

3 Unpacking the Reasons for Dominance of South-South Migration

The Ethiopian Case

Fana Gebresenbet

Introduction

It is not uncommon to read the three routes international irregular migrants from Ethiopia, and the Horn of Africa, take: the Eastern, the Southern, and the Northern. The Eastern route takes migrants from various corners of the country – primarily originating from central and eastern parts of Tigray (before the onset of the war in Northern Ethiopia in November 2020), northeastern parts of Amhara region, and more recently from parts of Oromia – to crossing points to Somali territories (the Issa in Djibouti, the Isaaq in Somaliland, and also Puntland) before crossing to the Gulf countries through Yemen. The Southern route takes Ethiopians, primarily from Hadiya and Kambatta Zones of southern highlands, through Moyale to Kenya heading towards South Africa. The Northern route is taken by migrants – with no specific core sending area – intending to reach Israel or Western Europe by passing through Sudan (see Asnake & Fana 2021; Fasil 2017; Meron 2020).

Broadly speaking, the Eastern and Southern routes have destinations in the Global South, Gulf states, and South Africa, respectively, thus constituting cases of South-South Migration (SSM), while the Northern route is a form of South-North Migration (SNM). As such, Ethiopian international irregular migration is very helpful to examine the intrinsic differences between SSM and SNM, and explain the reasons for the more pervasive nature of SSM. IOM figures from 2020 (cited in ACAPS 2021) for example indicate that some 11,500 individuals cross from the Horn to the Gulf irregularly every month, making up close to two-thirds of mobility in the Horn region (IOM 14/02/2020; IOM 05/05/2020). More specifically, according to Africa Renewal (2020 cited in ACAPS 2021), some 400,000 Ethiopians took the eastern route between 2017 and 2020 alone. IOM (2022) figures from 2021 estimate that about 10,243 Ethiopians cross Moyale annually aiming to reach South Africa. Even fewer Ethiopian migrants take the northern route. The northern route is used “only in rare cases,” and the total number of irregular migrants reaching Europe from the Horn decreased to less than 4,000 in 2018 (a quarter of the figures from 2016) due to various risks and restrictions (Girmachew 2021).

This chapter – by focusing on history and geographic proximity, capability requirements, geographic barriers, cultural enablers, and host societies’ socio-economic and legal arrangements – illustrates why SSM evolves into the

concentration of migrants in some localities and the eventual formation of ‘migration system’ (Bakewell, de Haas & Kubal 2011; de Haas 2009). The intention therefore is to depict the major structural explanations for the relatively lower extent of SNM, compared to SSM, at global levels too (Ratha 2016, 11).

This argument is made by using the aspiration-capability approach as an analytical framework (de Haas 2021). All individuals are considered agents, conscious actors weighing among viable options before making the decision to migrate (or not) within the constraints and opportunities of the extant structural conditions. As such, structural macro-level factors only provide the context within which agency is enacted, not replacing the latter (on structuration see Giddens 1984; Stones 2005). A focus on structural, macro-level factors alone will not in and by itself sufficiently explain the differentiated decision of prospective migrants to reach different destinations, in our case southern destinations being preferred more than northern destinations.

While aspiring is a necessary initial step for irregular migration, it is not sufficient. It needs to be backed up with the capability to realize the aspiration. Capability could come in the form of having the physical capacity to brave the harsh routes, the skills, and predisposition to succeed in the jobs migrants will be joining in the destination country, the financial means to cover required expenses as well as the social relations to access information as well as to enable migration and settlement in the destination country.

In more recent years, international migration is conceived as one strategy of many young Ethiopians charting a decent future (see for example Fana 2021). Drawing on Appadurai (2013), future-making is depicted in the chapter as a socio-cultural process¹ within which individuals draw on past experiences/archives of the community and what they are ‘taught’ to imagine and aspire in choosing the track one would adopt towards the future. This chapter will argue that SSM is more likely to emerge as a very strong alternative to a ‘viable future’ in core sending areas.

This view of migration as a communal, collective, and shared future-making project of youth (and the community at large) in core sending areas calls for the utilization of a revised Aspiration Capability Framework. The theoretical roots of the ACF, particularly as it relates to capability and rights, are anchored in the liberal, individualist academic tradition (see Dean 2009; Ibrahim 2021). Such conceptions do not fully capture African realities which are primarily entrenched in collectivist notions, norms, and values (see Kuhumba 2016; Metz 2016), and as argued elsewhere (Dereje, Meron & Fana 2023), there is a need to re-conceptualize and apply the ACF with a ‘collectivist turn’.

This chapter is based on extensive research the author conducted on Ethiopian migration since early 2017.² The remaining part of this chapter is structured in seven sections. The first offers a brief context on Ethiopian international migration. The coming five sections provide the different factors explaining the entrenched and concentrated nature of SSM in Ethiopia. The second section covers historical factors which underlie the entrenched nature of SSM in Ethiopia. The third section further builds on the first and illustrates how different processes help in the building of capabilities of individuals, households, and sending communities to enable

sustained migration. The fourth section compares geographic barriers between the three routes international migrants from Ethiopia take. The following section focuses on culture, in its very broad definition, as an enabler and constraint of migration to different destinations. The sixth section changes the focus to the destination country and the implications of socio-economic and legal conditions for migration dynamics. The last section concludes the chapter.

Core Sending Areas for SSM: History Matters

Core sending areas are defined, for the purpose of this chapter, as localities with more than a decade-long experience of migration to a particular destination. Characteristically, this experience of core sending areas builds a large presence of migrants from the locality in the destination country, social networks between those in the destination, the origin area, and in transit, and a significant impact on consumption and other aspects of socio-economic life of the sending community. The presence of such a core sending area, it is argued here, is realized through historical dynamics, and will provide the momentum for continued large-scale migration.

The past weighs heavily on the migration decision-making of potential migrants. The decisions and success of previous migrants help build aspirations of prospective migrants among other things through remittance-based consumption and investment in the sending areas, as well as by creating networks that ease migrations of followers. In Ethiopia's case (as well as most of Sub-Saharan Africa), historic relationships with some important destinations have cultural, religious, socio-economic, and political undercurrents, and are generally speaking geographically closer to the sending areas.

The political economy of Gulf countries experienced major changes in the 1970s with the increasing revenue from fossil fuels. This led to the creation and consolidation of a social pact in which the government's guaranteed cheap domestic labour, among others through the Kafalla labour system (see Asnake & Zerihun 2015; Wearing 2014) in return for public acquiescence to the monarchy and authoritarian governments of the region. The neoliberal shift since the late 1980s had differentiated impacts on gendered labour arrangements in the Middle East and Northern Africa (see Moghadam 2005), but did not significantly affect the gendered nature of major destination areas, particularly Saudi Arabia, of female labour force from Ethiopia, let alone in the domestic sphere (see Ennis 2019, 62; Jawhar et al. 2022). This system continued unabated until the demands for reform grew louder including demands for Saudization of the labour force in Saudi Arabia (Looney 2004), and more particularly since the early 2010s when the 'Arab Spring' movement shocked things a bit more (Wearing 2014).

By the 1980s, the migration of pioneers from eastern parts of Tigray (and possibly northeastern Amhara) appears to have started (Kiros 2021, 225). This period was a time of consecutive failure of rains leading to famine and famine-like conditions particularly affecting this part of the country (Kiros 2021). On top of this, the late 1970s also witnessed political violence by the Derg regime in response to urban-based youth political movements in the late 1970s and later on the activities

of the anti-Derg Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) in Tigray's rural areas. As such, there was a significant socio-economic and political push for early migration. This desire was also enabled by the relatively smaller distance to reach the coastlines of the Red Sea in Eritrea from parts of eastern Tigray and northern Wollo. As such, the very start of the Eastern route was informal, and was an attempt to cope with challenges in the home area by tapping into the emerging opportunity structures in the destination countries.

This is also the case with the Southern route. The earliest Ethiopian migrants reached South Africa as the latter was transitioning out of the Apartheid system of governance. At the time, Black South Africans did not have the entrepreneurial and business skills (see Republic of South Africa 1994), while their consumption increased following the commencement of cash assistance programme to a wide range of social groups – war veterans, child support, disability support, and care dependency grant – created regular financial support to poor households by the South African state (James 2015; Torkelson 2020).³ On top of this, in the 1990s, South Africa had a very liberal asylum policy which made it easier for migrants to get asylum permits and over time residence papers. Moreover, many migrants also benefitted from the sympathies of South African women⁴ who had positive views towards Ethiopia and Ethiopians thanks to their support to ANC during the liberation struggle (e.g., the military training offered to Nelson Mandela just before his imprisonment, and the active memory of the images of poor famine-stricken Ethiopians from about a decade ago at the time).⁵ The following quote from an FGD (Hossanna, August 2021) illustrates this point very well:

Our migration to South Africa was a miracle. Most of us even did not know Hosanna, let alone South Africa. We went to South Africa crossing 7 countries. We started making a lot of money by selling to South African women. We did that without knowing their language nor English. While South Africans lived in marvelous houses, we would enter with our dirt and mud and tap our shoes on their carpets. They were very friendly, especially the women. They like the goods that we bring them. We used to put signs so that we would not lose direction. The first Hadiya who started the location business was Shikuto. He would simply say “Sawabona” (greeting) and “collect money” (I came to collect the money). He didn't speak any of the languages of South Africa. He would simply say “Sawabona” (Zulu word for greeting) and “collect money”. That was all he could to say and we followed suit—Sawabona and collect money. We managed to do business only with these two words. If this is not a miracle, what else? Our main partners are South African women. The men who get money from the government use it for alcohol.

As such, when Ethiopians reached the destination areas they were received by an opportune combination of factors – a more favourable asylum system and cash transfer schemes which created purchasing power and liberalized asylum policies which enabled ease of movement and work.

The Hadiya (and Kambatta) dominated the cohort of Ethiopian migrants since the 1990s due to a range of factors. The strong political opposition against the then ruling party the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in Hadiya, unlike other parts of the country, was met with repression and political violence (Tronvoll 2001), justifying the intention of some to migrate. In response, some decided to migrate. Later in the early 2000s, the assignment of Tesfaye Habisso, native to the Hadiya-Kambatta area, as Ethiopia's Ambassador to South Africa and a prophecy by Pastor Peter Youngren, a Canadian Christian evangelist, gave the additional impulse to the migration. It is reported that Ambassador Tesfaye facilitated the migration of a few individuals, while it is also likely that his very presence in Pretoria gave prospective migrants from Hadiya and Kambatta an additional moral boost. The prophecy has it that God spoke to Pastor Youngren and the message was that a 'new door to the South' will be opened to those from Hadiya. Many remember him as saying "I saw a vision of God opening a Southern route for the Hadiya through which people will go and bring back prosperity to Hosanna" at the festival held in 2001. This door is blessed, and through the fortunes gathered through it Hosanna, the capital of Hadiya administrative zone, will be filled with buildings and vehicles (various interviews, see also Dereje 2022 and in this volume). The place of belief and the prophecy in migration decision-making can be illustrated in the following quote from an informant who came from Johannesburg for a family visit to Hosanna:

Peter's prophecy made the journey a lot easier than one would have expected. I migrated to South Africa in 2004, three years after Peter came. I was a student at that time. I talked to my friends about the idea of going to South Africa. They all readily agreed. When we decided to travel it felt as if we were already in South Africa. I remember the enthusiasm and the confidence we had. We never thought of the risks we might encounter during the journey and the language difficulties we might encounter. In fact, it felt like as if we were moving from one house to another within Hadiya.

(Pastor Birhanu, interviewed in Hosanna, November 12, 2020)

In both the eastern and southern routes, Ethiopians of particular localities were pushed by particular factors from their home areas, while they were received by an opportune mix of conditions that allowed them to flourish and enabled further migration of followers in the coming years. In both cases, the pioneer migrants – the earliest migrants who took the risk and developed the linkages between areas of origin and the destination country, thereby facilitating higher rates of migration in later years (Bakewell, de Haas & Kubal 2011) – benefitted from particular historical conjectures to settle and form a community in the destination areas. As will be discussed below, the sectors they joined in the destination countries enabled them to facilitate jobs to follower migrants as well.

The historical factors underpinning Ethiopian migration to the northern destination countries are very different from those detailed above. The earliest migrants travelled to Europe and North America as students during the imperial times and

overstayed following the 1974 revolution and ensuing violence. They were later joined by young men and women who were fleeing terror campaigns of the military government. This later group would first become refugees in immediate neighbouring countries before benefiting from resettlement programs to northern countries (Lyons 2007). The composition of new migrants changed after the 1991 regime change, as those favouring ethno-linguistic political organization had their heydays and those anchoring their politics on pan-Ethiopian nationalism were marginalized. The leaders were persecuted, with some finding their refuge in northern countries. Graduate study-related migration of those with university degrees increased too. As such, economic reasons are the primary factors for about a third of migrants taking the northern route (compared to more than 90% in the eastern and southern routes), while education (15%), family reunification (11%), and security/political factors (9%) together make a comparable justification for those taking the northern route (Kuschminder, Andersson & Siegel 2012).

What we therefore see is the ‘dispersed origin’ of the earliest as well as more recent migrants taking the northern route. On top of this, the nature of the economies and stronger state regulatory powers in northern destination countries (see Section “Socio-Economic Situation and Legal Arrangements of the Destination Country”) narrow down the possibilities of excessively benefiting from some informal economic engagements and creating the social networks to continue attracting new migrants to join the sector.

Therefore, what we see is SSM from Ethiopia being constituted by and evolving under particular historical factors which favour the concentration of migrants from particular parts of the country. On the other side, SNM attracted those with diverse backgrounds but with some academic achievements and those facing political persecution. There is no legitimate reason to argue that the later conditions of educational achievement and political persecution lead to the concentration of migrants from particular areas. As such, there is no core sending area for SNM from Ethiopia, and as such there are limited capabilities coming with that when it comes to enabling further migration, which the next section focuses on.

Building the Capability to Migrate

Historical trends and the creation of core sending areas in the case of SSM help consolidate the aspiration to migrate. This does not automatically translate into continued migration of people unless combined with a commensurate increase in the capability to do so. Two factors are important to explain the relatively higher flows of people using the eastern and southern route (thus SSM), than the northern (SNM): the relative cost and the relevance of social networks.

At least in the SSM routes for irregular migration from Ethiopia, the destinations are much closer to the sending areas than destinations in the Global North. On top of this, the border regulatory capacities of Southern destinations are relatively weaker than those of Northern destinations. While this comes with the possibility of evading border regulatory authorities⁶ or bribing one’s way into a Southern destination at a relatively cheaper rate, there is the accompanying higher risk of

inhumane treatment and human rights violations if captured by border authorities of the Southern destinations.

Northern countries use various attempts to control migration, ranging from using economic incentives to keep young potential migrants in their home country to externalization of their border regimes (Clemens & Postel 2018; Saferworld 2019). Stricter border regimes and control mechanisms will mainly push the cost of migration as well as the associated risks upwards. While such policies are generally shown to fail in terms of meeting the targets of stemming migratory flows (Castles 2004), what is clear is that the possibilities of migration increasingly become limited to high-capability groups. Thus, such policies further entrench how inequality shapes migration processes, by further reducing the abilities of the powerless to realize their migration ambitions.

High capability in this case could mean individuals with higher ‘budget allocations’ trying to realize their migration project or individuals who are more likely to secure a visa (be it as a student, family visit, or re-union). Both of these capabilities could be better met in more urban areas than rural areas, and are less likely to be concentrated in particular localities. This form of migration is therefore more appealing to potential migrants of a certain social standing, be it literacy and/or wealth status, than a place of residence. Moreover, if a prior migrant is going to sponsor anyone, the choice will not be necessarily geographically focused (i.e., friendship, family,...), but rather focus more on the competencies mentioned above.

On the contrary, the eastern and southern routes are relatively cheaper. The eastern route is the cheapest, as low as 795 USD, leading to the labeling of this route as a ‘budget route’ by some (IOM 2021). The southern route, which could cost as much as 5,000 USD, is more expensive than the eastern route.⁷ However, this cost is not prohibitively high as the likelihood of getting one’s migration expenses covered by a sibling/relative is higher among the Hadiya. Moreover, the likelihood of reimbursing this money is made easier by an arrangement, which could be dubbed ‘indentured labour’ for about two years (Meron 2020).

Under this arrangement, a prior migrant will open and stock a new Tuck Shop to the sponsored migrant, with the latter being expected to fully give all revenue to the sponsor for a period of two years or so until the full expenses of the migration are repaid. On top of this, the expected differential in pay of about 1,300 USD per month (IOM 2021) justifies the higher cost of the southern route. This arrangement – called Boss-Border relationship by migrants – enables earlier migrants (Bosses) to sponsor new migrants who will hold the Border position when the Boss opens a new Tuck Shop. As such, chain migration and business expansion of bosses continue to further consolidate the SSM to South Africa.

On the northern route, costs to migrate from Ethiopia to Europe or North America are much higher than the southern route. Unlike the eastern and southern routes where employment is the most important reason for migrating (more than 90%), education, security/political considerations, and family reunion are important reasons as employment in the northern route. As such, the means of financing migration also differs with gifts from family/friends being the main one to more than half of respondents taking the northern route (about a third in the other routes),

and selling assets (0.64% compared to about 5% in the other routes) and savings (8.28% compared to 20.59% and 12.45% in southern and eastern routes, accordingly) making negligible contribution (Kuschminder, Andersson & Siegel 2012). Moreover, if one wants to sponsor a migrant, there is no clear mechanism to arrange for the migrant to join a certain economic sector, and then repay the loan. Therefore, there are severely limited possibilities of creating a core sending area.

The consequences of the above-listed two factors work towards the entrenchment of the ‘culture of migration’ (see Fana 2021; Meron 2020) in relatively confined localities, particularly in rural areas in the case of SSM and within families in cases of SNM. This will have the immediate consequence of the concentration of financial remittances and related increased consumption and a degree of higher material development (primarily in the housing sector) in core sending areas in SSM and particular households in SNM. The impact of migration and remittances on consumption could be felt in Hosanna, where migrant families do not engage in any bargaining for the items they buy, unlike other families. This has created a new class of consumers, dubbed *Yehune* (‘Let it be’) by traders. This market behaviour is pushing the prices of daily consumables above neighbouring towns outside Hadiya, to the disadvantage of non-migrant households who invested in education and joined the civil service early on. Migrants have also increased land market dynamics and prices, as well as promoting a local-level housing construction boom. The latter is also visible in Atsbi Endasselassie and Wukro towns of Tigray, but more impressively in Hosanna and Bonosha towns of Hadiya.

In Hadiya, returnees often get surprised by the ease their families spend money, while the family that stayed behind calls the returnee ‘*Kuralew*’,⁸ and there is a distinction between ‘ye-lake’ and ‘ya-lake’ families (migrant and non-migrant families). The former profusely consume and buy without bargaining (the ‘*yehune*’ (Let it be)), while the latter bargain. As one returnee surmised:

When I first visited Hosanna upon return from South Africa, I was shocked when I heard the price that I was hearing from the shops. Nearly all goods are much more expensive in Hosanna than in Addis. When I asked people why is it that goods are very expensive in Hosanna, they told me about the *yihunes*. The hard-won money that we sent to support families is wasted here as if we dig money; thus endless. I also realised that shopkeepers, especially those who come outside of Hadiya, take advantage of this irresponsible consumption. If you haggle over a price they would say, ‘are you a *mengist serategnal* civil servant?’, as if being a civil servant is something that one has to be ashamed of. Implicitly they are referring to the difference between migrant and non-migrant families and their different spending behavior.

(Informant: returnee migrant, Male, Hosanna, 12 August 2022)

Although not comparable to the Hadiya, returnees from Saudi Arabia are recognized for higher consumption too. There was a locality in Atsbi Wenberta called ‘Riyadh neighbourhood’ (implying that the owners are those in the Gulf or with families there), and returnees were criticized for a higher degree of consumption,

including travel to nearby towns for entertainment. One returnee explained in the following words:

In Saudi, buying coca and juice (soda and beverages) is trivial. Here you have to think twice before buying a bottle of coca, leave alone packed juice. We are sitting on dirt floors here, and we always think of the day we will re-migrate to Saudi. The case is the same with buying clothes, modern mobile phone apparatus and the like. What is life if you cannot buy what you want, and enjoy it while you can!

(Informant: Returnee Migrant, Female, Alamata, 23 January 2017)

Moreover, migration-related discussions – on progress and fate of recently departed migrants, work conditions of those already in the destination country, remittances made and other socio-economic life of migrants – will be a routine part of community discussions at local levels in core sending areas (Teferi 2021). Such discussions will also have a significant bearing on the choices by placing migration among the important paths to a decent future. As such, migration strongly features among the leading viable alternatives to a future in such localities than others. This will create a cyclical process that reinforces the ‘culture of migration’ and adds further impetus to the drive.

Geographic Barriers

Migration – particularly irregular migration – is a risky endeavour. The risks involved in migration have increased in recent decades as destination countries, especially in the Global North, started implementing stricter border and immigration policies. In northern destination countries of Europe and North America, regressive populist political positions started gaining traction since the mid-2000s (Lazaridis & Wadia 2015). This has led to policy options that attempt to close borders off to irregular migrants and reduce the chances of legal migration, thereby intending to contain migrants in their origin areas including by economic incentives (Duffield 2007). The refugee crisis following the war in Yemen and Syria, and the dissolution of Libya further exacerbated public opinion and policy positions in Europe. Moreover, Europe attempted to export its border management to outside its territorial limits by cooperating with North African countries (Adamson & Tsourapas 2019; Norman & Micinski 2022). Stricter control over the Mediterranean Sea, which is crossed by African migrants into mainland Europe, had its share of adding manmade barriers to aspiring migrants.

These political and policy-generated barriers came into effect only after the migrant reaches closer to the coastlines. Further south to the coastlines of the Mediterranean migrants from Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa in general would have to pass through the Sahara Desert. The Sahara Desert with its natural and human-made risks, even with the services of skilled facilitators of migration, ends up being the burial ground of many migrants (Reitano & Tinti 2015). The natural

challenges arising out of extreme desiccation are further intensified by the insecurity and rebel and criminal activities in parts of north-western Sudan, eastern Chad, and Libya. All these interacting natural and manmade risks necessitate the services of smugglers/facilitators, which do not come cheap. With increased fees, the number of Ethiopian migrants taking this route will be (relative to the eastern and southern routes) be lower (Ibid.).

It is imperative to compare the risks involved in the northern route with that of SSM. In the eastern route, the risks involved cover shorter distances involved in crossing Somalia's or Djibouti's deserts, and then crossing a narrow strip of the Red Sea. There is the additional risk brought by the war in Yemen in the past few years, while the breakdown of order also allowed greater room for traffickers to manoeuvre (Wilson-Smith 2019). The southern route is riskier, among others, as it involves crossing longer distances traversing at least four countries (but higher if a migrant passes through Zambia and Zimbabwe) or long trips (often from near Mombasa to the southern coasts of Mozambique) on shaky boats on the Indian Ocean for days.

The above discussion aimed to illustrate the different geographic barriers migrants face in the three routes. Stiffer geographic barriers – including both natural and political/manmade – will necessitate the role of situated brokers/facilitators whose service fees increase with the increase in the level of risks. For the majority of potential migrants, the risks involved in the eastern and southern routes are more tolerable and somehow manageable. Although the rewards are perceived to be higher in northern destinations, the lack of capabilities to migrate legally or the much higher risks of engaging in irregular migration reduces the number of migrants braving this route.

Cultural En/Dis-ableers

Culture – in the broader sense, including religion – affects migration in general, and SSM in particular.⁹ An illustrative example here is the Hadiya term for explaining migration to South Africa as *Darifirma*, which takes male seasonal labour migration as a rite of passage among the Hadiya. According to Dereje, Hagen-Zanker and Mazzilli (forthcoming):

For Hadiya, migration has now become part of the natural order of things, in which both long-standing cultural norms of society and new trends converge. Concerning cultural norms, Hadiya perceive migration to South Africa as one – perhaps the ultimate – expression of *darifirma*. While the literal meaning of this word is 'to stroll', *darifirma* commonly symbolises the physical mobility that Hadiya have experienced and enjoyed since the beginning of time. As Dereje (2022) points out, in this context migration is not only seen as such, but also as an expression of the human disposition to move, thus perfectly natural (p. 37). The egalitarian but competitive nature of the Hadiya society, together with the guiding principles of *darifirma*, provided a fertile cultural ground where the migration trend could grow strong.

While this might be a reflection of the pastoral undercurrents in Hadiya culture, more recent episodes of labour migration to the sugar estates, Dire Dawa and Assab created the immediate impetus to keep migration as a commonsensical option to a future (Dereje 2022). As such, even the earliest Hadiya migrants were not discouraged from their decisions, but South Africa was in essence only a newer edition of an old phenomenon. The culture of migration in Hadiya zone partly relates to the long tradition of internal migration and mobility such as the cultural practice in the area known as *Darebacha*; a seasonal migration of people and their cattle at times of environmental crisis. The strong culture of migration in the area can be further referred from the 1960s to 1970s labour migration to work in sugar factories in Eastern Ethiopia, specifically in Metehara and Wenji; the resettlement of the local population to some parts of the country related to the growing population pressure and scarcity of farmland have all contributed to the ingrained culture of migration in the area.

In the eastern route, religion and religious pilgrimage created the conditions for the very first migrants to justify and enable their migration (Meron 2019). Haji travels to Saudi Arabia since much earlier periods created the context for migrants to make the trips (Kiya 2021). Although this is much easier in the case of predominantly Muslim sending areas, the relative ease of learning Islamic rituals in parts of North-East Amhara meant that the door was not closed for Christians (Ibid.). Without this religious affinity, the migration from these parts of the Amhara region (and possibly Tigray) could have been more constrained from maturing.

Religion plays an important role in the southern route too, though in a different manner. A prophecy by Pastor Peter Youngren is crucial in the buildup and consolidation of the aspiration to migrate to South Africa. Combined with the stronghold of Protestantism in Hadiya, his prophecy provided a divine justification to the intentions of potential migrants and enabled them to persist through the risks they faced *en route*.

For the northern route, there are no cultural enablers to fast-track large-scale international migration. The earliest migrants were students and politically persecuted elite (students, bureaucrats, and members of the royal family after the revolution of 1974), which made large-scale migration to these destinations unrealistic. Somehow being path-dependent, we continue to see educated and individuals from relatively higher income backgrounds migrating to the north. The average years of schooling for migrants taking the northern route is higher than those taking the eastern and southern routes by nearly five and four years. When it comes to occupation, those taking up education as their mainstay in the destination country are very few in all cases: less than 4% on average, but 8.64% in the northern route, and less than 1% in the eastern (see Tables 2 in Kuschminder, Andersson & Siegel 2012). Moreover, according to the survey by Kuschminder, Andersson, and Siegel (2012) more than three-quarters of migrants in the northern route are from urban areas, with less than a quarter and about 40% for the southern and eastern routes (see Table 3). Subjective determination of household wealth status shows that some 40.25% and 6.92% of migrants in the northern route assess their household condition as living comfortably and living very comfortably. If we take these as above

average, then close to 50% of migrants in the northern route are from relatively better households compared to less than a third in the other two (see Table 3 in Kuschminder, Andersson & Siegel 2012).

In terms of concentration, therefore what we can expect at best, is the aggregation of migrants within certain families in the case of the northern route, while a geographically centred concentration is visible in the case of the eastern and southern routes.

Cultural factors seem to favour geographically closer destinations, sending communities with an established migration culture, as well as the religious affinity between sending and destination areas. This makes the concentration of migrants from certain areas more likely for the case of SSM, in Ethiopia's case, than SNM.

Socio-Economic Situation and Legal Arrangements of the Destination Country

The very presence of a large population of migrant community to the intended destination country essentially presumes the conception of the destination as having better freedoms, be it economic or socio-political, than the origin. However, not all destination countries are equally attractive to all possible migrant groups. The 'desirability' of a certain destination will be highly dependent on the socio-economic condition of the destination country as well as the law enforcement capabilities of the destination country.

The socio-economic status of a destination country determines the lines of work open for a potential migrant, often with a lower skill base and questionable legal status. The Gulf countries' political economy, while having restrictive social and political regimes for women citizens (see Shah, Al-Kazi & Husain 2018), has given them greater powers and time-freedom in the domestic sphere by availing Saudi families of cheap female labour from elsewhere. What is perceived as cheap in the destination country is attractive pay to migrant women from many parts of the developing world. Unlike the northern countries or other regions of the world with similar per capita income levels, the cultural and politico-economic factors enabled large-scale labour migration to the Middle East. A returnee in Atsbi Wenberta made the following comparison in October 2017:

The lowest paying job one gets after reaching Saudi is tending animals in the deserts, until you learn enough of the language and build relationships to make your next move. This position gets you about 5,000 Birr per month, which is the salary of an MA holder in Ethiopia. Thus, I don't regret my decision to opt for migration leaving my job in the district government office.

(Interview: returnee informant, female, 13 October 2017, Atsbi)

Domestic work is minimal in Europe and North America, while pervasive in the Middle East (as well as South America and the Caribbean, as well as Africa; see ILO 2013, 20–21). Within Europe itself there are differences in cultural predilection towards domestic labour (of particularly women), with Spain, Italy, and France

having higher rates. The extent of domestic labour is maintained low in the developed world partly due to the provision of child and elderly care, which women migrants often take up in the Middle East. In cases where the public sector provides these care services, as in the Scandinavian countries, the demand for domestic labour will even be lower (ILO 2013, 35–38).

South Africa has a different labour demand. Many Ethiopian (and other) migrants benefitted from the political changes in the mid-1990s in South Africa, which brought more disposable income to the hands of black South Africans without the prior preparation to engage them in a range of businesses. The poor development of the townships and the relative distance of the townships from major urban centres coupled with the low entrepreneurship of black South Africans created the perfect conditions for the flourishing of door-to-door business. This business requires young men who could withstand the hours of carrying commodities on one's shoulders, hands, or head, and walking tens of kilometers. Rural Hadiya men, with the laborious farming skills met this demand. Urban youth were ill-suited to this business (as well as the journey). As a returnee migrant originally from Addis Ababa explained:

The most profitable location business was trade in curtain. It was mainly done by *Hosanna lijoch* (people from Hosanna). They kept it as secret. I got to know about it because I worked with a Hadiya guy and I joined them. They called it *Kitin* business. Previously it was belt – used as a generic name for all kinds of goods delivered door to door. *Hosanna lijoch* used to take *kitin* directly from Chinese suppliers and took it to location (door-to-door selling). That is why many of us did not know about this business and how profitable it was. The profit was more than double. First, they were selling the raw *kitin* and gradually they started sewing and selling it even more expensive. They are more daring and protective of the *Kitin* business. They penetrated locations and villages which migrants from Addis would not dare.

(Interview: returnee informant, male, 18 August 2020, Hosanna)

Similarly, the government's/laws in the Middle East and South Africa also encourage (at least tolerate) the types of business the migrants tend to dominate. The Kafala system of Middle Eastern countries permits relatively abusive domestic working conditions (Kerbage-Hariri 2017). In South Africa's case, the high government earnings from the high-income earner sections of the economy essentially make the informal door-to-door and Tuck-shop businesses many Hadiya engage in as not significant enough to tax or seriously govern (Gastrow 2018). Therefore, there is no strict and timely enforcement of the laws and regulations in certain countries, which creates the conditions for problems for migrants down the line.

That moment came in early 2010s for Saudi Arabia, as an effect of the Arab Spring (De Bel-Air 2014), as it got governments on their toes initiating strategies to better address social issues, including the constructed challenge of migrants as social problems. The Saudi government took the decision to regularize the status

of some informal migrant workers, and deport close to a million, while promoting the recruitment of Saudi Arabian nationals in the labour force (De Bel-Air 2014). The consequence was the mass deportation of more than 160,000 undocumented Ethiopian migrants, under abusive and inhumane conditions from Saudi Arabia (de Regt & Medareshaw 2016). The deportations were not followed by stricter control of the borders and/or the trafficking networks, leading to a comparably aggressive deportation as of the late 2010s again. Since 2017, more than half a million Ethiopians were deported from Saudi Arabia often making daily news in Ethiopia of the arrival of hundreds of deported citizens (Girmachew 2022). In South Africa, the actions to delayed/absent state regulation do not emanate from public actors. These are distressed young black South Africans taking their frustrations on migrant bodies and businesses. Such violence and xenophobic attacks started becoming more common since the late 2000s in different South African cities, which also led to more restrictive conditions for migrants already in South Africa. The cycles of deportation from Saudi Arabia for about a decade now and repeated xenophobic attacks in South Africa indicate the difficulties of sealing borders to keep irregular migrants out, and also failures to have more creative policies to handle the social issues underpinning these actions.

On the other hand, northern countries have stronger border regulation powers and enforcement capacities to significantly reduce the number of migrants reaching their territory, not stop it. Even after entry, the scope of making economic returns on the migration is limited until asylum cases are finalized, as the economy is largely regulated. As such, northern countries have better chances of reducing the scale of migration and the economic success of the average migrant, especially unskilled/semi-skilled ones.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that there are inherent differences in the nature of South-South and South-North irregular migration from Ethiopia. The historical roots of the current migration trends in the case of SSM created the fertile conditions for the creation of core sending areas, as the push factors were specifically shared to particular localities. On the other hand, the historical factors undergirding SNM created conditions for a more individualized/family level migration dynamic. These historical factors have differing implications for capability-building. In the case of SSM, aspirations and capabilities are shared at community level, with a shared repertoire and network to enable information flow and provision of support by former migrants. On the contrary, the SNM dynamics again are limited to potential migrants with higher capabilities (material, education, etc.), and are more individualized. A dialectic and iterative process of migration over decades has led to the building of a 'culture of migration' in core sending areas to southern destinations. In such areas, irregular migration is a commonsensical aspect of planning about the future of the youth. This future-making project, and the conception of irregular migration to a southern destination as one of few viable options, is collective. As such, in cases of SSM from Ethiopia the aspiration and capability are collective.

Moreover, the comparatively lower risk involved in the eastern and southern routes justify the preference of many migrants along these routes. On top of this, once in the destination country a migrant will receive different supports from prior migrants to start their informal engagement in the economy, partly taking advantage of the lower state capacity of the destination countries.

The collective aspiration and capability build an immense inertia which at the least maintains a high level of irregular migration, while interventions primarily aimed at containing migration tend to be informed by liberal conceptions. Here we have a major reason for the stubbornly high rates of irregular migration in the eastern and southern routes despite state attempts to clamp down on irregular migration.

Notes

- 1 In addition to economics, Appadurai's (2013) argument is to make the production of the future a socio-cultural process and anthropology as a discipline to understand how the future is produced. The socio-cultural processes in making migration a viable option to making one's/a community's future will align with what is known as 'culture of migration'. However, the 'culture of migration' will be consolidated and perceptible in areas with strong and extended periods of experience of migration, while the socio-cultural processes of future-making through migration exists in other contexts as well. The concluding section will detail this better.
- 2 My first research experience on migration-related fieldwork was in January 2017 in Atsbi Endaselassie, Alamata, and Abi Adi areas of Tigray (Fana and Beyene, 2017). In October 2017, I had the opportunity to do a second round of fieldwork in Atsbi Endaselassie. I am currently a researcher in MIDEQ (since late 2019) which examines South-South migration from Hadiya, south Ethiopia to South Africa. MIDEQ allowed extended fieldwork in various parts of Hadiya, and to rely on more than 100 formal interviews and focus group discussions conducted by the team of researchers. In mid-2020 I did fieldwork in Wurko, Tigray, and North Wollo of Amhara region (Mesfin et al., 2021). I also rely on the experience of the panel I organized with Asnake Kefale at the ICES 20 and later of the book we co-edited *Youth on the Move: Views from Below on Ethiopian International Migration* (Asnake and Fana 2021). Over the past five years, I have had the chance to physically stay in core sending areas to the Eastern and Southern Routes and gather data on decision-making and impacts of migration in these areas.
- 3 With 3.3% of its GDP dedicated to cash transfer programmes, South Africa has one of the largest and most comprehensive schemes in the world (see Torkelson 2020).
- 4 Despite the 'gender neutral design of the scheme, except the War Veterans' Grant (20.8% female), women make the largest proportion of recipients of other grant schemes: Old Age Pension (66%), disability grant (54.6%), Child Support Grant (98.1%), Foster Child Grant (94%), and Care Dependency Grant (96.8%) (Dianne Dunkerley, SASSA, 11–12 June 2013 Cited in Plagerson and Ulriksen 2015).
- 5 Various interviews with returnees as part of the MIDEQ research in Hosanna, Hadiya.
- 6 For example, Saudi border control becomes reportedly weaker during Islam's holy month of Ramadan, making this month the perfect time to attempt to cross into Saudi Arabia (Interviews with returnees, Atsbi Wenberta, October 2017).
- 7 Consecutive IOM reports show the increasing cost of migration from the Horn of Africa, partly due to increasing surveillance, along the southern route: between 1,750 and 2,000 USD in 2009; 2,500 USD in 2015-2-16; 3,400-5,000 in 2022 (IOM 2022).
- 8 A generic name for a line of work where an individual goes house to house to buy used kitchen utensils and others, often bottles and metal scraps at cheap rates, to be sold at higher rates. In this case, the labelling is to refer to migrants collecting cents and changes from purchases and exchanges (Interview, July 2021, Bonosha).

- 9 In the context of this chapter, culture is defined following Taylor (1871) as the “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

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