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How development shapes migration in rural Ethiopia

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Chapter 1. Theorizing Migration in Modernity

In response to fears and anxiety about contemporary migration, scholars and activists often point out that human beings have always moved. That there is nothing unnatural about migration is important to bear in mind. But simply stating this fact can gloss over the ways that humanity's patterns of movement and settlement vary from age to age.

There are arguably three fundamental turning points in the mobility history of humanity. The first occurred when sometime between 40,000 and 10,000 BCE, when historians note a remarkable dispersal of human beings across the globe. One potential explanation for this expansive movement is the development of speech. Spoken language, which emerged sometime between 90,000 to 40,000 BCE, facilitated a world of meanings, collectively shared, that introduced, perhaps for the first time, a "friction between expectation and experience," as the McNeill historians put it, that has "never ceased to provoke efforts to adjust those meanings so as to change behavior and compel the world to conform to human wishes, hopes, and intentions" (McNeill and McNeill 2003: 12). Awoken by imagination, perhaps this migration reflected a more aspirational form of movement: migration in pursuit of an imagined 'better.'

A second turning point in humanity's mobility history took place between 11,000 and 3,000 BCE. Innovations surrounding the storage of food, and later the domestication of plants and animals, enabled human beings to "settle down," seasonally or more permanently. In the several thousand years thereafter, this settlement gave rise to three distinct yet interlocking ways of life: the rural agricultural, the nomadic pastoral, and the urban complex (McNeill and McNeill 2003). The political strength and economic diversification possible in urban centers rested upon the acquisition and production of rural hinterlands. Pastoral communities played a crucial part of "trade and raid," twin drivers of human movement and exchange (McNeill and McNeill 2003; Di Cosmo 1994). Throughout this period of history, the vast majority of people lived in rural settings.

Humanity is currently in the midst of a third mobility shift: urbanization, by which I mean the gradual displacement of rural agricultural and pastoral ways of life by urban-centric social[6] organization. The scope of this shift is dramatic. In 1800, some 80-85 percent of humanity lived in rural areas. By 1960, this share declined to 66 percent. In 2007 humanity reached a tipping point; most people now live in urban areas – a share will increase in the decades to

[6] Throughout this dissertation, I use the term 'social' in its broadest sense, to encompass the political, economic, cultural, demographic, and technological dimensions of society – in the same sense as we use it to describe the 'social sciences' (see also de Haas 2010: 228; de Haas et al, forthcoming).

come (UNPD 2018)[7]. The city has replaced the agricultural village as the dominant cell of human society (McNeill and McNeill 2003), and more people are moving to cities, within their countries or without.

This third mobility shift overlaps with a period in history often referred to as 'modernity.' Modernity means many things, hardly agreed upon by scholars, but two dimensions of the term should be distinguished. On the one hand, modernity can refer to a set of structural conditions that distinguish 'modern societies' from previous ones—conditions that include industrialization, bureaucratization, mass education, and rapid transportation and communication technology (see Inglehart 1997; Giddens and Pierson 1998). From this perspective, 'modernity' does not have a clear temporal demarcation, but rather begins when a particular constellation of structural conditions emerges in particular societies. On the other hand, modernity also refers to a more ephemeral but no less powerful existential reality: the collective experience of life under the conditions associated with the structural conditions described above. Robert Bellah wrote that the modern should be seen not "as a form of political or economic system, but as a spiritual phenomenon or a kind of mentality" (1991: 66). Or as Marshall Berman so aptly put it,

> "There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience 'modernity.' To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (1983: 15).

What is striking is that this 'mode of vital experience,' this promise of transformation, was already present in my research area: a small rural village in Ethiopia, where education levels remain relatively low and the primary form of employment is smallholder agriculture tended with ox and plow. Nevertheless, what people desire and pursue above all else is *change*.

The title of this dissertation, "Moved by Modernity," may thus be understood from two perspectives. The (im)mobility of peoples shifts over time in response to the structural transformations associated with modernity (i.e. industrialization, mechanization, mass education, bureaucratization, greater connectedness) as well as a concomitant transformation in the aspirations and expectations engendered by the experience of 'modernization.' There is

[7] The rise in urban-centric movement is arguably more consequential than the international movement that absorbs the bulk of migration studies' attention. After all, 'international migration' as we imagine it today only arose in conjunction with the emergence of 'nation-states' in the 17th century. However, since the 1960s, only two to four percent of the world's population are international migrants (UN 2015; Zlotnik 1999).

always a two-fold process at work: transformations in the structural dimensions of our material lives and transformations in our collective social imaginaries — both of which have implications for, among many other things, the ways in which we move and settle. The two are distinct, but interlocking, forces of social change.

This chapter details my theoretical approach to understanding how Ethiopia's modernization experience impacted migration aspirations and behavior in Wayisso. It begins by situating the research question within current debates in migration and development studies and show why a focus on aspirations has a distinct contribution to make to migration and development research. It then clarifies the key concepts that structure the analyses, before elaborating the theoretical approach. It proposes a novel conceptual framework that integrates a macro-level social transformation perspective (see Castles 2010; de Haas et al, forthcoming) with the micro-level aspiration-capability framework (see de Haas 2014: 4; Schewel 2019; Carling and Schewel 2018), through the mediating concepts of 'social imaginary' and 'social structures.' This approach provides the conceptual tools to analyze how 'big' social change impacts individual aspirations and behavior over time.

Migration and Development in the Modern Period

Debates about migration and development remain fragmented along a number of competing perspectives. Some assume that migration is a symptom of poverty and thus approach migration as a problem to be solved; others assert that migration is normal human behavior and argue for treating it as such. Some see migration as deepening inequalities in the areas people leave; others see migrants' remittances as the way through which those origin areas will develop. As the following demonstrates, it is not a stretch to suggest that in most of these debates about migration and development, the emphasis is on changing structural conditions, particularly the ways in which migration is a cause and consequence of economic transformations.

Most of the focus of migration and development research focuses on how migration impacts economic development in origin areas. Taylor (1999) suggests two extremes frame this debate. The first, what calls the "developmentalist" extreme, argues that migration fuels the development of origin areas. Migrants' remittances put much needed capital directly into the hands of poor people to take charge of their local futures. Migration decisions are part of household strategies to raise and diversify incomes; the remittances sent home serve as capital for new investments and insures against income and production risks. This is the classic insight

of New Economic Labour Migration (Stark and Bloom 1985). The other extreme, what Taylor (1999) refers to as the "Dutch disease" or "migrant syndrome" perspective, argues that migration drains sending regions of labor and capital, impeding the local production of tradable goods (64). Because migration has self-perpetuating dynamics, of which remittances play a crucial part, migration deepens inequalities and further a rural exodus from the countryside to the city (see Massey et al 1998; Lipton 1980). When this migration becomes international, it drains the brains and brawn from poor countries (Penninx 1982; Papademetriou 1985).

Hein de Haas (2010b) compares the migration and development debate to a pendulum, swinging back and forth from developmentalist optimism in the 1950s and 1960s, to neo-Marxist pessimism over the 1970s and 1980s, towards more optimistic views in the 1990s and 2000s. With the rising tide of nationalism and populism across the globe, we are arguably in the midst of a turn toward 'practical' pessimism. Migration is straining the political and ideological fabric of the European project, American democracy, and the international order. Even if the economic benefits of immigration are clear for host countries, fears about the societal strain of immigration is pushing the pendulum back towards pessimism (see, for example, Collier 2013). The need to address the 'root causes' of migration has become a core justification for development aid (de Haas 2007; Clemens and Postel 2018).

The call to address the root causes of migration requires examining the other side of the migration and development coin: how development impacts migration, or the ways in which people's mobility shifts in relation to broader social change. This requires engaging theories of development, and its earlier incarnation, modernization. Even if not always explicit, these theories often carry assumptions about the impact of social and economic transformation on the movement of people.

What is today referred to as 'development' was described in terms of 'modernization' in the mid-20th century. Modernization became a dominant paradigm in the social sciences in 1950s and '60s, when the international development agenda took off and development interventions were shaped and justified by theories about how societies become 'modern'. Rostow's "Stages of Economic Growth" (1960)[8] is a pertinent example of one such

[8] Rostow (1960) details how a society characterized by subsistence agriculture or hunting and gathering with no centralized political system gradually develops more productive, commercial agriculture, growing demand for raw materials, increasing spread of technology, opportunities for social mobility and national political organization. These conditions lead to a "take-off" stage characterized by urbanization, industrialization and technological breakthroughs. As the industrial base grows and diversifies, a society "drives to maturity," experiencing rapid social developments occur alongside, such as the rise of transportation and social infrastructure: the rise of schools, universities, hospitals, etc. The last stage clarified by Rostow is the "age of mass consumption," where the industrial base dominates the economy, society is now predominantly urban, and consumers use disposable income to consume high-value goods. What comes next, Rostow could only speculate.

modernization theory. It presents a typology of stages delineating the conditions and economic processes that characterize the transition from a 'traditional society' (e.g. a primary sector economy) through 'take-off' (e.g. industrialization) to the 'age of mass consumption.' Such theories provided the conceptual bases for development policies often exported to developing countries in the post-World War II era (Stiglitz 2002).

Modernization theories embraced the free movement of goods, people, capital and ideas as countries moved from largely agricultural economies to industrial and service-based economies. For many modernization theorists, the reallocation of people (labor) from rural, agricultural areas to urban, industrial sectors is a prerequisite of economic growth. The urbanization of labor, goods, and capital is a taken-for-granted dimension of the development process, played out over and over again in economic history (Todaro 1969), and thus considered fundamental to 'balanced growth.' The free movement of people along wage and population gradients — within or across national boundaries — would lead to converging wage levels. This was a hopeful vision driven by faith in the market and people's ability to respond rationally to opportunities for material betterment.

In the 1970s and 1980s, critiques of modernization theories came to dominate the social sciences. Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory was particularly influential. Wallerstein (1979) suggested that rather than leading to 'balanced growth,' modernization processes were fueling global inequalities to serve the needs of 'core' capitalist centers. The integration of 'peripheral' regions into the global capitalist system undermines peasant livelihoods and uproots peasants from their rural ways of life. The movement of labor and capital to the city is not a 'rational' response of free agents, world systems thinkers argue, but a coerced displacement that serves the needs of the capitalist system more than local peoples. The 'penetration' of capitalism into poorer areas leads to dependency or as Andre Frank (1966) famously put it, the "development of underdevelopment." Migration, then, is driven by the livelihood displacement and deepening inequalities that come from 'development.' As Gunnar Myrdal (1957) similarly argued in his theory of cumulative causation, economies of scale tend to deepen poverty in the periphery and accelerate the growth of core areas, furthering inequalities and driving out-migration from the periphery to the core (see also Massey 1990). This dynamic occurs both within countries (rural-urban) and across countries (poor-rich countries).

These critical perspectives helped disenchant the myth of modernization for many development practitioners and led to more people-centered approaches to development in subsequent decades. Yet, these critical perspectives also left a lasting imprint of migration as a

problem, or at least a symptom of greater problems, that at times does a disservice to migrants themselves. Emphasizing the structural forces shaping migration and displacement often neglects the agency and rationality of rural migrants as they navigate their changing structural conditions. As others have clearly shown, migrants exert agency in a decision to move or stay, even under the direst conditions (Van Hear 1998), and migration is but one of many ways of responding to changing structural conditions (Malmberg 1997). Furthermore, the populations most disadvantaged by the transformations of the modern period are the arguably the 'involuntarily immobile' — those lacking the resources to realize their migration aspirations (Carling 2002).

From the micro-level perspective of migration decision-making, then, debates about migration and development tend to slide into one of two very different portraits of the migrant. Migrants are cast as either 'displaced' by capitalist penetration or rational utility-maximizers predictably following wage and population gradients. The former fails to recognize the agency of migrants in the face of changing structural conditions; the latter overemphasizes the agency of potential migrants, failing to account for structural constraints or the subtler influence of cultural norms and value-systems that underlie evaluations of 'utility.' There is a need to better understand, particularly at a theoretical level, how development impacts people's value systems and notions of the 'good', and the implications of changing aspirations for migration decision-making and behavior.

'Aspirations' in Migration and Development Research

Despite the general neglect of the aspirational dimension in migration and development theory, there are, scattered throughout the migration literature (particularly earlier studies), claims that development shapes the value system within which migration decision-making is made. For example, Kenneth Little, in *West African Urbanization* (1965), claims that "Western contact" creates "needs and aspirations [that are] impossible to satisfy in the countryside" and as a result, "migration means a flight from the land" (9 as cited in Caldwell 1969: 9). Elliott Skinner, in his 1960 study of labor migration of the Mossi in West Africa, begins: "Labour migration […] not only touches on nearly all aspects of the lives of the peoples involved, but is often the cause as well as the consequence of important social and cultural changes" (375). Akin Mabogunje (1970), the founder of migration systems theory, argues that economic development generally brings with it "greater social and cultural integration of rural and urban areas such that levels of expectations in both areas begin to converge towards a recognizable

national norm of what is the ‘good life’” (4). The growing interconnectedness of rural and urban areas “sharpens the awareness and desire of villagers for the ever increasing range of goods and services which the urban centers have to offer” (Mabogunje 1970: 4). More recently, Hein de Haas (2003; 2014), in his study of changing migration patterns in the Todgha valley of Morocco, found that, “Although local living conditions had significantly improved, people’s life aspirations had increased even faster, leading to increasing migration aspirations.” (2014: 22). Similarly, Peggy Levitt and Deepak Lamba-Nieves note the emergence of “consumption-oriented strategies of upward mobility and new aspirations among youth” as one important consequence of development (2011: 6). These examples suggest that the economic integration of rural or ‘developing’ regions into urban or ‘developed’ regions involves the spread of new, ‘consumption-oriented’ ideas about the good life, which in turn tend to increase the desire to migrate.

The ‘aspiration’ question is also a central concern of globalization theorists. Although they often fail to make a direct link with migration, social theorists debate whether development diffuses a common conception of the ‘good life,’ a question often framed in terms of the cultural consequences of globalization. There appear to be two competing perspectives about the link between macro-level processes of globalization and local conceptions of the good life. The first argues that globalization spreads a conception of the good life that is animated by Western values of individualism, materialism, and above all consumerism, but that this cultural diffusion is met by countervailing local or traditional values. In this regard, Thomas Friedman (2000) argues that two cultures have emerged in today’s globalizing world: a progress-centered, consumerist culture and a culture devoted to the preservation of values rooted in the past. This perspective would see two competing notions of the good life at work in people’s imaginations: a good life informed by global, ‘progress-centered’ norms and a good life informed by the values of an individual’s local identities and traditions.

A second perspective emphasizes how local and ‘global’ cultural forces interact, synthesize, and transform, rather than ‘compete.’ From this perspective, development and globalization are dynamic processes that manifest in multiple and co-existing ways throughout the world (Appadurai 1990: 296). “Creolization” is one way to conceptualize how local peoples shape and are shaped by the “intercontinental traffic in meaning” in our global age (Hannerz 1987: 547; Cohen 2003). Local social structures provide the matrices through which international flows of culture refract, giving rise to locally-specific cultural syntheses and expressions (Hannerz 1987: 548). Advocates of this second approach rightly challenge the idea that a single vision of the good life enjoys global ascendance and alternately emphasize the

heterogeneous values and norms that shape individual and community-level aspirations. Still, this heterogeneity does not preclude the powerful influence of individualistic and consumeristic ideals throughout the world (Appadurai, 1996; Schuerkens, 2004; Hannerz 1987).

Despite ongoing debates about the cultural consequences of globalization, there is relatively little existing literature making a direct link with *migration* aspirations. Thus, this is one core contribution this dissertation aims to make to the literature. However, there are several key works on which I hope to build. Gina Crivello (2015), in her research on Peruvian children's "imagined futures" (38), takes an important step towards linking the myth of modernization more specifically to migration aspirations. She situates her analysis of migration aspirations within a broader cultural shift from the 'Myth of Inkarri' (an indigenous myth of reconquest) to the 'Myth of Progress' (defined by education, urbanization, and economic growth). She quotes the Peruvian anthropologist Degregori: "The indigenous peasantry launched forward with an unsuspecting vitality towards the conquest of the future and of 'progress'. The school, commerce, and […] salaried work, these are the principle instruments for this conquest, and migration to the cities – increasingly planned – opens up new horizons" (2007: 6 as cited in Crivello 2015: 38). For Crivello and Degregori, migration is a key way that Peruvians pursue a modern vision of the good life.

Within research on Ethiopia, a few works link the 'myth of modernization' to the social imaginary and migration aspirations of youth. For example, Daniel Mains' research on the aspirations of unemployed youth in Jimma, Ethiopia, for example, shows how the desire to migrate to urban centers and abroad is increasingly driven by aspirations for "a different life from their parents', one filled with progress and change" (Mains 2013: 71). Mains attributes these desires in part to the spread of an "ideology of progress" amongst young people. As one of his informants explains, "Today's generation is different. In the past everyone expected to do the same work as his parents. Today everyone wants to learn and to have a better life. If someone's father is a farmer, then he wants to be a modern farmer, or else to do a different job altogether" (76).

In Ethiopia, the "ideology of progress" Mains identifies finds expression in different "narratives of success," or pathways through which people imagine a better life can be achieved (Mains 2013). Murugan and Abebaw (2014) suggest that Ethiopians increasingly view migration as an established pathway to success – a "short-cut" through which individuals and families, facing significant opportunity constraints locally, can achieve their aspirations for a better and more prestigious life. In their study of the factors motivating human trafficking from

Ethiopia, they argue that modern capitalist expansion creates a "a disjunction between socially expected ends/goals and the ways/means of achieving those goals" (78). Faced with high aspirations for modern notions of success and severe constraints on achieving them locally, many Ethiopians see migration as the only means to achieve their desired ends and sometimes put themselves in precarious conditions to achieve it.

To conclude, development not only introduces structural transformations that influence local livelihoods; it also spreads norms, values and ideas that fundamentally shape the nature of people's aspirations. Thus, changing aspirations should be analyzed as one important consequence of 'development.' However, the links between different dimensions of development, changing aspirations, and *migration* behavior have yet to be fully theorized. The following section details how this dissertation theorizes aspirations, in order to elaborate a conceptual framework with the theoretical tools to evaluate how development, or more generally processes of social change, impact migration behavior.

Theorizing Aspirations

To theorize changing aspirations, this dissertation uses three inter-related concepts: the social imaginary, the good life, and aspirations. The **social imaginary** refers to the imaginary backdrop against which all values, attitudes, ideas, and norms emerge; it is the web of conscious and unconscious assumptions about how things are and how things should be that give rise to particular notions of the 'good life'. The **good life** is one aspect of the social imaginary; it refers to imagined ideals about what an individual's life should look like — relating to work, location, family life, lifestyles and social position, among others. Finally, notions of the good life generate more specific **aspirations,** or desires for particular futures — towards higher levels of education, this kind of spouse, that kind of work, or indeed, migration. Aspirations direct decision-making; they guide what factors become relevant to a cost-benefit evaluation. This section explores each of these concepts and their interrelation, building on a range of thinkers who have examine the nature of their transformation in the modern period. The intention is to explore in more rigorous terms the imaginary backdrop out of which migration aspirations emerge.

The 'social imaginary' is a concept popularized by the Charles Taylor, who primarily uses the term to examine the roots of Western modernity (Taylor 2007). Taylor defines the social imaginary as "the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that

are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (2002: 106). A social imaginary is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. "Our social imaginary at any given time is complex. It incorporates a sense of normal expectations that we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices the make up our social life." (2007: 172)[9]. Here, I use the term social imaginary to capture not only the 'normal expectations we have of one another', but also about the expectations we have for the kinds of lives worth living. I am particularly interested in notions of the 'good life,' or the ideal life circumstances, to understand how conceptions of the good life shape *where* people imagine their futures. Notions of the good life and the aspirations derived therefrom emerge out of particular social imaginaries.

Thus, as the social imaginary changes, so too do notions of the good life. Notions of the good life vary across societies and social groups, even if there are some common patterns in the nature of their transformation. Yet, whatever the conception of the good life, the point to emphasize here is that ideas about the good are, as Appadurai (2004) argues, always part of a "some sort of system of ideas […] which locates them in a large map of local ideas and beliefs about: life and death, the nature of worldly possessions, the significance of material assets over social relations, the relative illusion of social permanence for a society, the value of peace or warfare" (67-68) — what is here referred to as the social imaginary. This suggests that notions of the good life are not just individually held and determined, but influenced by a social imaginary that is inherently collective, indeed *social*.

Visions of the good life animate and direct more specific aspirations. Rather than being the outcome of simple cost-benefit analyses, aspirations refer to the subjective hopes and goals that guide decision-making processes, setting the horizons within which life choices are made (see Carling and Collins 2018; Schewel and Fransen 2018a). Thus, although aspirations are often evaluated as something *individuals* have, they are shaped by greater sociocultural norms.[10]

[9] Taylor gives emphasis to the ways in which our social imaginary shapes interactions between people, in relation to his interest in clarifying the 'moral order'. Taylor shows how certain social forms that characterize Western modernity — the market economy, the public sphere, and democratic self-governance — are only possible through an often taken-for-granted shift in our social imaginary. He explores the contours of 'premodern societies' which tended to be organized hierarchically, with limited social mobility. He contrasts this with the modern view of equality, grounded in individual rights, and society conceptualized as the exchange of services among people (Taylor 2002).

[10] The links between aspirations and the broader social imaginary often remain vague. This is because, as Appadurai argues, the ideals that orient aspirations "often stay beneath the surface and emerge only as specific wants and choices: for this piece of land or that, for that marriage connection or another one, for this job in the bureaucracy as opposed to that job overseas, for this pair of shoes over that pair of trousers" (Appadurai 2004: 68). Too often, researchers focus on individual wants and desires, neglecting the social imaginary out of which

Because aspirations are 'socially grounded' (Ray 2006; Carling and Collins 2018; Appadurai 2004), they can illuminate the value-systems within which people make decisions, or exercise their reason. Recent studies, particularly surveys of migration aspirations, often use the term 'aspirations' synonymously with migration 'desires', 'wishes,' and 'preferences' (see Carling and Schewel 2018). But there is nothing conceptually distinct about this use of the term 'aspirations' in survey designs and the study of wants and choices in behavioral economics, for example. It is easy to retain the basic logic of rational-choice models of migration decision-making and simply substitute the term 'aspirations' for 'preferences.' When I use the term aspirations, I am trying to get at the future-oriented goals, values, and notions of the 'good' that orient the more specific wants and choices people make in their everyday lives. I thereby build on a rich qualitative literature that shows how aspirations influence the determinants and experience of various forms of (im)mobility (see, for example, Carling 2002; Jónsson 2008; Bordorano 2009).

To be clear, there is nothing inherently wrong with the logic of a cost-benefit analysis when we consider migration decision-making. Problems arise when 'costs' and 'benefits' are defined within a narrow economic frame, or the social context within which that cost-benefit analysis occurs is ignored. Economists recognize that non-economic factors also play a role in decision-making (Sjaastad 1962), and that cost-benefit analyses are always made to maximize 'utility,' not just income. But in practice, non-economic considerations are often "not regarded as key factors" (Haug 2008: 587). 'Utility' remains a vague concept, roughly corresponding with happiness, that is still overwhelmingly measured in terms of income. More work is needed to understand the forces that shape, and change, evaluations of 'utility' over time.

Bringing in Capability

While the thrust of the argument thus far has been centered on the importance of changing aspirations to migration and development dynamics, this should not lead to another extreme which neglects social structures, and how the opportunities and constraints they determine shape actual (im)mobility outcomes.[11] To conceptualize the impact of social structures on

these desires emerge. "This last, most immediate, visible inventory of wants has often led students of consumption and of poverty to lose sight of the intermediate and higher order normative contexts within which these wants are gestated and brought into view. And thus decontextualized, they are usually downloaded to the individual and offloaded to the science of calculation and market-economics" (Appadurai 2004: 68). In migration studies, attempts to understand migration aspirations, their origins and consequences, need to look behind migration aspirations per se to the social forces shaping notions of the good life and the social imaginary of populations.

[11] Some paragraphs of the following section are reproduced from Schewel (2019) and Schewel (2018b).

actual (im)mobility outcomes, this dissertation builds on the work of Hein de Haas (2003; 2014), who uses Amartya Sen's concept of 'capability' (Sen 1999) to analyze migration-development interactions. Amartya Sen's capability approach is a normative framework that places the freedom to achieve well-being as the ultimate aim of development and suggests its evaluation in terms of people's capabilities to do and to be what they have reason to value (Sen 1999). Capabilities are determined by the real opportunities and constraints people have to realize their aspirations. Opportunities and constraints vary from person to person; they are shaped by gender, education, social class, wealth, social networks and social norms.

De Haas advances an 'aspiration-capability framework' in order to analyze how (im)mobility outcomes relate to development and social transformation (de Haas 2014). The first iteration of this framework was proposed by Jørgen Carling (2002). After encountering widespread yet frustrated migration aspirations in Cape Verde, he decided to consider the aspiration and the ability to migrate separately; migration requires both, and immobility results from the lack of either one. The resultant 'aspiration/ability model', as he calls it, proposes three mobility categories: mobility (i.e., having both the aspiration and ability to migrate), involuntary immobility (i.e., having the aspiration but not the ability to migrate), and voluntary immobility (i.e., those without the aspiration to migrate). The novel contribution of Carling's model is the ability to see, and therefore ask questions about, these distinct (im)mobility outcomes — particularly involuntary immobility (see also Carling and Schewel 2018).

After studying changing mobility patterns in the Todgha Valley of Morocco, De Haas (2003; 2010c) replaced the term 'ability' with the more theoretically rich term 'capability' in order to analyze how (im)mobility outcomes relate to development. He showed how development—which tends to bring increases in income, access to education and media, improved infrastructure and security—often enhances people's aspirations and capabilities to migrate. He defines migration capabilities as the social, human and material capital individuals are able to mobilize in order to migrate (2010c: 16), and describes migration aspirations as a function of people's general life aspirations and perceived spatial opportunity structures (2014: 23).

Applying the concept of capability to Carling's aspiration/ability model makes two important contributions. First, the concept of capability brings dynamism to the aspiration/ability model by more explicitly connecting (im)mobility outcomes to development processes; this lays the ground to begin exploring why individuals transition across (im)mobility categories over time. Second, the concept of capability links the capability to migrate (and the capability to stay) with the notion of 'freedom,' and thus to human rights (see

also Preibisch, Dodd, and Su 2016). In this regard, De Haas (2014) argues that human mobility is a freedom in itself, and that people derive well-being from having the freedom to move or to stay, regardless of whether one acts upon it or not.

Hein de Haas (2007) applies the aspiration-capability framework to challenge the common assumption that development will solve the so-called migration problem in poorer countries. In his 2014 paper, de Haas suggests that we can even conceive of migration *as* development. This emphasis flips the perspective on migration and development from one in which development will "solve" the problem of migration, to one in which there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. Migration from this perspective, then, is an empowering act, a reflection of the enhanced capabilities development brings. It is, one might argue, more firmly rooted in the "migration optimists" group, providing theoretical tools to counter pessimistic views on migration drivers.

These points acknowledged, the aspiration-capability framework can additionally enable researchers to question whether migration is a manifestation of capabilities-enhancing development, or to embrace some of the insights of the pessimists. Certainly, economic policies devised in the name of development also result in capability deprivation that entails greater mobility. Consider, for example, literature on development-induced displacement (e.g. de Wet 2006) or more general work on the disempowerment of local populations by top-down development agendas (e.g. Frank 1966; Ferguson 1999; Stiglitz 2002; Sassen 1998). In other words, the economic transformations made in the name of development sometimes deprive people of the capability to realize their aspirations or the lives they value where they are. Development, in practice, is janus-faced, and the mobility consequences it heralds can be a result of empowerment and disempowerment, of capabilities-enhancement and diminishment. After all, Sen (1999) introduced the capabilities approach as a new development paradigm, in order to illumine what development should be, responding to what it definitively was not in reality. To evaluate whether growing mobility reflects capabilities-enhancing development, or whether it is the reluctant response to capability deprivation in other domains, requires examining how the aspiration and capability to migrate (and to stay) relate to the other local opportunities people have to realize their broader life aspirations.

Linking Aspirations, Capabilities, and the Social Transformation Approach

To theorize how development impacts aspirations and capabilities, this dissertation applies a social transformation perspective to distinguish different dimensions of

'development' (de Haas et al, forthcoming). A social transformation approach begins from the assertion that migration is an intrinsic part of development processes, and that to understand changing migration patterns over time, migration theory and research need to give due attention to the impacts and intersectionality of different dimensions of social change. A social transformation framework thus directs research attention along five areas of inquiry (from de Haas et al, forthcoming):

- *economic dimension* (the accumulation and use of land, labor and capital in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services)
- *technological dimension* (the application of knowledge through the deployment of procedures, skills and techniques)
- *political dimension* (the organized control over people [within a given territory])
- *demographic dimension* (the structure and spatial distribution of populations)
- *cultural dimension* (beliefs, values, norms, and customs shared by groups of people)

Taken together, these five key dimensions form the 'social domain.' Major processes of social change occur within each dimension, for example, the growth and of industrial capitalism under the economic dimension, national-state formation under the political, or the 'demographic transition' under the demographic. In particular settings, the timing, sequencing, and intersectionality of social change processes will stimulate particular kinds of migration or staying behavior.

The social transformation approach is thus a macro-level conceptual framework to orient empirical research. De Haas (2014) suggests that an aspiration-capability framework is a complementary micro-level framework to the social transformation approach. Migration, he argues, is a function of people's aspirations and capabilities to migrate within a given set of opportunity structures (de Haas 2014: 4). However, one challenge to this theoretical approach is clarifying how macro-level social transformations impact micro-level migration aspirations and capabilities. I do so through the mediating concepts of 'social imaginary' and 'social structures' (see Figure 2).

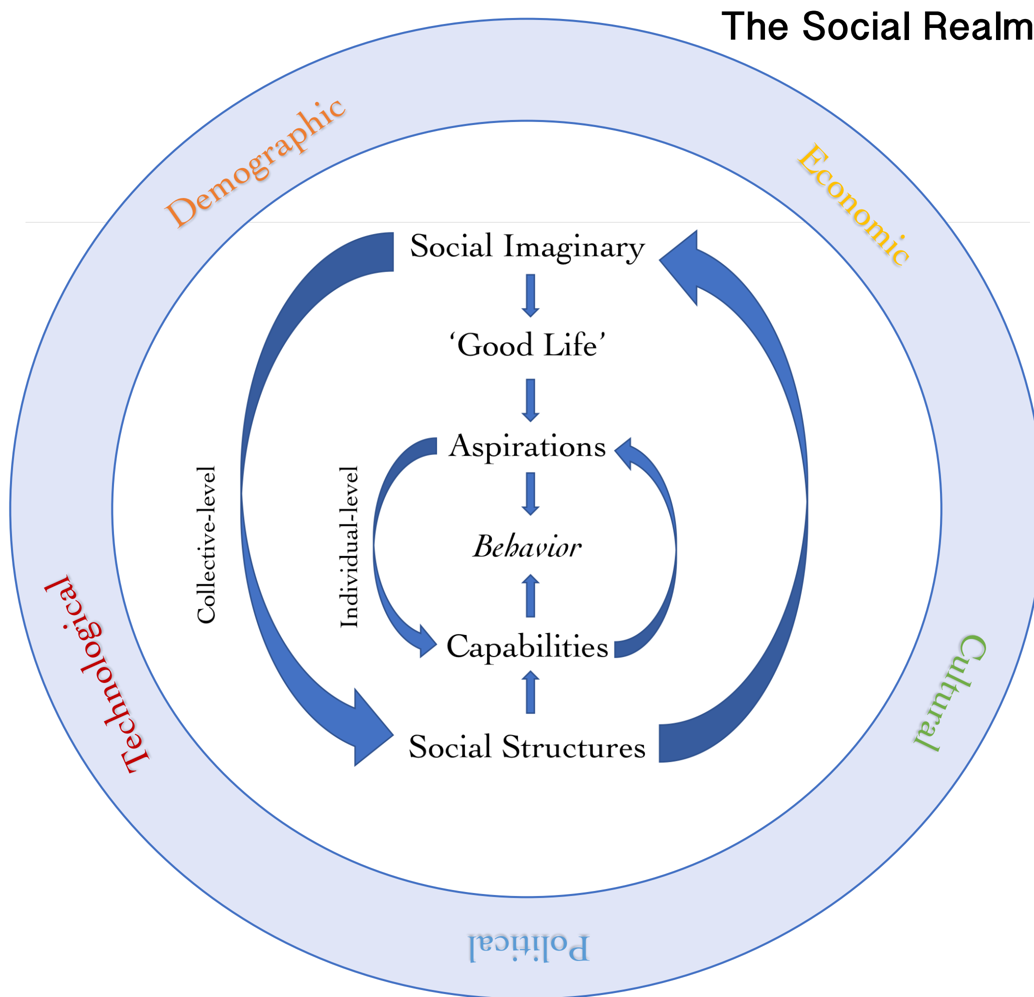

Figure 2. Integrating the Social Transformation and Aspiration-Capability Frameworks
Note: The five dimensions of the 'social realm' come from the social transformation perspective as elaborated in de Haas et al (forthcoming).

Figure 2 schematizes this dissertation's conceptual approach. When social change occurs, across any dimension of the social realm, it entails change at two levels within a given society: at the level of the social imaginary and at the level of social structures. These collective-level shifts have different impacts on the aspirations and capabilities of different individuals, depending on, for example, their gender, age, location, wealth, or education. Thus, shifts in the social imaginary and social structures are collective, while the actual aspirations and capabilities people hold are individually-specific. This dissertation focuses on how one facet of a changing social imaginary – specifically changing notions of the good life – influences individual aspirations and behavior, while attentive to how structural shifts change

the actual opportunities and constraints individuals navigate and thus the real capabilities required to realize their aspirations.

One might note that instead of placing migration in the center, there is 'behavior.' This is to highlight that the aspiration-capability framework employed here can be applied to social phenomena beyond migration: education (aspired levels of education and the capabilities required to achieve it), work (the aspired jobs young people desire and the capabilities required to achieve it), service (what role people want to play in society and what capabilities are required to achieve it), among others. The aspiration and capability to migrate is inextricably entangled within a web of other aspirations and capabilities that together make up the lives people value and ultimately live.

It is also important to note that Figure 2 illustrates how one might analyze the determinants of a particular behavior at a given moment. The arrows suggest that a behavior arises out of a particular intersection of aspiration and capability, each of which are determined by particular visions of the 'good' and structural opportunities and constraints, respectively. Over time, of course, the interaction between the various elements depicted in Figure 2 becomes more complex. Aspirations and capabilities, at an individual level, are not just determined by the social imaginary and social structures; they also influence each other. People's aspirations may be shaped by the actual capabilities they have, for example, or the capabilities people consider relevant to their lives depend on the aspirations they hold. Likewise, the social imaginary and social structures influence each other. The arrows in Figure 2 then, which point downwards from the social realm to individual behavior, are not meant to suggest that change always comes from the 'macro-level.' Macro-level change only comes about because of micro-level actors, and influences go both ways. This conceptual framework emphasizes that any dimension of social change impacts 1) the social structures of society and 2) the social imaginary, which have implications for the aspirations and capabilities that people come to have.

Conclusion

This dissertation applies and advances a social transformation perspective in three ways. First, applying a social transformation framework to evaluate changing migration behavior in Wayisso will illustrate the value of examining different dimensions of social change and their intersectionality to understand why particular kinds of (im)mobility behavior arise at particular historical moments. Second, the analyses adopt an aspiration-capability

framework (de Haas 2014; Schewel 2019) to explain how, at the micro-level, individuals adapt their aspirations, livelihoods and migration behavior to these social transformations. Analyzing how aspirations and capabilities change over time allows for more people-centered explanations of migration decision-making that avoid a common dichotomy in migration studies between 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration.

Third, the theoretical approach described here links the macro-level social transformation framework with the micro-level aspiration-capability framework through the mediating concepts of the 'social imaginary' and 'social structures.' This approach highlights that within any dimension of social change, there is always a two-fold process at work: collective shifts the social structures of a population as well as their social imaginary. Appreciating why particular aspirations emerge requires examining how values, norms, and notions of the 'good' shift within an operating imaginary. Similarly, to understand changing capabilities also requires an appreciation for how opportunities and constraints shift as a result of structural change.

These shifts at the level of social structures and the social imaginary, in turn, shape notions of the good life and the opportunities and constraints individuals have, which give rise to more specific aspirations and capabilities, including *migration* aspirations and capabilities. Of course, shifts that occur at the collective level are mediated by gender, education levels, local, networks, wealth, among other factors, leading to more individually specific aspirations and capabilities. Thus, as the following analyses will show, almost all may agree that the good life is no longer in rural areas, but the pathway out of rural lives looks very different for different people.