Moved by modernity

How development shapes migration in rural Ethiopia

Schewel, K.D.

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This dissertation examines how the social transformations associated with ‘development’ over the last century impacted the migration and settlement behavior of a traditionally semi-nomadic people in the central lowlands of the Ethiopian Rift Valley. Utilizing original survey data, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic methods, it examines two (im)mobility transitions: 1) from semi-nomadic pastoralism into settled agriculture, and 2) from rural agriculture into more mobile, urban-centric lives. To explain these transitions, the dissertation evaluates the impacts of different dimensions of social change – the political, economic, demographic, cultural and technological – on migration aspirations and behavior over time.

This research finds that, first, the sedentarization of semi-nomadic lifestyles was an integral part of modern nation-state building in Ethiopia. This settlement set the foundation upon which new forms of rural-urban and international migration would later emerge. Second, it finds that rural out-migration among younger generations – whether to neighboring towns or to the Middle East – is driven by rising access to formal education, growing rural-urban connectivity, and the expansion of market forces. It shows why ‘development’ tends to stimulate a widening aspiration-opportunity gap for rural youth; aspirations are increasingly oriented towards urban futures, which cannot be realized in rural areas and thus require migration to achieve. Nevertheless, many still remain in rural areas, lacking the capability to leave. These findings challenge popular ideas that development aid can reduce the ‘root causes’ of migration by showing why development, in its current practice, is the root cause of much contemporary migration.
MOVED BY MODERNITY

HOW DEVELOPMENT SHAPES MIGRATION IN RURAL ETHIOPIA

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aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. 4

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... 9

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... 10

Abbreviations / Language Reference .................................................................................... 12

Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 14

  Theoretical Contributions .................................................................................................... 18

  Chapter Outline .................................................................................................................. 22

  The Question of Terminology ............................................................................................. 25

Chapter 1. Theorizing Migration in Modernity ........................................................................ 27

  Migration and Development in the Modern Period ............................................................... 29

  ‘Aspirations’ in Migration and Development Research ........................................................ 32

  Theorizing Aspirations ......................................................................................................... 35

  Bringing in Capability .......................................................................................................... 37

  Linking Aspirations, Capabilities, and the Social Transformation Approach ..................... 39

  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 42

Chapter 2. Ethiopia’s Migration History .................................................................................. 44

  Modernization in Ethiopia .................................................................................................... 44

  Migration Trends .................................................................................................................. 48

  Sedentarization ..................................................................................................................... 48

  Internal Migration ............................................................................................................... 49

  Displacement and Resettlement ......................................................................................... 55

  Emigration ............................................................................................................................ 57

  Immigration .......................................................................................................................... 61

  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 63

Chapter 3. Methodological Approach ...................................................................................... 65

  Defining Migration .............................................................................................................. 65

  Research Setting and Case Study Design .......................................................................... 67

  Methods ............................................................................................................................... 71

    The Household Survey ....................................................................................................... 71

    In-Depth Interviews ......................................................................................................... 75

    ‘Hanging Out’ in Wayisso and in Town ............................................................................ 77

    Gathering Historical Data ............................................................................................... 77

  Local Networks and Research Assistants ........................................................................... 78

  Questions of Anonymity in Ethnographic Research .............................................................. 81
Chapter 4. Wayisso’s Migration History ......................................................................................... 83

Family trees ................................................................................................................................. 85
Mapping Destinations .................................................................................................................. 92
Mobility across the Life Course and across Generations ............................................................ 95
International Migration .............................................................................................................. 98
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................... 100

Chapter 5. Land ............................................................................................................................. 102

Climate ........................................................................................................................................... 103
Population Growth and Land-Scarcity ....................................................................................... 107
In-migration Dynamics ............................................................................................................... 119
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................... 120

Chapter 6. The State ...................................................................................................................... 122

Before: The Gada System .............................................................................................................. 123
Becoming part of the ‘Modern’ Ethiopian State / Version 1: Empire ........................................... 125
Land Tenure and the Balabat ........................................................................................................ 126
Farming .......................................................................................................................................... 128
Becoming part of the ‘Modern’ Ethiopian State / Version 2: Communism ................................. 133
Land Redistribution and the Peasant Association ..................................................................... 134
Formal Education and Government Work ................................................................................. 137
Conscription and Government Work ......................................................................................... 140
Becoming part of the ‘Modern’ Ethiopian State / Version 3: Developmental State ..................... 142
Getting Land in Town .................................................................................................................. 146
Foreign Investment ....................................................................................................................... 148
The Migrant Labor Market ......................................................................................................... 155
The Diversification and Multiplication of Labor ......................................................................... 157
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................... 165

Chapter 7. The Market .................................................................................................................... 168

The Expansion of the ‘Market’ in the Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha Woreda ............................. 169
From Cattle to Capital: the ‘Modernization’ of Social Practices .................................................... 170
Conflict-Resolution ....................................................................................................................... 171
Marriage Practices ....................................................................................................................... 177
Migration to the Middle East ........................................................................................................ 184
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................... 193

Chapter 8. Education ...................................................................................................................... 197

Educational Attainment and Mobility .......................................................................................... 199
The Spatial Location of Schooling ............................................................................................... 210
Education and Changing Aspirations ......................................................................................... 216
The Aspiration-Opportunity Gap ............................................................................................... 219
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................... 222

Chapter 9. The Good Life .............................................................................................................. 225
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Transformation of the ‘Good Life’</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Good Life was Rural</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Good Life is in the City</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting Narratives and Generational Divides</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Good Life, Constraints and Aspiration Adaptation</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Migration in Shifting Social Imaginaries</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Deprivation</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding Mental Maps</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining Migration from Wayisso</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Migration and Development Research</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A. A Map of Ziway, Adami Tulu, and ‘Wayso’ from 1976</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B. Survey questions for individuals</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samenvatting</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Indicators of Social Transformation in Ethiopia.......................................................... 45
Table 2. Charting Urban Growth in Ethiopia by Town- and City-size........................................ 50
Table 3. Road Network Development in Ethiopia.........................................................................51
Table 4. Urban Growth by Region in Ethiopia, 1994 and 2007......................................................52
Table 5. Migration Patterns by Gender: 1999, 2005 and 2013 .................................................... 53
Table 6. Emigration Rates by Human Development Ranking and Rural Population, 2015.... 57
Table 7. Top Ten Destination Countries (and Stock) of Ethiopian Emigrants, 1960-2000..... 58
Table 8. Migrant (including Refugee) Stock in Ethiopia, 1990-2015 ........................................63
Table 9. Wayisso Interview Record............................................................................................76
Table 10. Where Do People Go? (%) .........................................................................................92
Table 11. Current Residence by Family Group for Ages 20-39..................................................94
Table 12. Number of Movements by Age Group.......................................................................95
Table 13. Number of Movements by Age Group, Men................................................................96
Table 14. Number of Movements by Age Group, Women..........................................................96
Table 15. Net Enrollment Ratios for the Arssi and Shewa Regions, 1984.................................139
Table 16. The Primary Occupations of Men and Women in/from Wayisso..............................161
Table 17. Summary of Migration Types to/from Wayisso by Regime Period.............................166
Table 18. School Enrollments by Level in Ethiopia, 1967-2003.................................................198
Table 19. Educational Attainment by Age and Gender in Wayisso..........................................201
Table 20. Number of Places Lived by Educational Attainment, Women...............................202
Table 21. Number of Places Lived by Educational Attainment, Men.......................................203
Table 22. Education and Mobility by Family Lineage for Ages 20-39........................................205
Table 23. The Expansion of Public Education in ATJK Woreda..............................................211
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Wayisso Village and Neighboring Towns, Adami Tulu and Ziway ....................... 18
Figure 2. Integrating the Social Transformation and Aspiration-Capability Frameworks ...... 41
Figure 3. Percentage of Population Living in Urban Areas ............................................. 46
Figure 4. Educational Attainment by Migration Trajectory ............................................. 54
Figure 5. International Migration from Ethiopia by Decade and Region of Destination ...... 59
Figure 6. Regional Destination of Ethiopian International Migrants, 1990-2015 ............... 60
Figure 7. Map of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia ....................................... 67
Figure 8. The Three Gandas That Bounded the Household Survey ............................... 73
Figure 9. Remnants of the Oromo Protests Outside of Meki Town | 2016 ......................... 81
Figure 10. Example of Semi-Nomadic Pastoral Trajectories in mid-20th Century ............ 84
Figure 11. Migration Status by Family Tree | Model 1 ..................................................... 89
Figure 12. Migration Status by Family Tree | Model 2 ..................................................... 90
Figure 13. Main Destinations Within the ATJK Woreda ................................................. 93
Figure 14. Main Destinations Outside the ATJK Woreda ............................................... 93
Figure 15. Mobility Pathways of the Second Generation ............................................... 97
Figure 16. Mobility Pathways of the Third and Fourth Generations ............................... 98
Figure 17. Wayisso Community Pond | February 2016 .................................................. 104
Figure 18. Total Rainfall in Millimeters per Year for Adami Tulu, 1958-2015 .................... 106
Figure 19. Aerial View of Wayisso Households in 2008 ................................................. 109
Figure 20. Aerial View of Wayisso Households in 2016 ............................................... 109
Figure 21. Land Holding by Household and Generation | Lineage 1 ................................. 111
Figure 22. Land Holding by Household and Generation | Lineage 1 ................................. 112
Figure 23. Land Holding by Household and Generation | Lineage 2 ................................. 113
Figure 24. Land Holding by Household and Generation | Lineage 3 ................................. 114
Figure 25. Location of Foreign Companies in ATJK Woreda ......................................... 116
Figure 26. A Meeting with Government Officials in Wayisso .......................................... 117
Figure 27. A Father and Son | Seasonal Farm Workers from SNNPR in Wayisso, 2016 .... 120
Figure 28. Aerial Photograph of Wayisso and Surrounding Region from 1967 ................ 130
Figure 29. Aerial Photograph of Wayisso and Surrounding Region from 1972 ................. 131
Figure 30. A Close-up of Wayisso in 1967 ................................................................. 132
Figure 31. A Close-up of Wayisso in 1972 ................................................................. 132
Figure 32. Sector Analysis of Ethiopian Economic Development .................................. 144
Figure 33. Employment by Sector (%) in Ethiopia .......................................................... 145
Figure 34. Building a House on Leased Land in Adami Tulu ......................................... 147
Figure 35. Ziway Town in 1987 .................................................................................... 149
Figure 36. Ziway Town in 1998 .................................................................................... 150
Figure 37. Ziway Town and the Agriflora Sher Greenhouses in 2017 ............................. 150
Figure 38. Day Laborers Constructing Verde Beef's Electric Fence | June 2016 ............... 154
Figure 39. Becoming a Middle Man: a Wayisso Farmer Buys His Neighbors’ Harvest .... 158
Figure 40. A Newly Constructed Road in Ziway | 2016 ................................................. 160
Figure 41. A Child Driving Oxen on His Uncle's Land ................................................. 164
Figure 42. The First Wedding Ceremony in Adami Tulu ................................................. 181
Figure 43. A Return Migrant’s Store on the Outskirts of Ziway ................................. 190
Figure 44. One Return Migrant's Mana Bunaa, or Roadside Coffee House ................... 190
Figure 45. A Boy Watches the Herd as They Return from Fulee ................................. 201
Figure 46. Place of Current Residence by Educational Attainment, Men .................... 203
Figure 47. Place of Current Residence by Educational Attainment, Women .................. 204
Figure 48. Family Trees | Educational Attainment ......................................................... 208
Figure 49. Migration Status by Family Tree | Model 2 ...................................................... 209
Figure 50. Locations of Schools in the Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha Woreda ............... 211
Figure 51. Author's Photograph of a Social Sciences Textbook for Seventh Graders ...... 217
Figure 52. A Video House in Ziway .............................................................................. 218
Figure 53. An English Question .................................................................................... 220
Figure 54. A Street-Side Butcher Open Late in Ziway.................................................... 230
Figure 55. A Traditional Home in Wayisso .................................................................. 241
Figure 56. A New Home in Wayisso, Built with Migrant Remittances ....................... 242
Figure 57. Most Likely Migration Destination (%) by Current Residence ................. 244
# ABBREVIATIONS / LANGUAGE REFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition/Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATJK</td>
<td>Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha. The woreda within which is Wayisso village. The ATJK used to encompass the towns Adami Tulu and Ziway, until Ziway came under direct jurisdiction of the Oromiya state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bajaj</td>
<td>A three-wheeled vehicle, imported from India, used as taxis for short-distances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>balabat</td>
<td>An administrative position under the Imperial regime. The balabat oversaw tax collection, was charged with maintaining peace and order, and administered new forms of land tenure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balbaala</td>
<td>Literally ‘door’; sub-groups of a gosi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRDF</td>
<td>The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, a political coalition that has ruled Ethiopia’s federal government since 1994.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gada</td>
<td>The gada system (sirna gadaa) is the traditional system of governance and social stratification of the Oromo people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gosi</td>
<td>Roughly translates to ‘tribe,’ a division within a larger ethnic group. The people living in Wayisso constitute different ‘gosi’ of the Arsi Oromo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>kebele</td>
<td>‘Peasant Association’; the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia first established by the Derg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNNPR</td>
<td>Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. One of nine ethnically-based regional states in Ethiopia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>woreda</td>
<td>‘District’; the administrative unit above the kebele.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>