on interviewees descriptions, to meet the Kenyan Occupational Health and Safety Act, the CBA and the Fairtrade laws and guidelines. For instance, according to the CBA, the employer must change the gloves at least every

⁵⁷ Integrated Pest Management is an environmentally friendly and more sustainable approach to manage pests in agricultural and non-agricultural production facilities of all sizes, to reduce the toxic, hazardous impacts to the environment and human beings. “IPM takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options including, but not limited to, the judicious use of pesticides. In contrast, organic food production applies many of the same concepts as IPM but limits the use of pesticides to those that are produced from natural sources, as opposed to synthetic chemicals” (EPA, 2019).

fourth month to protect the workers' health. These failures create inhuman working conditions at Batian Flowers Ltd. and threatens the workers physical and mental well-being. Therefore, since Fairtrade standards seem to be not fully met and implemented, the question occurs if the production and sale of Batian Flowers Ltd. cut flowers could really be described as fair.

3.2.3 The Problem of Patient Transport and Lack in Assumption of Costs

The sanitary problems are accompanied by financial worries by injured or hospitalized workers from different perspectives. First, the CBA and the individual working contracts regulate paid sick leave. But due to a lack of education or due to bad former experiences, workers with a need for medical treatment are worried about their permanent salary during sick-leave and releases. For instance, Amani reported that she was not able to work for around eight months after she broke her leg during work. But Batian only paid sick leave for 1.5 months. Certainly, this is also a violation of the existing legislation, since the CBA regulates 53 days of full paid sick-leave, followed by 55 days of half paid sick leave (Interview 05 - Amani - female, 2020). Zola also had an accident within Batian packhouses, but the management did not give her permission to go to any hospital during her working hours for almost one week (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020). The missing permission to look after possible injuries or diseases is a clear breach of laws. The CBA dictates, that "every employer shall, with the consent of the employee, cause to be provided to such employee, medical treatment" (A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. 15).

General treatment expenses are covered by national health insurance which is deducted from their monthly salary. However, this deduction, which is according to the national legislation, is perceived as unfair. Therefore, it seems that the Batian workers expect the absorption of medical costs from their employer and not from the insurance. The legislation framework by the CBA dictates that:

"The medical treatment of an employee shall be provided at the expenses of the employer, unless:

- *The illness or injury was contracted during any period when the employee was absent from his employment without lawful cause or excuse; or*
- *The illness or injury is proved to have been self-inflicted; or*
- *Medical Treatment is provided free of charge by the Government or any insurance scheme established under any written law which covers the employee"*

(A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. 15)

Figure 9: Law for medical treatment of employees; Author: A.E.A. & KPAWU 2019; Source: Collective Bargaining Agreement 2019

Whether Batian Flowers Ltd. breaks the existing laws relating to the transport costs remains unclear, since the CBA does not mention the transportation costs explicitly. However, the deduction of the national health insurance, from which the workers benefit directly, is experienced as unfair, since the workers expect their management to cover these costs. Furthermore, the transportation costs to the hospital seems to be an integral financial expense and therefore part of their conscious lifeworld scenery. The worker Zola complained, just like Kovu, that her employer Batian only covered 50% of such transportation costs (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020). Surprisingly, they went to Cottolengo⁵⁸. The hospital which is approximately a two- to three-hour drive away, which increases the transportation expenses heavily. According to the Fairtrade standard catalogue, Fairtrade certified employers must provide:

⁵⁸ <https://cottolengo-hospital.business.site/>

“Access to appropriate healthcare means guaranteeing free transportation to the nearest hospital during working hours, or providing free onsite permanent medical support during working hours, which is able and equipped to deal with accidents and acute poisoning” (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 37)

The reason why Batian workers are not transferred to hospitals which are closer to their villages is unknown. However, the statements by Batian workers do not live up to the Fairtrade Standards (3.6.18 *Access to healthcare in case of work-related illness or injury*) and must therefore be understood as a violation of legislation. Referring to M. Styles (2019), workers use their wages for general living expenses, school fees for their own children or other relatives, remittances to the extended family and further loan repayments (Styles, 2019, p. 82). Additional expenses, like the transportation to hospitals, which are not fully covered by the employer or insurance, implies a significant issue (Interview 04 - Zola - female, 2020).

The Batian participants do not feel supported by the management in the case of medical needs. The negative experiences and perceived health care situation at Batian Flowers Ltd. are an integral part of the participants' lifeworld.

3.3 In Contrast: Satisfaction at Timafloor

All Timafloor workers, on the other hand, spoke of a surprisingly good health care system at the farm as well as good personal health conditions. While one participant even stated that he was never sick since working for Timafloor, another praised the health care system at the farm. This impression does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that there are no farm accidents happening on Timafloor. Nevertheless, the worries of sickness or diseases is not an elementary part of Timafloor workers' everyday life. This can be led back to a higher level of education about their rights in case of any injuries or sick leave. The company seems to be paying for medical care as well as non-intensive working hours in cases of health issues. Therefore, any health concerns do not necessarily lead to the fear of losing a job or being treated unfairly by the farm management. As a matter of fact, interviewees from Timafloor even stated that the management have helped to achieve good health care (Interview 11 - Charles - male, 2020; Interview 12 - Jabari - male, 2020).

All-in-all, it can be stated that Timafloor Ltd. takes the individual needs of its employees as well as the conformity with human rights more into consideration than the Fairtrade labeled Batian Flowers Ltd. The greater well-being by the workers of Timafloor can be traced back at least to the implementation of the CBA rules and other Kenyan laws. Referring to the statements by interviewee 10 and 08, Timafloor Ltd. meets, on the one hand, the laws given by the CBA and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and on the other hand, seems to protect its workers adequately through engagement at the upper-management level (Interview 08 - Nwadike - male, 2020; Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020). This leads to a general higher level of well-being, which influences the experience of the subjective working environment fundamentally. This different perception is visible, for instance, when the workers are talking about their salaries. As the KAPWU representative L. Ombiro stated (see chapter 2.2.1.1.), the general wages facilitated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) within the floricultural sector are too low and should be at least doubled to enable workers to have a decent life (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020). Timafloor workers perceive their salary, despite only small evidence-based wage differences, as much more adequate compared to the Batian workers. Interestingly, looking at the working conditions from an observer's perspective, the variation between labor protection and payment is not as high as might be indicated by the subjective well-being of the worker. This leads to the claim that even a minimal improvement of the treatment of the workers increases exponentially the positive perception of their working environment fundamentally, as well as their level of physical and psychological well-being⁵⁹. Timafloor seems to have understood this case and, therefore, provides

⁵⁹ J. Happ identified this mentioned phenomenon on Fairtrade cut flower farms within the Naivasha region as well. Even a slightly higher average wage and permanent positions on the investigated Fairtrade farms in Naivasha increased the level of well-being considerably (Happ, 2016, p. 135).

better management and labor conditions. Batian Flower, on the other hand, still seems to be stuck in more conservative, exploitative ways of production⁶⁰.

However, the workers' perceptions of the salaries as too low (despite higher satisfaction at Timaflor Ltd.), are congruent to other findings from the Kenyan cut flower sector (Gårdman, 2008, pp. 23-24). Indeed, M. Styles (2019) stresses in this correlation, that workers experience the access to credit and banking institutions through their employers as an important benefit. On the other hand, the access to loans increases the threat of cycles of debts (Styles, 2019, pp. 82-83).

3.4 Independence – The Dream of an Own Business and Own Piece of Land

The aspiration to personal and economic independence is consistent among all participants of this study. Working at a Kenyan cut flower farm is therefore only a means to an end. While all open questions were answered distinctively with their subjective focus, the question “*What are your dreams and wishes for your future*” was answered in the same way all across the participants group. All the interviewees aspire to own and run a business in the form of a shop or others, and to own a piece of land. In other words, all flower workers aspire to leave their employers and their dependency as a waged worker at one point of their future. The reasons to aspire an independence from the cut flower business are complex. For instance, Nwadike from Timaflor fears the exposure to chemicals (Interview 08 - Nwadike - male, 2020) while another worker wants more time for himself (Interview 14 - Asante - male, 2020) or their own piece of land shall secure food security and prosperity to the interviewees children (Interview 05 - Amani - female, 2020). Indeed, such strong volition to use the floricultural sector as a springboard, due to a rational choice, is also caused by the fact that continued upward mobility within society, and from an economic perspective, cannot be reached easily. Interestingly, referring to Styles (2019), this also counts for Kenyan middle-class professionals who aim for landownerships and their own businesses, or for political careers, after working in the floricultural sector (Styles, 2019, p. 89).

The fact that that all interviewed low-wage workers from Batian Flowers Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. have a permanent working contract must be considered when analyzing the desire of an independent life. Seasonal contracts are also widespread within this sector to cover harvesting and planting seasons (Happ, 2016, p. 71; Dolan, et al., 2002, p. 32). However, such uncertain contract conditions are a threat to the workers' well-being, since life planning is much more impeded. Therefore, Fairtrade stipulates permanent working conditions for certified employers, so the case at Batian Flowers Ltd. (Happ, 2016, p. 72).

Batian workers, especially, are using conditional forms to express their dreams. These conditions are mostly linked to the notion that a financial basis is required to own a business or piece of land. However, interestingly, most of the interviewees did not mention any plans to save money from their current regular income, while fears of promptly releases were mentioned regularly. The formulation that they wait for their releases, adumbrates a high fluctuation of human resources at Batian Flowers Ltd., which impedes individual future plans. Some workers state that they will try to get a job at another cut flower farm which depicts the rational relationship between employer and employees (Interview 09 - Julia - female, 2020). Only the worker Zahir thinks about resigning from his job, due to what he believes to be disastrous and hazardous working conditions (Interview 07 - Zahir - male, 2020).

On the other side, at Timaflor Ltd., workers do not expect releases other than the notice of self-termination of work contracts. These self-terminations depend on their approaches to save money. Due to a higher level of well-being, it seems that Timaflor workers have a greater capacity to create personal future plans. An external means to saving money is the in-house SACCOS (Interview 08 - Nwadike - male, 2020).

⁶⁰ This observation bases on the individual interpretative frame by the interviewees. This means, if working on a Fairtrade farm which should provide better working conditions, another benchmark is used by the workers compared to a de jure conventional farm. Therefore, it might be easier to increase the level of well-being on conventional farms since the expectations by the workers are marginally lower which affects the relational perceptions of justice and fairness.

3.5 The Aspect of Gender

The interviews show that the mentioned dependency to the employer (see chapter: 3.1.1.) as well as pressure and inhuman treatment is reinforced for women, especially for female single parents (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020). As in most parts of the world, Kenya's society is based on patriarchal structures and, therefore, norms and practices lead to structural disadvantages, ultimately detrimental for women (Kassie, et al., 2014, p. 153 ff.; Styles, 2019, p. 69ff.). The majority of workers within the floricultural sector are female (around 70%). However, female employees on a higher management level are still underrepresented. On the waged worker level, male and female workers are subdivided into different job groups: manual labor like picking flowers, planting and sorting is done by women, while male workers are fulfilling technical jobs like irrigation or spraying (Happ, 2016, p. 121; Gårdman, 2008, p. 21). The distribution of work according to gender is explained with considerable physical impact of toxic pesticides on female fertility (Happ, 2016). Nevertheless, in accordance with J. Happ (2016, p.122) and M. Styles (2019), women are also put in different positions than men due to gender stereotypes and socially constructed gender roles. According to Styles (2019, p.69), women are attributed with greater diligence to care for vulnerable cut flowers and "[...]the ability to respect details and with the natural attention women have along the way to all growth processes" (Styles, 2019, p. 69). The gender bias in terms of work positions in the cut flower industry can also be observed in the empirical material of this study f.e. only men work as sprayers (Interview 10 - Johan - male, 2020),

Apart from the gender related work positions, direct sexist experiences were denied by the participants. Nevertheless, indirect mistreatment and discrimination of females is illustrated. For example, it was stated that Fairtrade enforced the Batian production site as a non-smoking area. Consequently, women are now being harassed due to the suspicion of smuggling cigarettes for men on the plantation. Gate body controls were implemented which are experienced as restriction of freedom, focusing especially on the (unjustified) control of women ("now it has been an area of harassment because every morning they check if people have cigarettes [...] we feel our privacy is very much limited") (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020).

The current state of research confirms the analysis about the situation of female workers within the Kenyan cut flower industry. The mentioned patriarchal notions and acts lead, for example, to a gender gap in work distribution. Especially during European consumption peaks like Christmas, Mother's Day or Valentine's day, working overtime becomes exponential for women, since they are working as cut flower graders in the pack-houses. However, since women are mostly responsible for care work within their households, overtime can have negative impacts on the level of women's and children's well-being. Pressure of the female double burden especially for single parent women (Dolan, et al., 2002, pp. 35-36). According to overtime regulations, Fairtrade refers to "local applicable national and local legislation and industry standards regarding working hours and overtime regulations. Your company does not require workers to work in excess of 48 hours per week on a regular basis" (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 29).

The issue of sexual harassment is also present in current research. While Styles (2019) stresses the secrecy of possible victims and offenders (Styles, 2019, pp. 73-74). As in the presented data, the interviews in Styles' (2019) research also did not mention any concrete incidents⁶¹. Certainly, this does not indicate the lack of existence of such harassment. Dolan et. al. reported sexual harassments on all investigated farms within their study, especially by male supervisors (Dolan, et al., 2002). Happ (2016) confirms the community of sexual harassments in the floriculture sector. Sexual harassment and discrimination of women is also a matter of fact of underrepresentation of female employees in upper management levels. Hence, the structural male dominance also reduces the possibility for women to out in complaints in a safe environment. The most common method of sexual harassments concerns young single women (often single parents) who have seasonal contracts. Also, it appears that to get permanent employment, superior employees often expect sexual services (Happ, 2016, pp. 123-124; Styles, 2019, p. 73). Sexual harassments are also reported on Fairtrade certified cut

⁶¹ This must lead back as well to the structural problem, that female participants were interviewed by two male interviewers.

flower farms in Kenya, but, according to L. Ombiro from the workers' union, do not occur daily like it seems to be the case on conventional farms. The lower incidences on Fairtrade farms seem to be the results of trainings and workshops that are held on women's equality and gender topics (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020). Therefore, Fairtrade programs for women's empowerment and support in workers' communities are essential and show some success in research literature.

The general Fairtrade standards themselves require the companies achievement of equity (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 18) and expects unmistakably to take a no-tolerance policy against sexual harassment [see 3.1.5- and 3.1.6. (ibid. p.20).

“Your company does not directly or indirectly tolerate behavior, including gestures, language, and physical contact that is sexually intimidating, abusive or exploitative. [...]” (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 20)

Fairtrade demands women's committees and a broad elucidation rate (see Fairtrade Standard: 3.5.27 Grievance procedure, (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 33). Nevertheless, they were not mentioned by Batian workers even though they are promoted on the Fairtrade website (TransFair e.V., unknown) A women's committee or another safe space at Batian to complain was not mentioned. The current state of sexual harassment on Batian cannot be fully evaluated but would require a specific research on that topic.

In addition to the topic of sexual harassment and discrimination, the issue of maternity leave is fundamental when female health care is taken into focus. The CBA as well as the International Fairtrade standards dictates a maternity leave of 12 weeks / 3 months and nursing mothers granted breaks (A.E.A + KPAWU, 2019, p. 6; Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 30ff.). One young mother at Batian stated that she got a paid maternity leave of three months, which conforms with the current legislation. Yet, the promoted elucidation programs by Fairtrade or Batian itself never reached her (Interview 09 - Julia - female, 2020). Certainly, all interviewed women have never heard about the Fairtrade women program. This incidence aligns with the fact that Fairtrade in general does not seem to achieve the positive impact and changes, which the Fairtrade initiative intends to accomplish. At least, Fairtrade is not perceived as a supportive facility by the workers.

3.6 The Imagined Definition of Fairtrade and Complaints

3.6.1 The Perception of “Unfair”: Wrong Expectation of the Fairtrade Initiative

In general, all workers from Batian present negative comments about Fairtrade. This discontentment requires a closer look. It seems that the workers have expectations about Fairtrade, which do not meet the effect which Fairtrade actually wants to obtain in the cut flower business. Workers expect, for example, that Fairtrade shall pay for fees and provide direct financial support. Furthermore, interviewees also expect to be given commodities by Fairtrade. Therefore, the workers expect Fairtrade to be a top-down development aid providing goods and support, rather than an initiative improving production conditions. Interestingly, all interviewees stress the expectations of Fairtrade being responsible to pay “half of the school fees”. Accordingly, the conclusion can be drawn that they were provided with some information of such financial support regarding school fees. Sadly, the source about that information could not be traced back. The collected data does not show if the image of Fairtrade is falsely communicated as a development aid initiative instead of a production-centered initiative to the workers, or if the workers have unrealistic expectations of the Fairtrade programs, while communication is accurate.

Fairtrade aims to improve working conditions and living conditions within the workers' communities (TransFair e.V., unknown). Worker's expect Fairtrade Premium to be distributed directly in form of financial aid, while Fairtrade communicates openly that no direct financial support to individuals should be provided.

In this sense, Fairtrade is perceived and experienced by the workers as a business idea without any benefits for the workers' livelihoods. Question remains if the workers do not acknowledge community work, which is financed by Fairtrade Premium as their needs would, in any case, only be satisfied with direct financial aid, or if the Fairtrade Premium distributions lacks to meet the community's needs. In any case, the incorrect imagine of the Fairtrade Premium being financial aid can be traced back to a lack of explanation by the farms themselves. The unawareness and mis-knowledge of Fairtrade's functionality and its potential benefits demonstrate an insufficient implementation of Fairtrade principles in corporate governance.

Additionally, at this point it is important to mention that Fairtrade does not affect the regular salaries as well as working hours. L. Ombiro (2020) stresses that Fairtrade monitors the compliance with the national minimum wage and working hours legislation, which is represented in Kenya through the CBA. As a consequence, if the wages by Fairtrade certified companies meet the CBA requirements, the Fairtrade standard is fulfilled, despite the fact that the minimum wage does not facilitates a decent livelihood by the workers (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020; Gårdman, 2008, pp. 23-24). Fairtrade itself implemented the World Bank absolute poverty line of 1,90 US – dollar per day⁶² as a guideline to improve the minimum wages on Fairtrade-certified flower farms. Existing Fairtrade farms had to adapt this into the minimum wage by 85% by April 2018 and since April 2019, all Fairtrade flower producers have to comply with this requirement by 100% (Fairtrade International, 2019, p. 9).

3.6.2 Subsidies of Commodities and Preconditions for Support Programs

As a matter of fact, the provision of commodities by Fairtrade does take place. According to Fairtrade Germany, subsidized commodities like sustainable gas cookers are provided for the workers on Batian Flowers Ltd. (TransFair e.V., unknown). Workers also mention water tanks and solar panels that can be bought through Fairtrade initiatives. However, subsidies do not seem to make a difference in pricing for the workers. Indeed, according to statements by the workers, they do pay the whole price themselves. The price will be deducted from their salaries and, therefore, can be paid off in rates.

Workers must apply to the Fairtrade board on the farm to get access to the Fairtrade program's commodity bonus. However, workers complain that they have applied several times without any success⁶³. The membership at the KPAWU workers union or restricted productivity due to injuries are, for example, mentioned as reasons for refusal (Interview 02 - Nala - female, 2020; Interview 03 - Kovu - male, 2020). Also, having taken a loan from a bank or other formal debts restricts access to Fairtrade's benefits. Realistically, most of the workers need to lend money from financial institutes, in order to be able to pay for their children's school fees. Promised credits without interest are only distributed when the liquidity of the recipients is guaranteed. Consequently, only a very small group of financially stable recipients can get access to loans or commodities.

"I don't think it is fair because the poor person is not benefitting at all and continues being poor"
(Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020).

Through the reported application and refusal process, Fairtrade commodities become an exclusive and restricted aid, which does not meet the principles of all-out support. Indeed, Fairtrade commodities can potentially function as a penalizing and suppressing process of worker control mechanism on the farms.

⁶² 1,90 USD = 203,767 KES (Kenya Shilling); status: July 2020; Source:

<https://www.xe.com/de/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1%2C9&From=USD&To=KES>

⁶³ The workers eliminate the option of the Fairtrade board itself taking unfair decisions. It is stated that members of the board are "one of them" as the boards consists of general workers which are elected democratically. Therefore, higher management and Fairtrade regulations are made responsible for non-successful applications.

3.6.3 The Fairtrade Community Program

The frustration and the perception of the senselessness of Fairtrade aligns with the negligence of community programs. Only two out of nine Batian workers have heard about Fairtrade engagements within neighboring communities. They thereby do not refer to any personal benefits. Initiatives by Fairtrade, such as the installation of water pipes (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020) or reparation of classrooms (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020) in community settlements are perceived as unfairly distributed. In the worker's perspective, they "are the people who are making Fairtrade and working with the flowers but are not benefitting at all" (Interview 15 - Elias - male, 2020). In Elias' opinion, recipients like a school did nothing to deserve the benefits.

Further community programs, which are promoted at Batian's Fairtrade online profile, like funded community sport activities, loans without interest, workshops on family, financial and health planning, as well as advanced medical care, were never mentioned by the interviewees and therefore, potentially do not exist. Fairtrade benefits seem to not take up an integral part of the workers' lifeworld as there are no direct benefit in form of cash.

Hence, the Fairtrade initiative is not experienced positively, as the workers do not feel any direct or personal benefit. In this sense, Fairtrade's image is not the image of an initiative to improve production conditions, but rather a disappointing form of development aid or business initiative. This argument can be metaphorically illustrated through the umbrella case: Batian workers only mentioned one direct benefit from Fairtrade, which was the gift of an umbrella. The umbrella was given to all Batian workers in 2019:

"I have not seen them doing anything. When they bring commodities or goods, they sale to us like as the simple way you buy from a shop. They don't even assist us with school fees. They don't have assisted school fees for my children. So, I have nothing the only thing I have seen about from Fair Trade is, I got an umbrella last year. Nothing else. And this here is the umbrella I got" (Interview 05 - Amani - female, 2020).

Additionally, Fairtrade was not mentioned in the context of the lack of PPE or complaints about working conditions. It can be concluded that workers are not even aware of the aim of Fairtrade to improve working conditions. Also, Fairtrade was only mentioned after concrete inquiry. The majority of interviewees dismisses the initiative as useless, while, certainly, not having complete knowledge about it. Only two out of nine participants seemed to have any deeper knowledge about the function and broader vision of Fairtrade.

The data of this study about Fairtrade benefits can be concluded in two different strands. On the one hand, the expectation of any benefits is a different one for the workers than intended by Fairtrade. As a consequence, workers are not aware of distributions and community aid which is done. The Fairtrade regulation prohibits the usage of Fairtrade Premium as following:

- To meet any expenditure for which the company is legally responsible (e.g. health and safety requirements)
 - To cover the running costs of the company
 - As salary supplements to individual workers
 - To replace existing social and environmental expenditures of the company
- (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 14)

Since 2014, up to 20% of the annual financial Fairtrade Premium resource can be used to direct cash contributions to the workers if distributed equally (Fairtrade International e.V., 2014, p. 14). Despite strict transparency requirements, this seems to be an adequate way to increase the visibility of Fairtrade in cases such as Batian.

On the other hand, there seems also to be a mismanagement and even failure in the implementation of Fairtrade benefits and support programs. The lack of presence and access to Fairtrade Premium initiatives at Batian Flowers Ltd. for low-wage workers or the whole absence of such programs must be put in contrast to previous research about the Fairtrade cut flower producers in Kenya. Gårdman (2008) stresses the transparency of investigated Fairtrade farms [Batian Flowers Ltd. as highly intransparent for this research] and the high rate of elucidation of human and working rights by the workers. The Premium was invested in infrastructural programs or in social initiatives like orphanages or practical workshops (computers, tailoring, driving) (Gårdman, 2008, p. 25). Also, J. Happ's (2016) findings indicate clearly that Fairtrade certified farms within the Naivasha Region use the Premium program for the implementation of workshops, school investments, scholarships etc.. Consequently, further investigation is needed on how the Fairtrade Premium at Batian is implemented, since all participants did not perceive any benefits from these initiatives.

3.6.4 The Audits – Violation of Fairtrade Legislation

The audits are annual checkups by FLOCERT GmbH to review the compliance with Fairtrade standards on the farm (Happ, 2016, p. 36). The announced and annual audits include farm and production site assessments and interviews with persons from the general workers as well as the upper management level (ibid. p.36-37). In the case of any irregularities, the companies have the possibility to introduce and implement corrective actions. If FLOCERT GmbH recognizes any breach of rules, the Fairtrade certification can be detracted (ibid. p.38). In general, according to Gårdman (2008), Fairtrade audits fulfilled the gap of “non-existent governmental inspections” and could therefore “contribute to the sustainable development of labor and human rights” (Gårdman, 2008, pp. 38-39). However, the empirical material uncovers possible breaches of rules or, at least, a primitive and flat interpretation of such regularities.

The selection of general workers by the extern auditors to verify the compliance with Fairtrade legislation on labelled farms, seems to be inadequate at Batian Flowers Ltd.. Due to pressure by the upper-level management, workers at Batian might be sanctioned through harassments and sacking if they criticize or communicate any complaints during such interviews. Therefore, due to the non-anonymous survey during the audits, workers do not dare to formulate their actual experiences and the real situation on the farm. As shown in this research study, anonymous opinions about Fairtrade do not describe a positive Fairtrade impact on the farm at all. Any official Fairtrade report illustrating positive workers' impressions can therefore only be biased or even censored in some or another way. The constraint of expression of opinion is a clear violation of human rights and, also, Fairtrade rules (Interview 01 - Lucie - female, 2020). Finally, referring to statements of the KPAWU representative L. Ombiro, the management of Fairtrade certified Kenyan cut flower farms seem partially educating specific selected workers. Those trained workers are then subject to the who Fairtrade auditors in conformity with the company's intention. In this sense, a bias or falsification of the real existing state of the working conditions can be present to Fairtrade standard audits. L. Ombiro confirms given practice also on other Fairtrade farms in Kenya (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020). Through incomplete and inconsequential audit, the Fairtrade standards blur on production sites, which contradicts the high reputation of Fairtrade at the consumption level.

Chapter IV

4.1 Conclusion – Which Lessons Were Learned?

The lessons which were learned through answering the research questions, through a phenomenological research design, might influence the sector towards more sustainability. The research questions were:

A: *How do the workers of Batian Flower Ltd. and Timaflor Ltd. experience the working conditions, and how does it affect their lifeworld?*

B: *How do these experiences relate to the views of the workplace and certification information, and do the workers of Batian Flowers Ltd. experience and perceive any advantages of the Fairtrade certification?*

C: *Are any differences between Fairtrade and non-Fair-trade labeled cut flower farms recognizable, and if there is a gap between the workers perceptions and the information by the certification organizations, why is there such a gap?*

Firstly, the everyday life and the lifeworld of most Kenyan cut flower wagedworkers is often shared by workers of the same employer. While Timaflor Ltd. workers' health and well-being is boosted through enhanced health services, compliance with national safety standards, more respectful top-down handling, and a slightly higher average salary, Batian's workers express a higher level of discontentment. In general, according to the Kenyan salary legislations framed and guided by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), it was stated that gross wages should be increased to fulfill the workers' basic needs (Interview 16 - Laurence Ombiro - male, 2020)). Therefore, the working conditions at Timaflor Ltd. are still far from being considered to be satisfactory but are, nevertheless, more pleasant than conditions at Batian Ltd. among other producers in the region. It becomes clear that one reason for the positive reputation by Timaflor and the higher degree of workers' well-being is also due to comparisons to the situation on other farms. Secondly, the experiences of Batian workers do not fully correspond to other research on Fairtrade's role within the cut flower industry, as well as how Fairtrade describe the working conditions on that particular cut flower farm. The presented study illustrates the weaknesses of the Fairtrade labeling system for hired labor companies. It shows also the detrimental working conditions at Batian Flower Ltd, which partially violates legislation frameworks. The gap between Fairtrade's self-image and the workers' perceptions should be scrutinized, and the Fairtrade leadership should listen to the workers' complaints and try to improve both: the conditions and their communication with the workers. Channels of communication need to be created between workers and Fairtrade officials. The audits, conducted by FLOCERT GmbH, should ensure the protection of speech and expression of opinions. Otherwise, the Fairtrade labeled employers are easily able to break engagements, like happening at Batian Flower Ltd., where the interviewed workers were not able to report any advantages created by the Fairtrade certification. Thirdly, as mentioned, the differences between the investigated Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade labeled cut flower farms are fundamental, yet in contrary to what could be expected. A Fairtrade labeled farm is in no way ahead of non-labeled farms. The medical health care at Batian flowers reveals gaps that are normally more common on conventional, uncertified cut flower farms in Kenya. However, a broad study about the actual existing conditions of health care units on Fairtrade farms is required, since this study only illustrates two cases on a micro-level. Same with the case of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Batian Flowers Ltd. While the non-Fairtrade employer Timaflor Ltd. seems to protect its employees adequately, the working conditions of the Batian workers are a serious threat to the individuals' mental and physical health. Regarding this non-adequate health care, workers at Batian suffer fear of sick leave and insufficient medical support, despite the Fairtrade certification. The case of Timaflor illustrates that an adequate PPE outfit, in line with existing Kenyan legislation and rules by the International Working Organization (ILO), can increase the level of well-being

fundamentally due to the reduction of the status of employee's illness. In the case of Batian, an independent holistic investigation is required including official perspectives from stakeholders, since Batian Flowers Ltd, Fairtrade Germany, as well as FLOCERT GmbH, did not contribute to this study, despite official requests. At the same time, this comparative study illustrates the degree of well-being by Kenyan cut flower workers, which is relatively easily influenced by the mentioned structures (e.g. PPE, health care, reduced workload, freedom of assembly and speech). However, beside the weak implementation of legislation, additionally, workers seem to have exorbitant expectations regarding the function of Fairtrade, which underlines the requirement of an adequate elucidation. Therefore, the gap between the workers perceptions of existing working conditions and the information provided by Fairtrade and the producer itself can be led back to possible discrepancies during the audits and the lack of internal evaluative institutions. The gap can only be closed if workers on Fairtrade-labeled cut flower farms become aware of their rights and the programs' legislation framework. Furthermore, on each flower farm a mechanism such as an awareness helpdesk or helpline, which is capable of making decisions at the farm level to communicate any kind of discomfort, trouble or other grievances, ought to be established. This seems to be an essential measure, especially since it could be questioned whether Fairtrade audits actually constitute an independent supervisory authority. It is imperative to consider that such bottom-up awareness helpdesks must implement postcolonial approaches, deconstructing and critiquing various forms of stereotypes and rhetorical figures, as well as gender aspects, in order to create communicative safe spaces for wage workers.

On a side note, the instability of production in the Global South, the cut flower industry in Kenya especially, became more present than ever with the global pandemic due to the Covid-19 virus. At the time of conducting research for this study, the Covid-19 virus was only a regional epidemic. Only a few weeks later, Covid-19 became a global pandemic that influenced and changed the lives of all human beings. However, the pandemic left its mark also within the global cut flower trade. Due to the abolition of the Kenyan target markets within the Global North, the decline in sales has led to job dismissals and unpaid leaves in Kenya (Rotich, 2020). As in all economic sectors, the Kenyan cut flower industry will also experience the global lockdown impacts for a long time. If and when the sector can recover from the restriction remains unclear. But if so, it might constitute a chance for the whole industry to restructure towards a more socially and environmental focused approach in order to decrease economic vulnerability.

4.2 The Influence of Phenomenological Paradigms

The interviews were read with a phenomenological intention of understanding the world from the actor's point of view which facilitated a collection of broad empirical in-depth data. The focus on the interviewees' narratives based on semi structured, open-ended interviews rather than the researcher's observations enabled a framing of the workers structure of consciousness and subjective experiences regarding to their perceived working conditions. The research design facilitated an introductive understanding how the workers perceive the world around them and allowed partial insights into the subjective experienced lifeworld.

The contemplation of phenomenology when analyzing the interviews created an arena of interpretation in which the participants communication of emotions, first-person perspectives, desires, social activities and memories, especially through subordinate clauses, metaphors, dramaturgy self-expressions were kept in mind. This chosen qualitative, phenomenological inspired research design enabled the holistic manifestation that individual, subjective perceptions and experiences can differ from objective criteria like work protective laws despite their implementation. Indeed, it becomes clear that this research merely caught up only parts of the workers lifeworld, broadening outstanding perspectives through the collection of narratives. However, phenomenological paradigms enabled introductive insights into the subjective structure of the workers lived experiences outside quantitative, scientific paradigms rather than a conceptual evaluation of the formal working conditions.

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6. Appendix

6.1. Appendix I. – Guiding Questions of Semi-structured interviews

1. Since when and why you are working for Batian Flowers Ltd. / Timaflor Ltd.?
2. Could you describe how a normal working day looks like for you?
3. Do you like your job at Batian Flowers Ltd. / Timaflor Ltd. and how do you perceive your monthly salary?
4. How do you experience the working environment at Batian Flower Farms Ltd. / Timaflor Ltd.? What do you like and what would you like to improve?
5. Have you heard about Fairtrade / MPS – SQ standards and if so, what do you think about it?
6. Batian Flowers writes on its website: “We are taking good care of its 600 employees like: Personal Protecting Equipment, funding medical needs of each employee and its family?” How do you perceive and experience such standards? / Tima Flowers writes on its website: “We are taking MPS-SQ certified which means meeting the national and international requirements in the field of health and safety for its employees.” How do you perceive and experience the health and safety standards?
7. What are your dreams and wishes for your future?

Those guiding questions were added with deepening questions according to the interview setting, atmosphere, as well as individual focal point. For instance:

What do you think Fairtrade is?
How do you spend your monthly salary?
How did you obtain your job?