



Working Papers

Paper 159, February 2020

Migration, Development and the Urbanization of the Good Life: Mobility Transitions in Rural Ethiopia

Kerilyn Schewel

MADE project paper 11

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Abstract

This paper examines how Ethiopia's "development" over the last century impacted the mobility patterns of a traditionally seminomadic peoples in the central lowlands of Oromia. Using original survey data, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic methods, this research uncovers how, within just four generations, one village experienced two mobility transitions: from seminomadic pastoralism into settled agriculture, and then from rural agriculture into more mobile, urban-centric lives. To explain these transitions, this paper advances a social transformation framework to explore how different dimensions of social change — the political, economic, demographic, technological, and cultural — impact aspirations and capabilities to migrate or stay. It finds, first, that the sedentarisation of seminomadic lifestyles was an integral part of modern nation-state building in Ethiopia. The integration of this once peripheral region into a centralised, hierarchical state disrupted traditional patterns of socioeconomic organisation with the effect of tying people to places. Second, it finds that rural out-migration among younger generations — whether to neighbouring towns or to the Middle East — is primarily driven by rising access to formal education, growing rural-urban connectivity, and the expansion of the market economy. In Ethiopia, where most analyses of rural out-migration focus on the factors that "force" young people to abandon agriculture and rural lives, this case study shows why rising rural out-migration is part and parcel of "development" as it is practiced today. Rather than alleviating the need to migrate, this research suggests that development often creates the need to migrate.

Keywords: migration, development, Ethiopia, aspirations, urbanization

Author: Kerilyn Schewel (University of Amsterdam)

Acknowledgements: The research leading to these results was part of the MADE (Migration as Development) Consolidator Grant project, receiving funding from the European Research Council under the European Community's Horizon 2020 Programme (H2020/2015-2020)/ERC Grant Agreement 648496. Much of this paper is taken from my doctoral dissertation. I thank my supervisors, Hein de Haas and Jørgen Carling; the Bahá'í community of Adami Tulu; my research assistants, Kedir Gemechu and Tilah Alemayehu; Ben Schewel; Asmamaw Legass Bahir; Stephen Murphy; the political sociology group at the University of Amsterdam; and the MADE team, including Simona Vezzoli, Sonja Fransen, Katharina Natter, Siebert Wielstra, and Dominique Jolivet, for their invaluable accompaniment and support throughout all stages of this research.

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The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

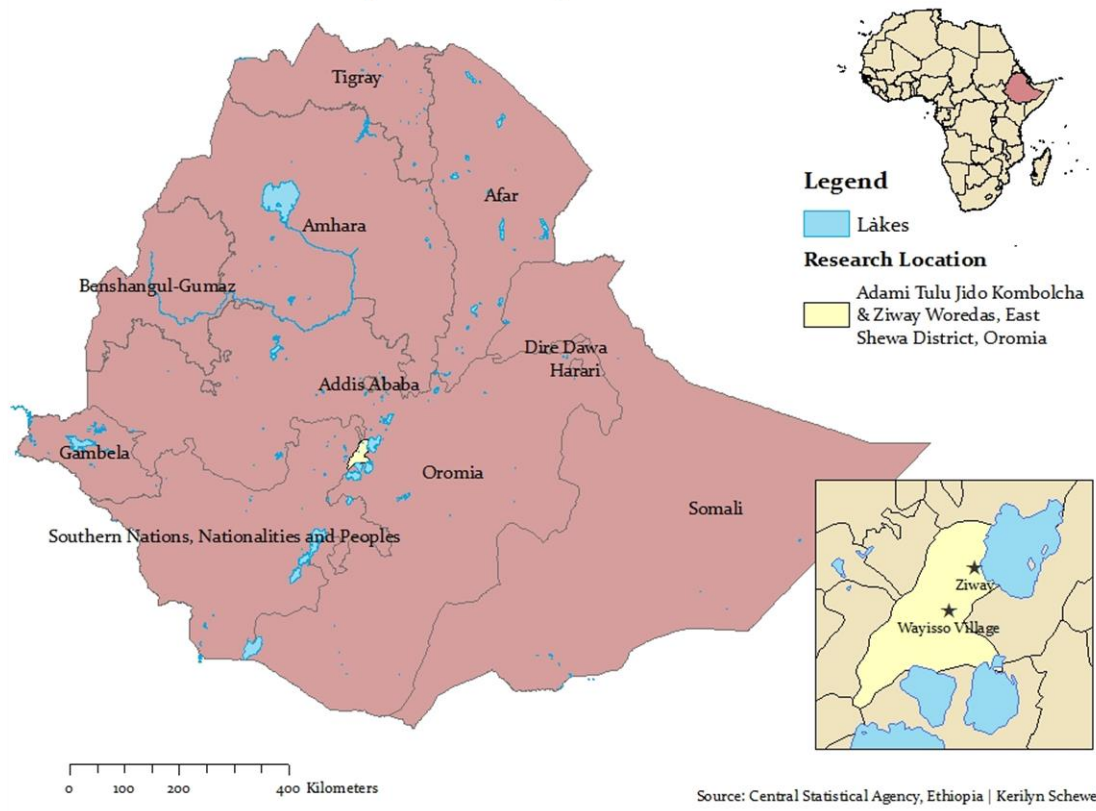


Figure 1. Map of Ethiopia and research site

1 Introduction



This paper examines the creation and transformation of one rural village in the central lowlands of the Ethiopian Rift Valley. It explores the interlinkages between the migration and settlement behavior of a traditionally seminomadic peoples and the “modernisation” of the Ethiopian state. The village, called Wayisso, lies in the state of Oromia, some three hours south of Addis Ababa by bus. There is nothing immediately remarkable about the place. It is flat and semi-arid, with sandy soil and erratic rainfall that suited pastoral livelihoods for generations. Less than a century ago, however, three families began to settle in three different areas of what came to be called Wayisso village. Small clusters of households grew, around which pastoral movements continued as new livelihoods took root. Pastoralists eventually became farmers, and, once settled, a new kind of movement emerged in the form of “migration” to neighbouring towns or further afield. Today, many remain in Wayisso as farmers, but many others are leaving for education and new forms of work elsewhere — in towns and cities across Ethiopia or in the Middle East. Within just four generations, then, this population group moved from nomadism to settlement, and from settlement to rural-urban and international migration. This study examines the social forces that drove these migration transitions. Its primary research question: How have patterns of migration (i.e., the nature, volume, composition, and direction of movement) changed in Wayisso, and what forces of social change drove these shifts?

Although Wayisso’s story is unique, its history of settlement and migration illuminates broader patterns in the region and elsewhere. Specifically, by understanding the drivers of its mobility transitions (Zelinsky 1971), this study contributes to a more general debate about the relationship between migration and development in the modern era. Its findings challenge common “push factor” narratives that tend to describe migration from poor, rural settings as more or less “forced”. Push-factor narratives are particularly prevalent in Ethiopia, where Ezra and Kiros’ (2001) summary of the state research on rural out-migration emphasises the negative factors that impel people to flee rural places:

Earlier research indicates that landlessness, agricultural policy, land fragmentation, absence of farm oxen, introduction of commercial farms, environmental degradation, population pressure, recurrent drought and famine, war, and political crisis were major factors responsible for rural outmigration (2001, 750 citing Rahmato 1984; Cohen et al. 1988; Ezra 1997, 2000; Berhanu and White 1998; see also Miheretu 2011, 31; Bezu and Holden 2014).

Such push-factor narratives, which continue to frame explanations of rural out-migration in Ethiopia, tend to perpetuate the idea that development can stop migration. Reflecting this assumption, billions are allocated in development aid to poorer countries around the world, including Ethiopia, in an effort to reduce migration propensities (see de Haas 2007; Clemens and Postel 2018). If these push factors can be alleviated, this line of thinking assumes, fewer people will *need* to leave.

And yet, existing research seems to suggest the opposite — that, at the macrolevel, “development” in low-income countries is more often associated with *greater* migration. Indeed, several studies confirm that as poorer countries experience a constellation of social shifts associated with development — including economic growth and diversification, expanding formal education, and infrastructure improvements, among others — more people begin to leave rural places for urban centers within their countries and beyond (see de Haas et al. 2020; Todaro 1969; Zelinsky 1971; Massey 1988; Skeldon 1997; de Haas 2010; Clemens 2014; Clemens and Postel 2018). Although there are certainly important variations in the nature, timing, or degree of movement within this overarching “mobility transition” that remain little understood, a more fundamental question persists across contexts: *why*, as poorer places “develop”, do more people decide to leave?

This paper provides empirically grounded insights into why development, in practice, tends to stimulate aspirations to leave rural places. It shows how widening access to formal education, growing connectivity between rural and urban areas, and the expansion of a market economy in rural areas lead to an “urbanisation” of the good life. It finds that social transformations associated with development tend to generate an “aspiration-opportunity gap” for rural youth; that is, young people’s aspirations become increasingly oriented towards urban futures, which cannot be realised in rural areas and thus require migration to achieve. As rural places become progressively connected to labour markets and lifestyles across the country and abroad, an aspiration to leave can take the form of internal or international migration. In this regard, the paper finds that, far from *alleviating* the root causes of migration, development *is* the root cause of migration from Wayisso.

To be clear, I use the term “development” in order to contribute to theory-building on the relationship between migration and development. This is a tricky endeavor, because development is an inherently normative concept. It is difficult to separate the idea of development from the idea of *progress* (see Arndt 1981). In practice, however, the social and economic transformations made in the name of development often disempower local populations at the same time that they enrich the national gross domestic product (Sen 1999; de Haas et al. 2020). When I speak about the consequences of development on migration

patterns, then, I speak about development as it actually proceeds, for better or worse, not necessarily development as it *ought to be*.¹

This paper proceeds as follows. After detailing my conceptual and methodological approaches, Part I shows how mobility patterns in Wayisso changed over the last five generations. It briefly describes how three seminomadic pastoral families initially settled in Wayisso, before analysing household survey data to illustrate subsequent patterns of out-migration. I explore where people go, how often they move, and the characteristics of those who stay, highlighting generational, gender, and household differences in (im)mobility outcomes. Part 2 explores the impact of different dimensions of social change on these migration trends, including (1) the rise of the Ethiopian nation-state and three regimes' development policies, (2) the spread of the market economy, (3) the expansion of formal education, (4) population growth and diminishing landholding, and (5) changing notions of the “good life”. In doing so, this study advances a multidimensional approach to understanding the root causes of migration that gives due attention to the psychological dimensions of social change.

2 Conceptual Approach

This research adopts a “social transformation perspective” for studying migration, an approach that begins from the idea that migration is an intrinsic part of more general development processes (see Castles 2010; de Haas 2010a; Van Hear 2010). Rather than simply a cause or consequence of development success or failure, migration is a process that inevitably transforms as the social shifts that constitute development proceed (see de Haas 2010a, 228). To advance this perspective, the Migration as Development (MADE) research project, of which this case study is a part, developed a “social transformation framework” to understand how different dimensions of social transformation shape internal and international mobility patterns over time. A social transformation framework is a metatheoretical conceptual framework for studying “big change” that directs research attention along five key dimensions that together form the social domain (see de Haas et al. 2020):

- *the political*, defined as the organised control over people;
- *the cultural*, defined as the beliefs, values, norms, and customs shared by groups of people;
- *the economic*, defined as the accumulation and use of land, labour, and capital in the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services;
- *the technological*, defined as the application of knowledge through the deployment of procedures, skills, and techniques; and
- *the demographic*, defined as the structure and spatial distribution of populations.

¹ A second justification for using the word “development” is that, despite important critiques on its normative characteristics, the term remains a strong political, social, and cultural force, with discursive power that continues to animate and structure the flow of capital, goods, ideas, and people around the world (Escobar 2011). In Ethiopia, the concepts of “development” or “modernisation” shape the nature and substance of government policy; they also, as James Ferguson argues, give form to how everyday people understand the world, “providing a set of categories and premises that continue to shape people’s experiences and interpretations of their lives” (1999, 13).

Within each dimension, major processes of social change can occur: for example, the growth of industrial capitalism under the economic dimension, nation-state formation under the political, or the “demographic transition” under the demographic (see de Haas et al. 2020). In particular contexts, the timing, sequencing, and intersectionality of these social-change processes stimulate particular kinds of migration or staying behavior. A core aim of the MADE project is to identify common trends in the relationship between migration and the “modern transformation” across diverse contexts, while remaining attentive to unique manifestations of social change. In so doing, we aim to avoid the top-down determinism of classical modernisation or development theories as well as the relativism of postmodern thought (see de Haas et al. 2020).

A key question for the social transformation framework is clarifying how the “big” social changes associated with development impact the day-to-day migration decision-making of people and families. To conceptualise the ties between macrolevel social change and microlevel behavior, this paper links the social transformation approach with the “aspiration-capability framework”, which views migration as a function of aspirations and capabilities to migrate within a given set of opportunity structures (see de Haas 2014; Carling and Schewel 2018; Schewel 2019b).

To theorise changing aspirations, this paper uses three interrelated 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 (see Taylor 2002, 2007); it is the web of conscious and unconscious assumptions about how things are and how things should be that gives 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.²

Of course, how aspirations are expressed, frustrated, or adapted depends on the structural opportunities and constraints individuals face. To conceptualise the impact of changing social structures on actual (im)mobility outcomes, this study uses the concept of “capability” (see Sen 1999³; de Haas 2003, 2014) to analyse migration-development interactions. The concept of capability, as I use it here, refers to the real opportunities people have to realise their aspirations within a given set of social structures. Capabilities vary from person to person; they are shaped by gender, education, social class, wealth, social networks, and social norms.

Figure 2 schematises this paper’s conceptual approach, integrating the macrolevel social transformation framework with the microlevel aspiration-capability framework through

² For more detailed discussions of the concept of “aspirations” and its current usage in migration research, see Carling and Collins (2018) and Carling and Schewel (2018); for more general discussions of aspirations and development, see Appadurai (2004), Ray (2006), also Kuhn (2012).

³ 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 (see Sen 1999).

the mediating concepts of “social imaginary” and “social structures”. 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 aspirations and capabilities people hold are individual specific.

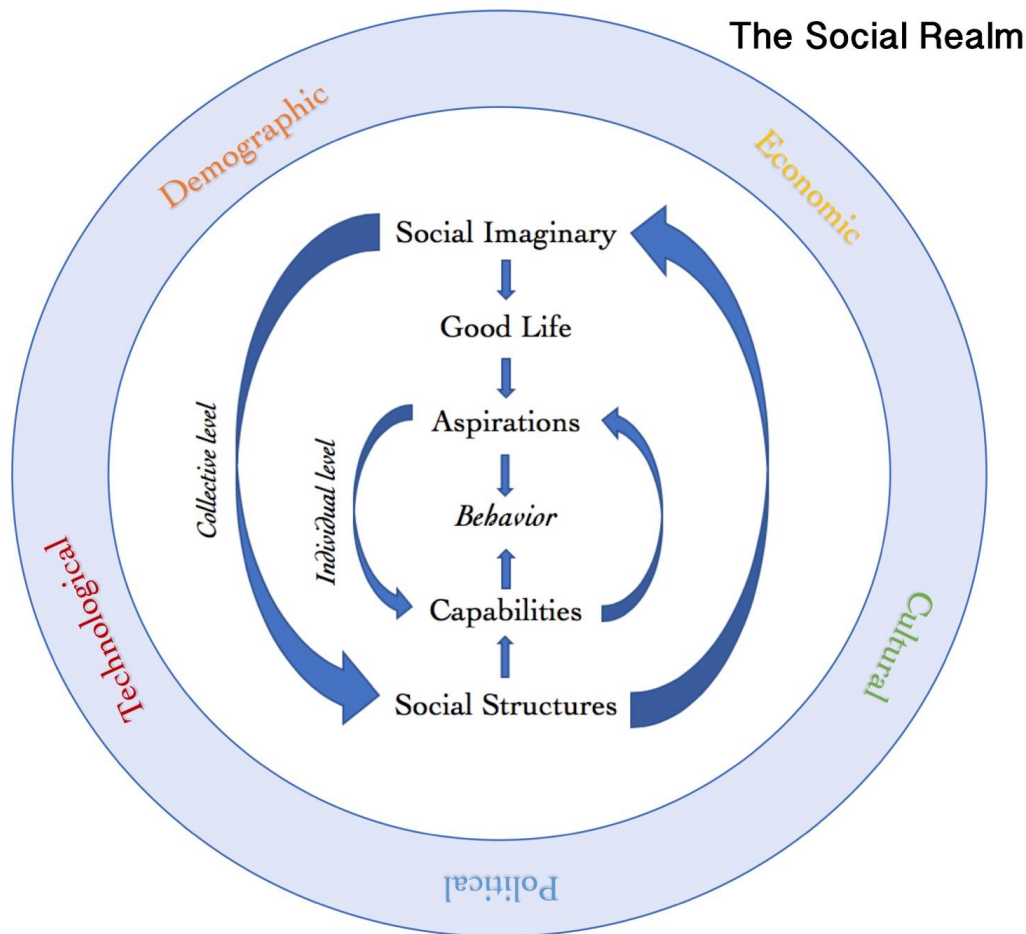


Figure 2. Integrating the Social Transformation and Aspiration-Capability Frameworks

Note: The five dimensions of the “social realm” come from the social transformation perspective as elaborated in de Haas et al. (2020).

3 Methodological Approach

The Wayisso village is situated within Wayisso Qancerra *kebele* (peasant association) in the Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha (ATJK) district of the Oromia state. It lies approximately 164 kilometers south of Addis Ababa along one of the main roads that stretches southward to Kenya. My aim was not to find a case that was empirically representative of the typical rural village in Ethiopia; such a village does not exist. Rather, I sought a location that could speak to the broader forces of social change associated with Ethiopia’s modernisation and how they

influenced migration trends over time. In this regard, the relatively rapid pace of social change and mobility transitions in Wayisso meant I could explore a range of deep social shifts — from bartering to a monetised economy, for example, or from pastoralism to subsistence farming to wage work — that occurred within living memory.

Further, because of Wayisso’s proximity to Adami Tulu, a small market town of some 10,000 people, and Ziway, a boom town of some 50,000 registered people (but likely many more), it is a rich setting to understand small-scale processes of urbanisation. The debate on urbanisation in Africa most often focuses on big cities, yet the most dramatic consequences are taking place on the small scale — along a continuum of rural areas, villages, towns, and smaller cities (African Economic Outlook 2016). As of the last national census, in 2007, over half of Ethiopia’s urban population (54.2%) were in towns of 50,000 people or less (Schewel and Legass 2019). Understanding the structural and aspirational shifts taking place in Wayisso, and how they relate to the neighbouring towns Adami Tulu and Ziway, can therefore shed light on the forces driving “micro-urbanisation” (Berriane 1997) across Ethiopia and the African continent.⁴



Figure 3. Wayisso Village and Neighbouring Towns, Adami Tulu and Ziway

Source: Satellite Image from Google, Digital Globe, 2019.

⁴ In addition, Wayisso village lies in close proximity to a number of private foreign investors, which allowed me to explore the impact of these companies on local livelihoods, imaginaries, and migration decision-making. Notably, there is Sher Ethiopia, a flower farm based in Adami Tulu and Ziway, whose greenhouses now take up as much land as the city of Ziway itself (see Figure 2). There is also Verde Beef, a Dutch-American owned cattle farm newly situated immediately next to Wayisso village. Although such private investments are often touted as the solution to economic and migration challenges in Ethiopia and Africa more broadly, I found a more complex story about how locals perceive these jobs, and their impact on whether people decide to leave or stay is mixed. While I am unable to go into much detail about these dynamics in this paper, see Schewel 2018a, 2019 for more on this theme.

There were several populations of interest within Wayisso, each with distinct (im)mobility experiences. The oldest living generation, who grew up as seminomadic pastoralists, remember Emperor Haile Selassie, adapted to the communist revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, and still refer to the current government — established in 1994 — as “new”. Then there are their sons and daughters, those who embraced farming as their primary livelihood. Their youngest children were among the first to leave Wayisso for secondary and higher schooling in Ziway. Next is the current generation of young adults, many of whom straddle lives between the village and town. Within these generational divisions, family lineage, wealth, educational attainment, and gender introduced additional areas of exploration. I found, for example, that young women with middling levels of schooling from one particular family group were the only ones to migrate from Wayisso to Middle Eastern countries as domestic workers.⁵

My research took place over several visits: for ten days in April 2015, from January to July 2016 (six months), for two weeks in November 2016, and a return visit for two weeks in October 2018. Considering the limited historical data on this village and the population living there, my research methodology was four-fold. First, I conducted a household survey to capture basic demographic information as well as the mobility histories of all the individuals born in or living in Wayisso. I focused my survey on three *gandas*, or family clusters, originally settled by three patriarchs, in order to follow the mobility histories of entire family groups after the transition to settlement. Rather than randomly selecting some households within somewhat arbitrary government-set boundaries, I surveyed all households within these three family clusters of Wayisso, totaling seventy-three households and 657 individuals. Second, I held fifty-four in-depth interviews with individuals born in Wayisso village (including those who have left), as well as those who moved into the village, and thirty interviews with other individuals of interest (for more details on the household survey and interview approach, see Appendix I). Third, I employed ethnographic approaches, “hanging out” with families in the village, workers in the field, young people at school, and women in the market. For most of my fieldwork, I lived in a home with four other young women who had moved to Ziway from Wayisso and another village, Macafara. Finally, I interviewed and collected data from various government agencies, development workers, and academics to gather as much data and historical context as possible about the region.

4 How Mobility Patterns Changed Over Time

Five generations ago, in the first half of the twentieth century, three pastoral families began to settle in three different areas of Wayisso. At that time, the lowlands were forested with acacia trees and were primarily the domain of the Habernoosa *gosi* (roughly “tribe”) of the Arsi Oromo ethnic group. The Habernoosa people of this region were highly mobile. Their seminomadic pastoral movements changed with the seasons, but they revisited common grazing places — towards the lakes in the dry season and away from them in the wet. Depending upon the rain, they might travel longer distances. They traded butter and meat for

⁵ The only individual to have left Wayisso for Europe was a woman who now works in London. We met in London in October 2016, November 2018, and April 2019.

grains with the Silt'ee to the West to supplement their cattle-based nutrition: meat, milk, and blood. When they moved, their shelters were abandoned, taken up by others, or left to fall back into the earth.

Towards the 1940s, these temporary homes became more permanent. One man, Bedane Tufa, constructed a simple home in what was then known as “Wayisso Macho”, named for a small mountain. When he would leave with the cattle to graze for weeks or months at a time, others began to stay behind in what came to be known as *ganda Bedane*. A kilometer or so south, another man, Dakabo Uso, built a home bordering the Macho Mountain. One of Dakabo Uso’s wives lived there, while his other two wives stayed in Jela, further away across the Awash river. In Wayisso, this one home for one wife would eventually become many homes; *ganda Dakabo Uso* was created. A third *ganda* emerged when Dakabo Bulu, a wealthy man from the Abayii *gosi*, built a third home in the area. These three *gandas* represent the first settlement of Wayisso; they served as a home base around which seasonal movements continued. The *gandas* became increasingly rooted over time, yet the ways in which subsequent generations lived, moved, and settled changed from generation to generation. Bedane Tufa, Dakabo Bulu, and Dakabo Uso were the last true seminomadic pastoralists. Thereafter, there were two fundamental mobility transitions: from seminomadism to settlement, and from settlement to “migration”.

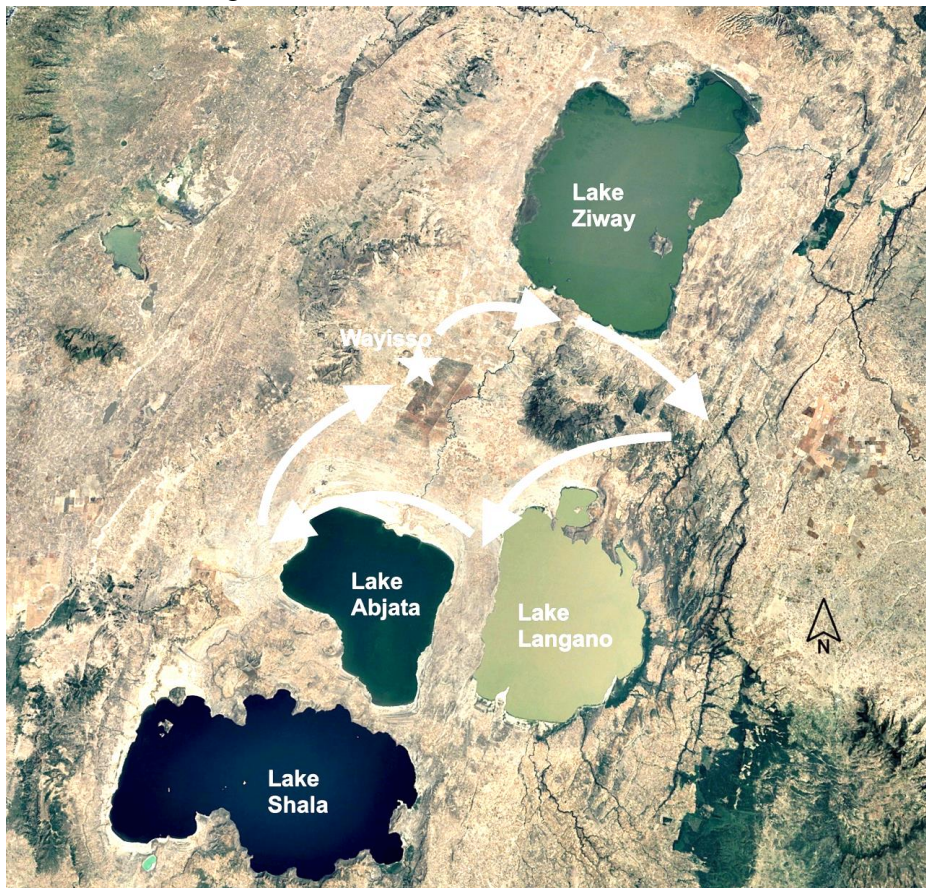


Figure 4. Example of Seminomadic Pastoral Trajectories in Wayisso, Mid-Twentieth Century

Source: Satellite image from 1984, Google, Digital Globe.

Section 5 describes in more detail the conditions that led a pastoral people to embrace settled agriculture. The remainder of this section explores who, when, and how people began leaving Wayisso after settlement, drawing primarily upon household survey data of these three family groups. Figure 5 presents their mobility histories. The figure can be read from top to bottom, with cells at the top representing the oldest individuals and younger people towards the bottom. The three separate green lines at the top show the three “founding fathers” of the first generation: Bedane Tufa (Lineage 1), Dakabo Bulo (Lineage 2), and Dakabo Uso (Lineage 3). Beneath each, working downwards, are the sons of these patriarchs, marked with “M” for male. Each cell is placed vertically according to their age (left-most column)/date of birth (right-most column), and horizontally according to birth order. Beneath each cell, the vertical black line often connects to a pink cell, marked with “F” for female, and each vertical line represents a marriage. Many families are polygamous (though this trend is declining), with one man having several wives. Beneath each wife are her children. All children remain in one column, according to order of birth, unless they marry and start their own family in Wayisso, in which case they receive a new column. However, if an individual left and started a family elsewhere, their wives and children were not surveyed. This chart thus represents a snapshot of the current residences of individuals who were born in or moved to Wayisso village.⁶

Legend: Migration Status (Model 1)	
Lives in the Wayisso	
Rural-rural marriage migration	
Lives in nearby urban area	
Lives in distant urban area	
Lives abroad	

⁶ In Figure 5, the color coding corresponds to each individual’s migration status at the time of the survey in 2016 (or the time of their death). Yellow represents those who live in Wayisso (nonmigrants). Pink represents rural-rural movement; all those who moved into Wayisso from another rural *kebele* or left Wayisso for another rural *kebele*. The blue cells refer to rural-urban migration. The lightest blue refers to those who are living in nearby urban areas, such as Adami Tulu or Ziway. The darker shade of blue represents those who are living in more distant urban areas outside of the ATJK district. The darkest blue color represents those who were living abroad (arguably also a rural-urban movement across national boundaries). At the time of the survey, there was one individual from Lineage 1 living in London and seven individuals from Lineage 2 living in the Middle East. Only five are shown in Model 1, because two migrants came from households that were related to, but not directly descended from, Dakabo Bulo. These households moved into Wayisso at a later date. Because they were considered part of the same family group, they were included in the survey, but they are not depicted in the family trees.

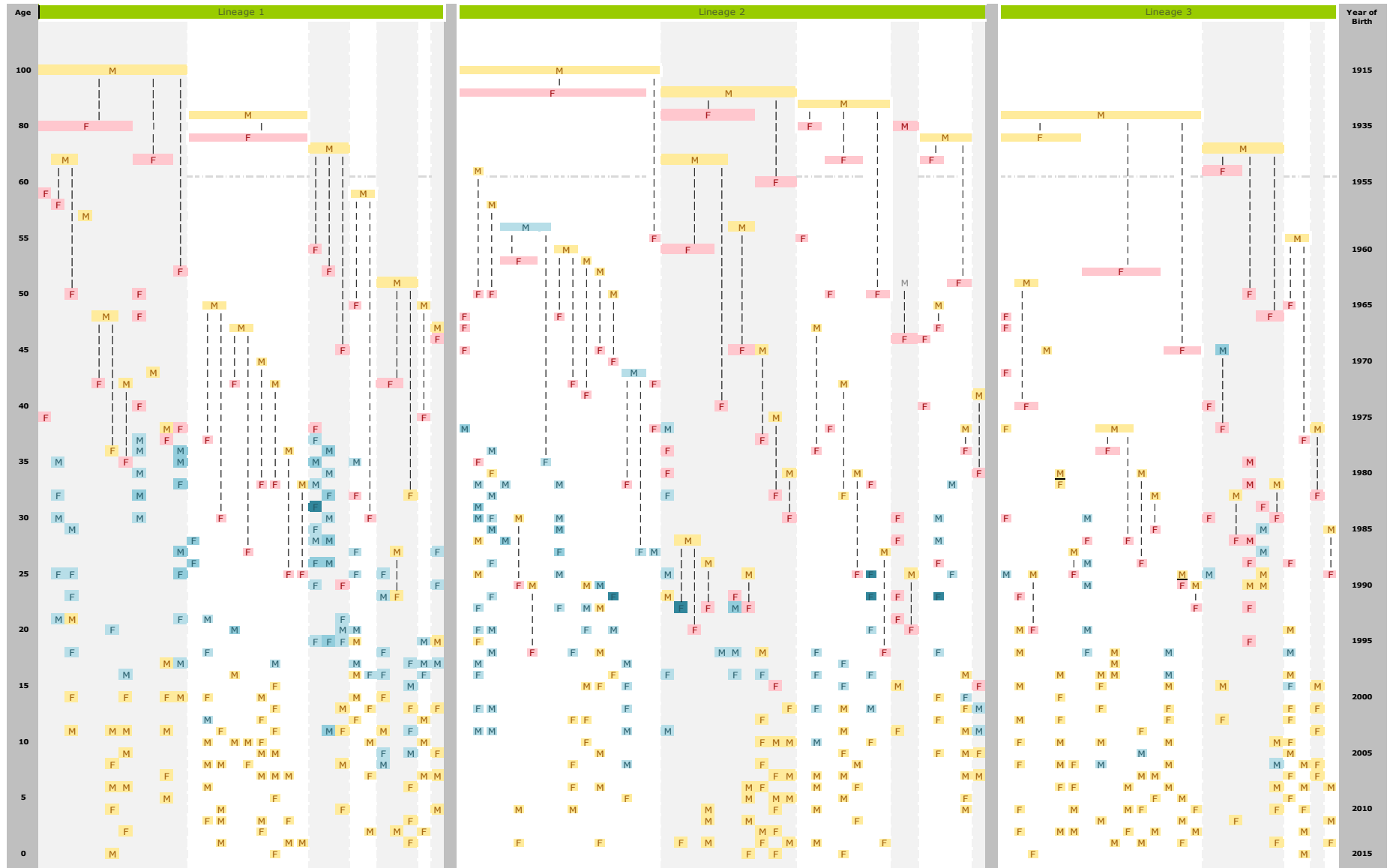


Figure 5. Migration Status by Family Tree | Model 1

A few clear trends stand out from Figure 5. The second generation (after the “founding fathers”), and their first children (the third generation), largely settled and stayed in Wayisso (the yellow and pink cells). However, a movement to urban areas (the blue cells) clearly began with the fourth generation, those who were generally born between 1975 and 1995, or between the ages of twenty and forty at the time of research, confirming qualitative assessments about who and when people first began leaving Wayisso for urban areas. A number of women, particularly within Lineage 1, have also moved to urban areas; however, many women continue to move to rural areas for marriage (the pink cells). It is worth noting that women have always been mobile. Almost all rural-rural migration across generations has been female, as women left their families to join their husband’s upon marriage. The large number of individuals in yellow at the bottom represents a new generation of children growing up in Wayisso, a few of whom, as early as age seven or eight, begin to leave to pursue schooling or live with relatives elsewhere.

By far, most people move close to home: Ziway or, to a lesser extent, Adami Tulu (see Table 1, Figure 6). International migration remains relatively rare, as does migration to cities farther away. Only three people, for example, are in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Seven percent live in other urban areas outside the district.

Table 1. Where Do People Go? (Percent)

Place of Residence	Women (born in Wayisso)	Women (total)	Men	Total
Wayisso	16.4	47.2	57.4	51.9
Adami Tulu	7.8	4.7	7.1	5.8
Ziway	28.9	18.4	25.1	21.5
Adama	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.0
Addis Ababa	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.8
Middle East	3.9	3.3	0.0	1.8
Europe	0.8	0.5	0.0	0.3
Other: urban area (Ethiopia)	9.4	5.7	5.5	5.6
Other: rural area (Ethiopia)	32.8	20.3	1.1	11.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	128	212	183	395

Source: Household survey 2016.

Notes: Current residences of those surveyed age fifteen or older. Women (total) includes those born in Wayisso as well as women who moved into Wayisso, most often for marriage. “Other urban area” refers to towns or cities with three or fewer people from Wayisso residing there (Bulbulla, Shashemene, Hawassa, Borana).

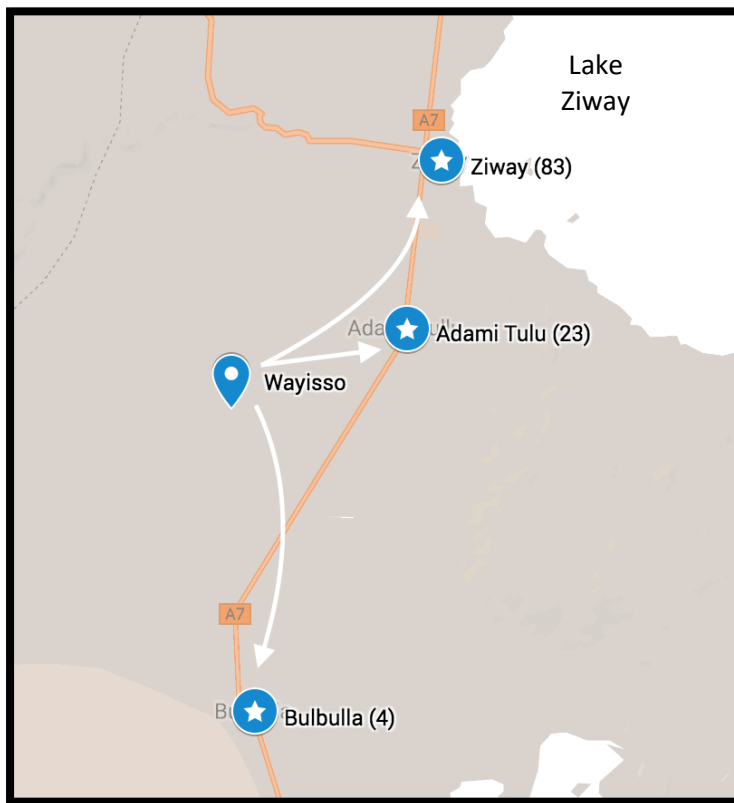


Figure 6. Main Destinations from Wayisso within the District

Source: Adapted from Google, DigitalGlobe (2019).

The family trees also reveal that the volumes and trajectories of out-migration vary by family lineage (Figure 5). Lineage 1 shows the greatest out-migration to other urban areas (the clusters of blue), among both women and men, with one woman abroad in Europe. International migration is concentrated among women in Lineage 2 (the darkest blue cells), all of whom were in the Middle East. Lineage 3 sees most of its male descendants remaining in Wayisso and beginning their families there, even among the fourth generation when men from the other family groups left in larger numbers. Most women in Lineage 3 continue to move between rural areas, and no women are abroad. A second model is included in the Appendix II, confirming these same trends but showing more detail. For example, Lineage 1 has more men who left Wayisso at some point in their lives and returned to settle in the village; they experienced higher rates of mobility across the life course, even if they eventually settled in Wayisso. As Table 2 illustrates, these family differences are further magnified when focusing on the generation in their twenties and thirties, the first generation that began to leave Wayisso on a larger scale.

Table 2. Current Residence by Family Group in the Fourth Generation (Ages Twenty to Thirty-Nine)

Place of Residence	Lineage 1		Lineage 2		Lineage 3	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Wayisso	19.4	34.1	44.4	35.7	75.0	71.4
Adami Tulu	12.9	0.0	2.2	2.4	10.7	3.6
Ziway	32.3	39.0	40.0	21.4	14.3	0.0
Adama	12.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Addis Ababa	0.0	0.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Middle East	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.9	0.0	0.0
Europe	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other: urban area (Ethiopia)	19.4	14.6	6.7	4.8	0.0	3.6
Other: rural area (Ethiopia)	3.2	9.8	0.0	23.8	0.0	21.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	31	41	45	42	28	28

Source: Household survey 2016.

Notes: Current residences of those surveyed between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine. “Other urban area” refers to towns or cities with three or fewer people from Wayisso residing there (Bulbulla, Shashemene, Hawassa, Borana).

5 The Development Drivers of Mobility Transitions

The mobility transitions described in Part I coincided with a relatively rapid period of social transformation in Ethiopia. Over the last century, the integration of this once peripheral region of the empire into the modern Ethiopian state meant that the mobility and immobility strategies of Wayisso households became increasingly tied to the development strategies of the ruling government. The Ethiopian “state” took different forms over the last century: an imperial regime led by Haile Selassie until 1974, the communist Derg regime (1974-1991), and a developmental state (1994-present), led by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Although animated by different ideologies, each regime shared an ambitious pursuit of “modernisation” that deeply affected the movement and settlement of people in Wayisso. This section applies a social transformation perspective to explore how different dimensions of Ethiopia’s modernisation shaped mobility trends over this period.

5.1 The Rise of the Modern Nation-State

Traditionally, the Arsi Oromo peoples who lived in this region were organised through a republican model of self-governance referred to as the gada system (*sirna gada*). The gada system functioned by grouping the male members of society into a series of *luba*, or generation classes, that succeed each other every eight years, culminating in the gada stage in which an

elected *Abba Gada*, or Gada Father, served as the central authority and political head for the entire society.⁷ The gada system has many unique and intriguing characteristics, but in the context of this study, perhaps the most relevant is that this system of governance was compatible with seminomadic pastoral lifestyles. In the late-nineteenth century, the notion of private property or the idea of a centralised and hierarchical “state” separate from the community was foreign to the Arsi Oromo (Abdiyo 1999). In this region, the gada fathers oversaw social life, managed resources, and mediated conflicts within a system of communal land tenure.

When Menelik II conquered this region in his campaign of 1882-1886, Lake Ziway and its surrounding territory (including what would become Wayisso), formally became part of the Shewan state and eventually the Ethiopian empire. Integration into the Ethiopian empire introduced new political and economic realities to the pastoral peoples in this area, one of the most important being the new political position of the *balabat*. This position was initially conceived to facilitate a relationship between an emerging centralised state and newly conquered peoples whose languages and customs were foreign to it (Gnamo 2014). The *balabat* was often a local leader whose status was already recognised by his peoples. He was appointed by the state to collect taxes, maintain peace and order, and regulate land tenure. In this area, the *balabat* did not entirely supplant the political and social organisation provided through the gada system in the first half of the twentieth century, but rather overlaid it. Thus, the gada system continued alongside the emergence of a centralised state, but weakened as the centralised state grew stronger. This political position of the *balabat* was so effective that it continued during the Italian occupation (1936-1941), and afterwards under Emperor Haile Selassie. It was only abandoned by the Derg in the 1970s.

By the mid-twentieth century, although land remained primarily for grazing, certain families in Wayisso began to claim larger portions of it. By paying a ETB 20 tax to the *balabat*, someone could claim an entire forty hectares, also called a *gasha* in Amharic or *wanta* in Afaan Oromo. Taxes at the time were paid by selling butter at markets in Kurkura or Borema, or selling cattle in Meki or Negele. However, as many interviewees remember, not everyone knew the value of claiming land at that time. As pastoralists, grazing their cattle on what in practice remained collective lands, few thought to “claim” land. Those who did were in positions of political power: the *balabat*, local leaders beneath the *balabat*, and those with connections to them.⁸

⁷ According to Hassan (1990), the full cycle of the gada system included ten grades, spanning eighty years, after which an individual “retired” (*gadamojjii*). The first forty years, comprised of five grades, were periods of preparation and educational rites of passage that trained young men in the political, economic, military, and ritual affairs of the community. Each grade served a particular social purpose, from boys overseeing herds as shepherds in one stage to warriors proving their military prowess through *butta* (or ritual war) in another. After these five gada grades, a *luba* graduated with a *dannisa* (fatherhood) ceremony, signaling their entrance into maturity and capability to assume the leadership of the nation. In the Gada stage, the *luba* elected an *Abba Gada*, or Gada Father, who would serve as the central authority and political head for the entire society. Alongside the *Abba Gada*, there was also an *Abba Dula* (Father of War) and *Abba Sera* (Father of the Law). After their eight-year term, the reigning gada class would transfer power to the next in a ceremony known as *Jarra*, with the *Abba Gada* handing over the *bokku*, a symbol of unity and common law of the peoples to the newly elected.

⁸ Each *gosi*, or subgroup within the Arsi Oromo, had their own *balabat*: the Habernoosa around where Wayisso is today, the Abayii near the mountains to the east of the Awash river, the Oliyee around Adami Tulu, and the Wegee near Ziway. Below each *balabat* was the *cicarsum*, an elected chief for the respective *balbaala* within a *gosi*. For example, in the Habernoosa *gosi*, there are five *balbaala*, or “doors”: Hadumana, Godemena, Alekira,

A more dramatic shift in livelihoods and land tenure occurred after the communist revolution in 1974. Soon after seizing power in the distant capital city, the newly formed “Derg” regime implemented a sweeping land reform, whereby all land was nationalised and then redistributed through newly established *kebeles* or “peasant associations”. Peasant associations were designed to be units of some 300 or 400 farmers and their households, within which government directives and services (e.g. land distribution, judicial tribunals, cooperatives, schools, health services, villagisation programmes, etc.) would be established. Groups of four or more *kebeles* were then organised into an *agargelot* (meaning “service”) to organise the distribution of goods and social services for people’s basic needs. Households needed to register in a peasant association to gain access to material resources or social services, and many did so given the clear material advantages.⁹

The establishment of the *Waeso Macho kebele*, as it was called at that time, brought the state much closer to the lives of everyday people than ever before. The effect, in short, was to hasten a process of settlement. The Derg sent teachers to the peasant associations to encourage and teach pastoralists to become farmers, what the government then saw as the more “modern” and productive livelihood. Households were to keep a portion of their harvest and give a portion to the state. The Derg also introduced health services, formal education, and salaried government jobs to the area for the first time. Although some households in Wayisso had begun to experiment with small-scale supplemental farming prior to the Derg revolution, the 1970s and ‘80s saw a transition into more established residences and farming lifestyles, where households claimed, farmed, and lived from their allocated land. Through land reform and the creation of the peasant association, then, the Derg effectively, as Hoben (1976) put it, allocated land to the people and people to the land.

Concurrent to this process of settlement, the Derg also introduced new forms of long-distance, state-sponsored movements to the Wayisso population, primarily through conscription to meet military and labour shortages. Some young men in Wayisso were called to meet growing demands for low-ranking army personnel as the Derg fought with Somalia in the southeast, separatist guerrilla movements in Eritrea and Tigray, and internal opposition groups within Ethiopia. Others were sent to work on state farms to meet labour shortages. Almost all who left, however, returned and resumed agricultural livelihoods in Wayisso. The more fundamental mobility transition that occurred during the Derg, then, was the “settling down” of a seminomadic people into a single place, administratively circumscribed by the state. This settlement became the foundation upon which rural-urban and international migration emerged in the decades to come.

The Derg regime fell in 1987. After several failed attempts by its leader Mengistu Haile Mariam to reform the government and maintain control, a new coalition government, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), seized power in 1991. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, formally established in 1995, was headed by Prime

Afemena, and Mujemena, divisions with the Habernoosa *gosi* who can trace their lineage to one of the five sons of Habernoosa. The *balabat* would allocate land to the *cicarsum* of each of these *balbaala*. Not equally, however. If you had a better relationship with the *balabat*, had connections to the government, or were wealthy, you tended to get more land. In the early twentieth century, the Godemana *balbaala* held the most land; it stretched from the Macho Mountain down to Lake Langano.

⁹ While the Derg left room for different kinds of relations with nomadic peoples, like the Afar, Wayisso was formally categorised as an agrarian peasant association.

Minister Meles Zenawi, who served from 1995 to 2012. In the early years of the new regime, the government envisioned a state-led economy that put agriculture and the well-being of the peasant masses as the starting point, or cornerstone, of the nation's economic growth — an approach to the structural transformation of the economy described as “Agricultural Development-Led Industrialisation” (ADLI) (Lefort 2015). It was a unique “endogenous” development strategy — in many ways still influenced by socialist ideals — that embraced government centralisation, a strong focus on the traditional peasantry, and the marginalisation of private enterprise (Zenawi 2012; Clapham 2015, 2017).

By the early 2000s, however, many began to conclude that ADLI was not working. Agricultural productivity stagnated, and GDP growth rates were lower than at the end of the Derg. The EPRDF began to face significant disapproval both in towns and the countryside, and increasing international pressure from the International Monetary Fund to embrace deregulation and more neoliberal reforms (see Stiglitz 2002). A turning point was reached with the 2005 elections and the associated protests: the regime changed course and decided its new legitimacy would be in “the promise of massive economic growth” (Clapham 2015, 365). This led to a second stage in the regime's development strategy, one that was much more sympathetic than the first phase to the role of private actors, foreign investment, free enterprise, and market forces (Lefort 2015). Thereafter, economic growth increased at unprecedented levels, averaging (officially) double-digit GDP growth rates between 2005 and 2015. Over this same period, Ethiopians began leaving agricultural livelihoods in greater numbers to pursue new forms of work, mostly in the service sector. Employment in agriculture decreased from 85.8 percent in 2000 to 68.2 percent in 2017, while employment in the service sector rose from 10.5 to 22.4 percent over this same period (WDI 2019).

Just as the current government gave up on an “agriculture-led” development strategy, so too have Wayisso households given up on the idea that agriculture offers a promising future. While they maintain this livelihood activity — for most their farmland and cattle are all they have — they believe that any opportunity for material change requires getting a foothold in town, particularly in the service sector. As one college graduate explained, “For the future, we need to change our life to business. My family needs to sell their cattle and build a house to rent in the city”. Likewise, Hawa, a young mother with a Grade 6 education, explained that living in town meant you had an opportunity to earn an income year-round, rather than relying on the annual harvest alone. “I know we can generate an income here [in Wayisso], but in the city, you can open a small business in front of your residence”. Usha is a young man, newly married, who manages several strategies to realise a better future for his family. He farms his six plots in Wayisso, he studies for an accounting degree at Oromia Regional University in Ziway, and he recently began another business on the side: selling eggs from a hen farm he keeps in Wayisso. The initial investment for this side business came from his cousin in London, the one woman from Wayisso living in Europe.

Of the seventy-three households surveyed, seventeen (23.3 percent) had both a house in Wayisso and a house in town. Forty-three households (58.9 percent) had hired seasonal labour migrants to help at some point with their farm work after a year of drought — a sign that many able-bodied men were directing their energies elsewhere. As a result of this diversification and multiplication of labour, households increasingly straddle rural and urban livelihoods. Most maintain their farmlands as a base income, but aspire towards — and, if they

have the means, actively pursue — formal education and alternative nonagrarian incomes. Yet not all households were or are able to make this shift to town. Usually, only the wealthiest can build a house in town or support their children’s movement to urban areas for education or work. Instead, some young men turn to wage work with the foreign-owned company neighbouring Wayisso. Others, particularly women, consider labour emigration to the Middle East.

Although these political transitions were relatively rapid, the respective livelihood patterns each regime encouraged blur into each other. Pastoral tendencies persisted for a long time after the transition to farming was more or less complete; young and old still have a high regard for cattle, which remain a sign of wealth and status. Similarly, the transition out of farming and to the city does not mean people abandon agriculture entirely. Rather, many individuals and families move between rural and urban lives — seeking out new forms of income generation in town while maintaining their farmlands in the village. This is one of the key insights of New Economics Labour Migration (Stark and Bloom 1985), which explains that rural households often use migration to diversify their incomes and protect against risks. But rather than using rural-urban migration as a strategy to sustain and insure a home base in rural areas, households in Wayisso seek to shift their “center of gravity” to urban areas (see Hägerstrand 1957; Skeldon 1977). And, once there, they use their rural lands to supplement and sustain an urban life.

5.2 The Expansion of the Market Economy

The development strategies pursued by different Ethiopian regimes reconfigured the political-economic landscape within which Wayisso households pursued their livelihoods. Equally profound are corresponding transformations in how people conceive of “livelihoods” as economic systems shift. Today, a good livelihood is measured not in cattle but in income. This has fundamental implications for how people think about “work” and how they think about migration. The migration decision-making of earlier generations of seminomadic pastoralists was shaped by concerns about climate and weather, and where they could best graze their cattle or rest for a season. Today, migration decision-making is increasingly motivated by the pursuit of money — not simply for money’s sake, but because of the social, economic, and spatial mobility that money can buy in “modern” society.

Karl Polanyi (1944) once argued that the modern nation-state and the modern market economy are not discrete entities but rather a single human invention. Polanyi shows how the expansion of the market economy, over other economic forms grounded in redistribution or reciprocity, leads to fundamental shifts at the level of social institutions and the social imaginary. New economic mentalities, in particular an embrace of market “rationality” and the profit motive, are integral to the great economic transformations we associate with modernity. I use the term “market” in a broad sociological sense, to refer to the social structures through which people engage in material exchange. In this sense, “markets” have always existed in this region of Oromia. However, the nature of the markets, the role of money, the types of goods exchanged, and the inequalities that shape participation in the market have radically transformed over the last several generations. In this section, I explore how the location and

functioning of markets shifted — from rural to urban settings, from bartering to monetised exchanges — before considering the migration consequences of market expansion.

In the early-twentieth century, the main market for this region was in a rural area called Boramo, where people gathered for material and social exchange. Local peoples bartered meat, butter, grains, cloth, and other goods; gada fathers met for negotiations. Towards the mid-twentieth century — when a few government and foreign-owned companies began offering wage work in the region and as money was increasingly needed to pay government taxes — more cash markets emerged in towns along the main road: Meki to the North and Jido to the South. Not far from Boramo was Adami Tulu, a town that was initially, as one elder described, “settled by the poor”. In the 1940s and 1950s, labour migrants began to settle in Adami Tulu to work at “Gerbi”, a foreign-owned farm. As the town grew, so did its market. By the 1960s, the Boramo market had essentially moved to Adami Tulu. In fact, the oldest living generations still call Adami Tulu’s weekly market day “Boramo day”.

When the market moved from a rural to an urban area, bartering became less common. Money was a more efficient means of exchange for a growing number of goods. Because Adami Tulu was located along a main road, it facilitated the participation of other merchants and ethnic groups from farther afield. The marketplace became the heart of the town and further fueled the town’s growth.

When the Derg took power in the 1970s, the market’s growth slowed. People increasingly accessed material resources through the state, in particular the *agargelots* established to distribute basic goods (see section 5.1). Although the weekly market in Adami Tulu continued, it did not substantially grow under the communist government. However, after the fall of the Derg and the rise of a more market-oriented developmental state, growth of the town and its market accelerated once again.

Today, Adami Tulu’s market is hardly confined to a weekly event. The market is everywhere: in the proliferation of restaurants, hotels, corner shops, film houses, house rentals, and everyday material exchanges taking place across town. There remains a “market day” in Adami Tulu, which falls on Wednesday and draws buyers and sellers from longer distances. Yet that weekly market is one part of a more diffuse system of monetised exchanges that spread across Adami Tulu. The town itself has become the market. When people aspire to move to the town, to live and work in town, much of these aspirations are animated by the desire to participate in this ever-expanding market.

As the reach of the market economy expands, its implications extend far beyond the economic domain. In fact, the market’s growth depends upon the continued commodification of various dimensions of social life.¹⁰ Consider marriage, for example: this social practice has always been a moment to share and display one’s wealth with the community. In earlier times, marriage practices included a ceremony rich in symbols of wealth and prosperity. The bride would be covered in butter before being given to her husband. In fact, the wedding ceremony required so much butter that communities established a “butter bank” between families (Hailu 2007). The two families, when meeting for the wedding ceremony, would mix milk with blood from their cattle and drink it together. The man usually gave four or so cattle to the woman’s

¹⁰ I use the term “commodification” here to refer to the transformation of goods, labour, and services into objects of monetary exchange (see Appadurai 1986).

family as *gabara*, or dowry. Today, however, as one elder laments, “The times have changed completely, from blood to money”. Marriage is an affair that can cost some ETB 30,000 (~USD 1400) for the *gabara* alone. Men are also often required to gift other consumer goods to the bride’s family, such as jerrycans, blankets, bicycles, or furniture. As a result, young men are delaying marriage to first secure their livelihoods so they can pay what feels to them like ever-increasing demands for the *gabara*.

Wedding ceremonies today vary from more traditional forms, where a woman would wear traditional Oromo dress and jewelry, and perhaps put a symbolic dab of butter on her forehead, surrounded by friends and family. Now they are much more costly affairs, with a white dress and suits, multiple meals, multiple venues, transportation in cars, and sometimes even a film crew. Weddings also have become a lucrative area for business, and the divide between the rich and the poor has become more conspicuous. For earlier generations, wealth was measured in cattle and consumable “goods” were relatively limited. The monetisation of wealth, and its more conspicuous consumption today, has widened and rendered more visible material inequalities.

Under these conditions of market expansion, migration can fuel long-standing inequalities. Moving to town becomes the purview of those who have the financial means to invest in a migration project and sustain the cost of living an urban life. The remittances urban migrants send back can widen the divide between families that participate in migration and those who do not. Lineages 1 and 2, for example, show higher rates of out-migration and mobility. Many of these families initially had more land, education, or resources. Those who now live in town have greater access to new kinds of work, particularly in the formal and informal service sector, than those who remain in Wayisso. They are better able to facilitate the continued out-migration of their kin. Families in Lineage 3, on the other hand, often described the feeling of being stuck in Wayisso, with fewer networks elsewhere and limited opportunities to earn enough money to move to town.

At the same time, migration can also disrupt long-standing inequalities that were previously determined by family, ethnicity, or gender. Migration to the Middle East for domestic work, for example, is one way young, rural women attempt to reshape their futures, challenging a life-course trajectory that otherwise leads many to an early marriage and motherhood (see Schewel 2018b). In fact, in Wayisso, it is precisely because of the commodification of so many dimensions of social life — the increasing power of *money* to buy social, economic, and spatial mobility — that young women consider migrating to the Middle East. Migration is not only a strategy to accumulate financial capital, it was frequently described by young women as a way to gain “freedom”, to “do something with my life”, and to “change my life and the life of my family”. Although this migration still requires a significant upfront investment, it is only possible for rural women because of a growing “migration system” (Mabogunje 1970) between Ethiopia and Middle Eastern countries. Brokers and agencies lower the costs and constraints of migrating to meet the demands of an international labour market.

5.3 The Spread of Formal Education

Each of Ethiopia's three regimes included widening access to formal education in its development policy. Under the imperial regime, schooling was largely limited to Addis Ababa and other major towns. Under the Derg, formal schooling expanded into more rural and peripheral regions of the country, including the ATJK district. The number of young people in primary school rose from less than half a million in 1968-1969 to 2.8 million in the later years of the communist state. Secondary education also increased, but at lower levels, over this period (see Ruffino 2005; Schewel and Legass 2019). From the 1990s onwards, under the current government, access to schooling increased exponentially. The government focused on the rapid expansion of its education sector at the primary and tertiary levels, achieving significant results. Net enrollment rates in primary levels increased from 21 to 93 percent between 1996 and 2014 (UN 2014).

Widening access to formal education significantly impacts the aspirations, expectations, and livelihood choices of young people. From one perspective, the introduction of formal education is part and parcel of the economic transformations associated with modernity, a prerequisite for the specialisation and division of labour in industrial and postindustrial societies. From another perspective, formal education, as Hannerz argues, is a cultural process, "an organised way of giving individuals cultural shape" (1987, 553). Education entails both a formal and a "hidden curriculum", which "appears to involve, centrally, one orientation or other to metropolitan cultural influences" (Hannerz 1987, 553; Masemann 1974; Lecompte 1973). Maurus, in her ethnographic study of agropastoral societies in southern Ethiopia, confirms the weighty impact of education on the perspectives of young people. She shows how, through the influence of schooling and the access to town life it brings, "Young people's concept of time shifts from a cyclical one, concentrated on the reproduction of the social world, towards a linear one, focused on personal and national development" (Maurus 2016, abstract).

In Wayisso, there is a clear generational divide in educational attainment (see Table 3), such that the generation in their twenties and thirties is where we might expect formal education to have the greatest impact on migration outcomes. Indeed, it is precisely this generation that was the first to move out of Wayisso towards town. As other sections describe, this generational movement was shaped by other political, economic, and demographic changes as well, but formal schooling was a major, if often underappreciated, influence.

Table 3. Educational Attainment by Age and Gender in Wayisso

Education Level	Educational Attainment (%)							
	0-19*		20-39		40-59		60+	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
None	2.0	3.1	41.6	5.5	100.0	19.4	100.0	70.0
Grades 1-4	36.6	56.3	4.0	7.3	-	32.3	-	10.0
Grades 5-8	45.5	26.0	24.0	16.5	-	38.7	-	20.0
Grades 9-10	13.9	11.5	13.6	31.2	-	-	-	-
Grades 11-12	1.0	2.1	3.2	3.7	-	6.5	-	-
Diploma	1.0	1.0	12.0	22.0	-	-	-	-
Degree	-	-	1.6	13.8	-	3.2	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>n</i>	101	96	125	109	47	31	7	10

Source: Household survey 2016.

* Children age ten and younger who have not yet begun schooling are not included.

Table 4. Average Number of Places Lived by Educational Attainment and Gender

Educational Attainment	Women	<i>n</i>	Men	<i>n</i>
None	1.94	107	1.3	20
Grades 1-4	1.50	8	1.17	29
Grades 5-8	2.44	50	1.51	49
Grades 9-10	2.61	31	2.58	45
Grades 11-12	3.20	5	3.50	8
Diploma	3.56	16	3.84	25
Degree	5.50	2	4.19	16
Total	2.31	219	2.29	192

Source: Household Survey 2016.

Notes: Includes women and men born or living in Wayisso, age fifteen and older. Degree refers to tertiary education; diploma is often a vocational or other certificate, most often sought after failing the national exams at grade ten.

The relationship between education and mobility (captured here in the number of places of residence) is strong, particularly for men ($r = .74$, $p < .01$, $N=274$). For women, the relationship is more modest ($r = 0.48$, $p < .01$, $N=280$), because women already move once for marriage and most do not attend school. If we exclude married women, the correlation is stronger ($r = .70$, $p < .01$, $N=114$). For both sexes, the completion of primary school (grade eight), appears to be a turning point: those with secondary and higher levels of education live in urban areas, and those with little or no education live in rural areas. This distinction is particularly striking for men but also holds for women (see Figures A3 and A4 in Appendix III).

For many, this mobility occurs across short distances: from Wayisso to Adami Tulu and then to Ziway, for example. But the rising numbers of people living in four or more places suggests this mobility is now extending beyond the ATJK district. For the cohort in their

twenties and thirties, 23.8 percent of men and 21.7 percent of women had lived in four or more places — leaving initially for schooling and then often for work. Beyond generation, varying levels of educational attainment are also due to some household heads having embraced and encouraged formal education earlier on, most notably elders from Lineage 1; other families did not immediately see the value, particularly elders in Lineage 3. Table 5 shows that average years of education are higher for men and women in Lineage 1, followed by Lineage 2, then Lineage 3. Rates of mobility follow suit.

Table 5. Education and Mobility by Family Lineage for Ages Twenty to Thirty-Nine

	Lineage 1			Lineage 2			Lineage 3		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Years Education (mean)	6.9	11.2	8.6	4.9	9.7	7.4	3.8	8.6	6.2
Number of Places Lived (mean)	2.9	3.8	3.2	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.0	2.0	2.0
<i>n</i>	44	32	76	43	45	88	28	28	56

Source: Household Survey 2016.

The strong links between formal education and spatial mobility are primarily due to three factors: the location of schools, the nature of the educational curricula, and the experience of living in town among those who make it to secondary or higher levels of education. Regarding location, as Figure 7 illustrates, primary schools are located in almost every *kebele* of the district. Secondary, preparatory, and vocational schools, however, only exist in urban areas. Thus, rural students who live beyond walking distance usually need to move to urban areas, or afford a daily commute, to attend. Even if tuition at government schools is free, the cost of access to Adami Tulu or Ziway (whether in a rented room, meals, or transportation) can be insurmountable for poorer families. Secondary schooling becomes accessible only to those who can afford a rural-urban migration project.

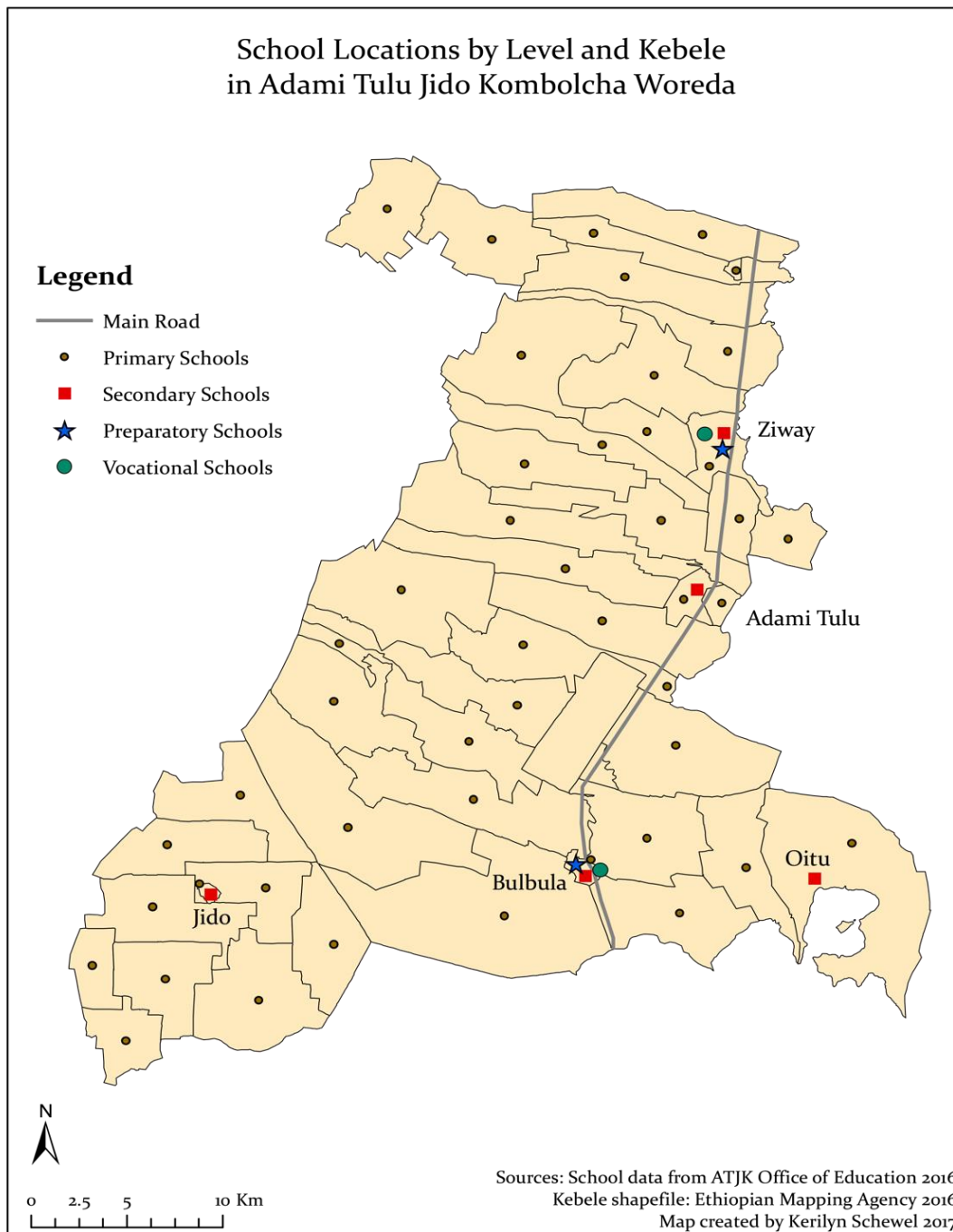


Figure 7. Locations of Schools in the Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha Woreda

Another important dimension is the promise and *experience* of formal education on young people’s aspirations and expectations for their lives. In a study of migration aspirations among young Ethiopians, Schewel and Fransen (2018) found that even just completing primary levels of education significantly increased the aspiration to live elsewhere. One reason is because education employs both a formal and a “hidden curriculum”: schools transmit cognitive skills like reading, writing, and mathematics together with “norms, values, and behavior patterns deemed important for socialisation” (Lecompte 1973, 22). While other social institutions, such as family or religion, also exert an influence on young people’s knowledge,

attitudes, and aspirations, the school offers a particular kind of education. It is a “formal” education, what Durkheim (1956) describes as the space in which children are trained for citizenship in a larger society. In many rural places around the world, formal schooling, as it is currently practiced, “teaches young people not to want to be farmers” (White 2012, 12, citing Biriwasha 2012). In Wayisso, agricultural knowledge is transmitted through nonformal channels, most often the family, while “formal education” is exclusively a pathway *out* of agriculture into something else.

The urban bias implicit within the formal and hidden curriculum tends to deepen discontent with rural lives and foster hopes of urban futures. To give one example, in a grade seven social studies text book, I came across the following exercise (see Figure 8). It presents two pictures to the student: “my village home”, a decrepit mud and stick hut (hardly representative of the well-kept homes in Wayisso); and “my town home”, a two-story, white house with a balcony and palm trees. The book asks the students to look at pictures A and B and describe each picture to their partner. On the following page, it asks students to say which home they prefer and why. Hardly hidden, this example shows how formal education can shape young people’s perceptions of “village” and “town” life.

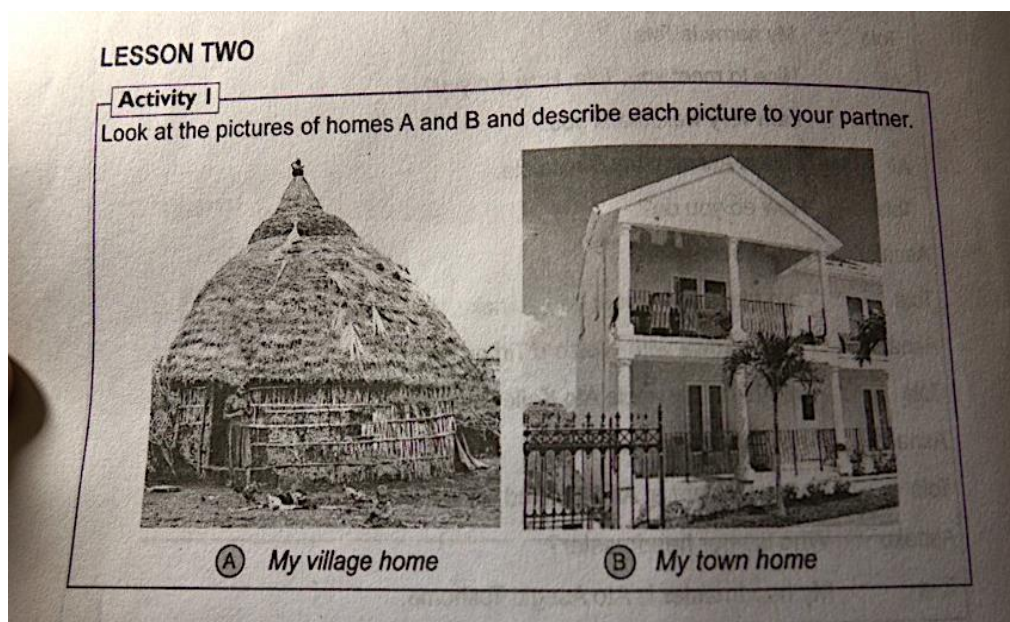


Figure 8. Author's Photograph of a Social Science Textbook for Seventh Graders

Perhaps more influential than the promise of an urban future that education implicitly or explicitly holds is the actual experience of living in town while studying. “It completely changes young people”, one father in Wayisso expressed. One mother explained her understanding of this process:

After they taste the life of the urban area — they get pure water in front of their house, they have light, they access as many facilities as they like — they come back to their birthplace. They see how we are spending our lives with the soil. [...] There in the city,

they use a *bajaj*¹¹ for transportation. Here, they are going to use a cart to go and fetch water from far away. They hate it.

When young adults from Wayisso shared their life histories, education was often the first reason they left the village, and the experience of moving to town was one of the most formative of their life. What people said about their first experience of living in town was remarkably common: the difficulty of living away from family, learning to prepare food for themselves, having to pay for *everything*, accessing clean water and electricity, and being able to study after school rather than shepherd the cattle or help with household chores. Through these experiences, young people learned “to be an urban person”, as one young man put it. They “adapted” to urban life.

Access to basic facilities is an important difference between rural and urban life. Beyond running water and electricity, basic infrastructure “needs” for today’s youth include communications technologies. Video houses showing movies or football matches are popular places. More and more urban youth have a smart phone and a Facebook profile. Then, once in towns and cities, young people became even more connected to opportunities and lifestyles elsewhere. From the perspective of Wayisso, Ziway is like the “capital city”, as one man in Wayisso described it; once in Ziway, other urban centers farther afield enter into people’s aspirational horizons.

The provision of secondary or higher levels of education to rural areas like Wayisso may alleviate the initial need to move to town, but it is more likely to delay rather than reverse this general urbanward shift in migration aspirations and behavior (see Massey et al. 2010). It is not just the geographical location of schooling that shapes migration trajectories, it is also the content of formal schooling — its formal and “hidden curriculum” — that orients young people’s aspirations towards professional work and urban lifestyles. Many young people will not achieve the educational levels they wish nor the alternative forms of work they desire, and agriculture will remain an important part of their lives. Yet the social devaluation of agricultural work means young people are increasingly unsatisfied with rural futures. Formal schooling is thus another important though often overlooked factor shaping migration aspirations and behavior within the “modern transformation”.

5.4 Population Growth and Land Constraints

When asked why people are leaving rural areas in Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha district, development workers, government officials, students, and farmers in the area often responded in the same way: climate change, land scarcity, and population pressure. These three interrelated, bread-and-butter explanations make the very question of why people move appear obvious. Because I arrived in the midst of one of the worst droughts in recent memory, climate change was understandably at the forefront of many people’s minds. Indeed, in Ethiopia, as well as Africa more broadly, environmental change and drought, a demographic “youth bulge”, and diminished access to farming land are common explanations for why young people are

¹¹ A three-wheeled taxi common in towns across Ethiopia.

leaving rural places (see, for example, Bezu and Holden 2014; Kosec et al. 2017; Barrios et al. 2006; Henderson et al. 2014).

These explanations for rural-urban or international migration share one important commonality: they frame migration as a “flight” driven primarily by “push factors”. This framing, however, can neglect other important dynamics at play in Wayisso. First, in the short-term, periods of drought or diminished landholding more often *constrain* migration, because they deprive households of the income needed to pay for a rural-urban migration project. Second, the impact of drought or diminished landholding on migration was often more indirect than direct. Younger generations that may have less access to land, for example, are also going to school and increasingly aspire to nonfarm work for many other reasons. Nevertheless, these constraints on rural livelihoods reinforce shifting perceptions that a better life is now “elsewhere”. Young generations who can leave, do; many others are increasingly subject to feelings of “involuntary immobility” in Wayisso (see Carling 2002).

In the narratives people told, the weather began to change in the last few years. The 2015-2016 drought was the worst they could remember. As one middle-aged farmer expressed, “It’s the first time I’ve seen such kinds of changes like the ones in the past two years. In the past, there was some change in the weather, but we could still harvest our crops. But now, it is very difficult. We can’t even plough our land”. The explanations people gave for the drought varied. Some blamed local deforestation practices. “It began from individuals cutting trees to make charcoal”, one man expressed. “When individuals cut trees to make money, then climate change comes”. Others blamed the sweeping deforestation of hundreds of acres of savanna neighbouring Wayisso, when a foreign-owned beef export company moved in. With grand ambitions to grow the company’s size and profits at exponential rates, Verde Beef cut down the trees that forested this land to farm maize to fatten their cattle. After this devastation to the landscape, a drought followed, and in many people’s minds, it was clearly due to the foreigners. As one woman expressed in a community gathering, “We are very worried. [Verde Beef] has cut down all the trees. Everyone knows. There was rain before. Then he came and this year we don’t have any rain”. At the same time, many also blamed the government’s constant push to increase productivity, which in the long-run has decreased the fertility of the soil and increased vulnerability to drought.¹²

While this study did not embark on a full evaluation of local claims of what “caused” the recent drought, the idea that drought “caused” out-migration from rural areas like Wayisso is too simple. Consider rainfall data collected from the Meteorologist Office in Addis Ababa (Figure 9). It shows that the drought of 2015 was indeed one of the worst in recent decades. Unfortunately, many years of data are missing, particularly during the 1970s; nevertheless, we know major droughts (and famine in many parts of Ethiopia) occurred in 1973-74 and 1983-

¹² In the minds of many farmers, government efforts to increase the productivity of farmers and thereby reduce vulnerability to periods of drought — through subsidized fertilizers, pesticides, and stronger seeds (irrigation is not yet practiced in Wayisso) — have only exacerbated the problem. The declining fertility of the land, they explained, compounds the problem of rain scarcity. As one village elder expressed: “The land has been plowed for many years, so it is impossible to get the same harvest we had in earlier times. The land is finishing its fertility. Maybe the government tries to tell people otherwise, to motivate people [...] but nothing changes. It is science that the land becomes less fertile when you plow yearly.”

84.¹³ Years of low rainfall appear to be a recurring phenomenon in this region, even if not everyone remembered it in the histories they told. After all, erratic rainfall is arguably one reason why seminomadic pastoral livelihoods persisted for so long. However, the rainfall data also suggests that, if anything, there may have been more rain in recent years. In fact, it was during years of higher average rainfall, in the late 2000s and early 2010s, that more people began leaving Wayisso. The comparatively lower levels of rain in the late 1980s and early 1990s did not coincide with high rural-urban migration; during these years, most families remained settled and invested in agriculture. The fact that more people were leaving Wayisso during years of on-average higher rainfall suggests a more complicated story.

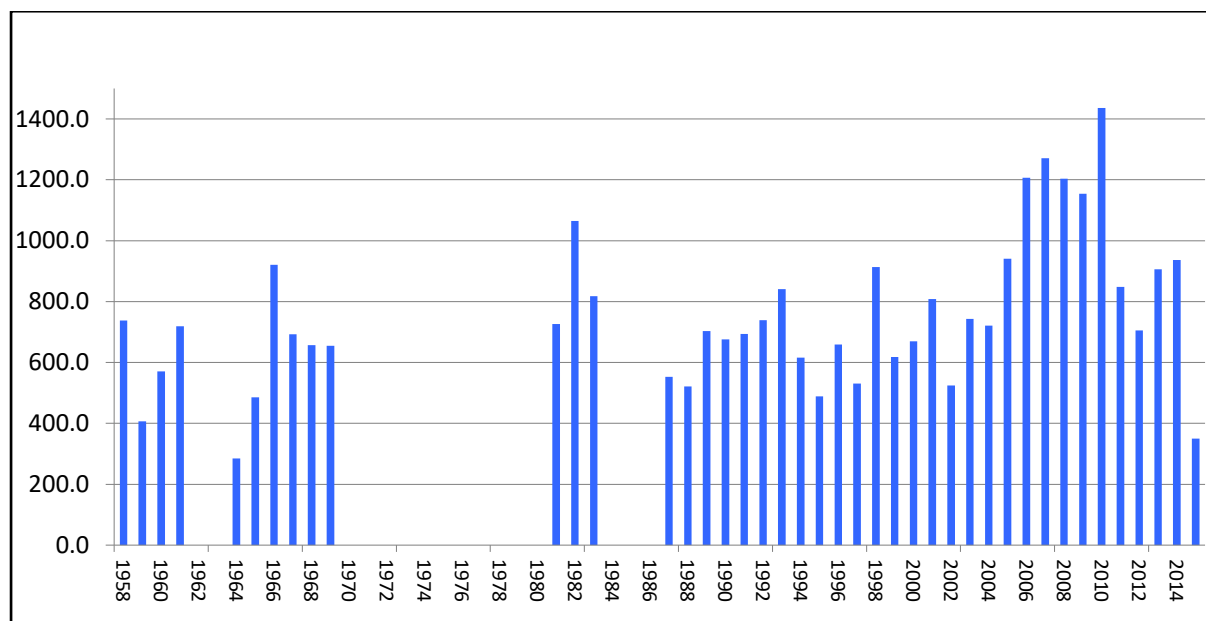


Figure 9. Total Rainfall in Millimeters per Year for Adami Tulu, 1958-2015

Source: Meteorologist Office in Adami Tulu and Meteorologist Center in Addis Ababa.

Conducting fieldwork during a period of drought revealed the degree to which droughts reduce the resources available to smallholder farmers. For families in Wayisso with limited landholding, their small harvests are mostly used to feed their families. Little is left to sell on the market and generate the income that is supposed to provide for the remainder of the year. During periods of scarcity, children may drop out of school, temporarily or sometimes permanently. Young men may postpone marriage ambitions, because they cannot afford the dowry. People may also postpone their migration plans, because they do not have the resources to migrate to town. In the short term, droughts constrain mobility.

Alongside drought and climate change, population pressure and land scarcity are two other common explanations for rural-urban migration in popular and academic discourse. I treat these together, because the main impact of population growth on migration determinants is primarily through its effects on landholding for younger generations. As one village elder

¹³ This chart shows rainfall data in mm/year for the Adami Tulu meteorologist office, the closest station to Wayisso. For some missing months, rainfall data from Ziway was substituted as a proxy for Adami Tulu. Even still, some years are missing, particularly a large gap in the 1970s when rainfall data was not collected.

bluntly put it: “Whether they are educated or uneducated, if they are in the rural area, they don’t do anything if they don’t have land. That’s why they migrate”. The ability to rear cattle or farm clearly depends on access to land. Landholding varies greatly in Wayisso, from one plot (0.25 hectares) among a few young households to twenty plots (5 hectares) among a few older families; the average is 1.5 to 2 hectares, or six or eight plots. This is relatively large compared to other areas of Ethiopia,¹⁴ but Wayisso households can only farm their land once per year, as compared to twice a year in the surrounding highlands.

In brief, this study yielded three important findings related to the relationship between landholding and migration. First, and unsurprisingly with large family sizes, the amount of land male offspring inherit becomes scarcer with each generation.¹⁵ As a result, that land is increasingly used for farming rather than pasture. As one farmer explains, when people first switched to farming, “People might farm one plot, half a plot, two plots... It was really fifteen years ago that they started to farm *all* their land. Before, they divided up the land, but they still kept some as pasture”. He then gave the example of a man who has twenty to twenty-five plots: “If he divides this among five children, the children have much less. They don’t have enough land to husband their cattle, and so they farm. But they have less, so they farm all their land”. Eventually, grazing land disappears at the same time that the amount of farming land diminishes.

Second, no clear correlation exists between household landholding and migration outcomes (see Schewel 2019a). In some cases, particularly in Lineage 3, households face significant land constraints yet show high rates of immobility. While it may be tempting to suggest that those with access to little or no land are forced to leave, this neglects the fact that some will not have enough income to make a move to the city. However, others with greater amounts of land are more able to support the lifestyle they wish, whether it be rural or urban.

Third, young farmers rarely invest in new agricultural approaches to make smallholder farming more productive or sustainable. Those who gain access to discretionary income more often invest it in education or nonagrarian income-generating opportunities as they attempt to transition out of rural lives and into urban ones. Farmers clearly question whether agricultural livelihoods are sustainable and desirable. However, instead of directly forcing people off of their land, these constraints on rural livelihoods seem to bolster an already-shifting social imaginary away from rural agriculture towards urban futures.

To summarise, although periods of low rainfall are not new to Wayisso, what is new is the primary reliance on agriculture (and a related decline in grazing lands) that makes populations more vulnerable to climatic variables. Under such circumstances, drought can be particularly consequential for the livelihoods of rural families. But rather than *driving* migration, drought more often constrains movement by depriving many households of the resources needed to support a migration project. Further, as the population grows in Wayisso, landholding decreases with each generation, meaning that livelihoods based on agriculture alone, for this generation or the next, are not sustainable in their current form. For it to become so, further agricultural innovation is needed, yet there are no signs of this occurring. Many

¹⁴ Bezu and Holden (2014), in their survey of five districts in Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, found a mean farm size of 0.86 hectares. Half of all households had only half a hectare (two plots) or less, compared to a national average of 1.22 hectares.

¹⁵ Women traditionally do not inherit land.

families choose to invest their discretionary income in other livelihood futures — through education, migration, and other business pursuits — instead of agriculture. Thus, the impact of these structural constraints on rural livelihoods needs to be analysed in relation to changing aspirations and ideas about the good life.

5.5 Changing Notions of the “Good Life”

The previous sections suggest that understanding the drivers of mobility transitions requires a two-fold analysis of social change: at the level of social structures (e.g., the state, the market, and formal education) and at the level of the social imaginary (e.g., ideas, values, attitudes, and norms). Structural drivers have been given the majority of focus in migration research, and it is often tempting to see shifts in the social imaginary as simply “following” more fundamental structural changes. But the Wayisso case study shows that changing notions of the good life also independently influence how people orient their behavior and thus further shape existing structural conditions.

In this light, urbanisation — which characterises the second mobility transition in Wayisso — is not just a demographic, economic, or political process. It entails an urbanisation of the social imaginary: the gradual displacement of values, norms, and attitudes that sustained rural ways of living with values, norms, and attitudes that support the social and economic systems of “modern”, urban-industrial society. This section explores the urbanisation of the social imaginary through shifting conceptions of the “good life”. In Wayisso, the good life used to be a rural one, measured in cattle, milk, and butter, and the towns were places for the poor. Today, the opposite is true. The village is often perceived as a place of poverty, stagnation, and struggle, while the city offers the promise of *change* in one’s material and social circumstances. Of course, there is not a single conception of the good life in this region of Ethiopia. Visions of the good life are shaped by generation, education, experience, religious beliefs, gendered norms, social hierarchies, and more personal factors. And yet a common shift is the general relocation of the good life from the rural to the urban, a shift that gives rise to widespread migration aspirations, particularly among younger generations.

For earlier generations, nearly everyone agreed, the rural life was the good life. “Earlier, our families lived a rich life — they simply drank milk and ate butter. Their way of life was good”, as one elder put it. The tropes of milk, butter, and honey are everywhere in people’s imaginations of the past. They remembered their ancestors as strong, wealthy, and happy. “During the time of my great-grandfather, our lives were based on the cattle. We lived by drinking milk, by eating butter. We slaughtered the cattle and drank their blood. When you compare these people to the people today, they were stronger, because they drank milk, ate butter, and drank blood”, one middle-aged farmer said. Some degree of romanticisation of the past is inherent in people’s telling of it. “At that time, there were no thieves. There was no killing anyone... without a reason. You loved everyone”, another elder reminisced. Whatever you needed was available; money was not an issue, he said: “We didn’t use much money. There was no place for money. At that time, one cow was one birr. One birr was so much money!”

The good life — with abundant cattle, good grazing lands, a large family, and a firm position within the established social system — could only be sustained or even envisioned in

rural areas. Even as Adami Tulu and Ziway began to grow in the mid-twentieth century, the wealthy continued to prefer the rural life. However, just as people shared a belief in the wealth and prosperity of earlier generations, they shared the opinion that “the rural life has passed”. The signs of wealth for previous generations were often used to illustrate the decline and fall of rural lifestyles. As one older man put it, “In our age, we were drinking milk. We ate butter. We ate porridge. But now we are proceeding to oil. I hate oil. I don’t want to eat it. The life of society has changed from milk to oil, from butter to oil, from porridge to oil”. Another older woman recounted, “Now butter is too expensive, but before we could get it all the time. Now, it is difficult to even eat butter, but before, we would use it for our hair!”

Regardless of any objective evaluation of whether the quality of life was truly better before than it is now, these narratives confirm that people have come to see themselves as poor in Wayisso, something they were not before. Their ancestors would certainly be “poor” according to our economic criteria of today — they would fall below the \$1.90 per day poverty line, for example — if only because they did not meaningfully participate in a monetised economy. But they also experienced higher mortality rates, particularly among children. And egalitarian as the gada system may have been, it was strongly patriarchal, leaving little room for women in the decision-making affairs of the community. Yet these negative elements were rarely mentioned in reminiscences about the past. People remember that the lands were green, and their ancestors were wealthy, dignified, strong, and happy.

Today, however, the good life is nowhere to be found in rural areas. It has migrated to the city. As so many people shared, both young and old, “It is much better to live in the city”.¹⁶ At the most fundamental level, people have changing expectations for the quality of their material life. What are now seen as basic needs — easy access to clean water, electricity, and toilets — are found in town. As one young woman put it, “What can my generation do in Wayisso? We cannot meet our basic needs there. We don’t have anything — no electricity, not enough clean water, no transport. [...] Young people who have left may go back to Wayisso for the day, but they won’t even stay one night there”. These changing expectations go beyond material needs, however. The city is also the realm of consumption and access to capital, technology, knowledge, and perhaps most importantly, the potential for *change*. Change was perceived as impossible in the village. “In Wayisso, you can work hard your whole life, but you do not see any change. The life of a farmer today, even if he works hard his whole life, will look the same in twenty years”, one young man explained. “To change my life” was the most common reason people gave for wanting to leave.

Change manifests itself in many ways: in access to education and for the lucky few who make it to upper levels, the professional jobs to which it opens doors; in access to business opportunities such as opening a shop, driving a taxi, or renting out rooms; and in new kinds of clothes, mobile phones, foods, television, and films that become outer signs of an inner transition to a modern lifestyle. Old signs of social status remain, like being elected as a gada father or the number of cattle one owns, yet new forms of urban-based status symbols are proliferating.

¹⁶ Although technically Adami Tulu and Ziway are more likely to be categorized as “towns”, rather than cities (their populations are below 100,000 people), they are “cities” in the imaginations of those who live in the rural areas surrounding them — particularly Ziway.

Because the city is perceived as a place with greater possibilities for change, it is also seen as a place with greater choice. For young women in particular, the city was described as a place of “freedom”. In the village, women make minor contributions to the livelihoods of the household — through selling goods at the market in Adami Tulu, for example. However, the city represents an opportunity to earn a steadier income, play a more active part in shaping their family’s economic future, or find income-generating work that would give them more leeway to avoid an early marriage. Thus, to reduce the allure of the city to capital and consumption alone would be too narrow; money is necessary to achieve aspired change, but the desire for change goes beyond the desire for money.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that although almost everyone felt that the good life had left Wayisso,¹⁷ not everyone planned to leave. Few elders in Wayisso had the energy or enthusiasm to “start over” somewhere else. Even among the more eager younger generations, aspirations are mediated by actual opportunities and constraints. As one young woman from Wayisso, who was selling coffee in Ziway, explained, “In Ziway, you can find work. You can find anything. You have light, water, everything is here. But you need money. If you have money and you are able to work, you can find anything in Ziway”. For those without the means to make the move, their immediate preference was to stay in the village. As one woman in Wayisso explained, “Life in the city is very good if you have something in your hand. Otherwise, we prefer the rural life. Here we find everything without money, without expense. But if you are wealthy, it is better to be in the city”. Often, when asked what young people first noticed about life in the city, they mentioned the expense. The need to pay for everything — rent, food, tea, and coffee. In the village, everything is “free”. People may all want to ideally move to the city, but as one young man explained, “People stay because they get married, or they have children, and they don’t have the money to make the move”. Many households in Wayisso did not have any immediate plans to leave, even though they recognised the good life was no longer in Wayisso.

Finally, it is worth mentioning more explicitly the role that *migration* itself contributes to a shifting social imaginary, or the values, norms, and attitudes of migrants and nonmigrants alike. Rural out-migration is not only a consequence of recent transformations in the social imaginary, it also contributes to these shifts. This is because migrants, particularly in earlier stages of a migration transition, tend to be what some have described as “exceptional people” (Goldin, Cameron, and Balarajan 2012); they model new practices that others observe and then consider imitating. When the initial migration of a few generates conspicuous positive outcomes, it can introduce new possibilities and pathways into others’ imagined futures. In Wayisso, the remittances from migrants in town or young women in the Middle East are visible to neighbours — through the construction of a new home, in paying the tuition fees for a sibling’s private education, or by moving a parent to town — fueling a sense of “relative deprivation” among households who do not have a migrant elsewhere (see Lazarsfeld 1949; Stark and Taylor 1989). Young women who aspired to go to the Middle East would often

¹⁷ There are, of course, conflicting narratives about the past and present, of rural and urban lives. Young people were more likely to see older generations as “backwards”; older generations were more likely to see urban youth as “lazy” and corrupted by town life. Women were more likely to see the past as “dark” and the future as “bright”; older men lamented the decline of their once dignified positions in the social web. For a more detailed analysis of generational and gendered divisions in perceptions of the “good life”, see Schewel 2019a.

mention someone they knew who was able to “change their life”, who inspired them to follow a similar route. The act of seeing someone leave, noting where they go and what types of change that migration brings, expands the horizons and “mental maps” (Fuller and Chapman 1974) of those considering their future options.

As migration behavior diffuses throughout a community, it becomes less of an exceptional practice and more of the norm. In some places, migration eventually becomes so commonplace that “people learn to migrate, and they learn to desire to migrate” (Ali 2007, 39) and a “culture of migration” emerges (Kandel and Massey 2002; Cohen and Jónsson 2011). In Wayisso, one could argue a culture of migration exists relative to migration to town. But international migration, particularly new forms of labour migration to the Gulf, is not yet so widespread that one would say it has become an integral part of local “culture”. After the first few women left for the Middle East in the late 1990s and early 2000s, this migration corridor became a potential pathway many young women seriously consider. If a culture of international migration were to emerge, what is occurring now in the ATJK district illustrates what changing patterns of aspirations and behavior look like before a culture of international migration takes root.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

When geographer Wilbur Zelinsky first proposed the hypothesis of the “mobility transition” in 1971, he suggested there are “definite, patterned regularities in the growth of personal mobility through space-time during recent history, and these comprise an essential component of the modernisation process” (222). His basic insight — that migration patterns transform in predictable ways as countries ‘modernise’ — has proven true in many contexts. Economic development is often associated with rising levels of rural-urban and international migration (see Massey 1988; Skeldon 1997; de Haas 2010; Clemens 2014). And yet, nearly fifty years later, the perception persists that rising levels of rural-urban and international migration from poorer places is more reflective of development “failure” than success. There is a conceptual disconnect between popular perspectives that paint migration as a flight from push factors, to be remedied through development aid, and perspectives that emphasise rising migration as an inevitable part of development processes. What does the Wayisso case study contribute to this debate, and what can it tell us about the hypothesis of “mobility transition” in relation to Ethiopia’s modernisation?

First, while Zelinsky emphasized the *growth* in personal mobility that accompanies modernisation, the Wayisso case study shows that modernisation also entails a *decline* in certain forms of mobility, notably nomadic and seminomadic ways of life. For most of humanity’s recorded history, at least since the Neolithic Revolution, nomadic ways of life were remarkably common — one of three distinct yet interlocking ways of life: the rural agricultural, the nomadic pastoral, and the urban complex (McNeill and McNeill 2003). For thousands of years, the vast majority of humanity lived outside urban settings. Only recently has humanity experienced the profound effects of urbanisation, or the gradual displacement of rural agricultural and pastoral ways of life by urban-centric social organisation. The Wayisso case study shows that in Ethiopia, the *sedentarisation* of nomadic and seminomadic groups was a

political and economic process intimately tied to the emergence of the modern Ethiopian nation-state. After all, whether socialist or capitalist, modern states are built upon a sedentary logic that assumes people are naturally “rooted” to particular places (Malkki 1991). The rooting of people to place is essential for the government to know who is where, collect taxes, impose law and order, and provide services. The policies pursued by the state both assume and enforce this sedentary logic (Bakewell 2008). Common definitions of migration — movement from one place of residence to another, across a state-designated administrative boundary — are only viable within this sedentary frame.

A second, related finding is that the growth in personal mobility that Zelinsky describes is often more possible for some populations (usually the more advantaged) than others. This is illustrated through the second mobility transition in Wayisso — the emergence of rural-urban and international migration. What is arguably distinct about this second transition is the unequal access to it. Under the Derg, “settlement” was possible for all because land was allocated to every household. No one remained “trapped” in pastoral livelihoods. In the second rural-urban migration transition, however, migration was only possible for those households with enough money to invest in a migration project, whether that be sending their children to school, leasing land, or setting up a business in town. Unequal access to the city introduces a new existential experience for many people in Wayisso, what Carling (2002) refers to as “involuntary immobility”: the feeling of being stuck where one is, unable to realise one’s aspirations to leave. To be clear, inequalities are not new to this society. What is new is the way inequalities shape how people can and cannot move. As Doreen Massey forcefully argues, “Mobility, and the control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power” in the modern world, and “differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak” (Massey 1994, 150). The most disadvantaged in Wayisso are arguably not those who leave, but those who cannot leave.

Finally, in Ethiopia, where most analyses of rural out-migration focus on the factors that “force” young people to abandon agriculture and rural lives, this case study shows why rising rural out-migration is part and parcel of “development” as it is currently practiced. Rather than *alleviating* the need to migrate, this research shows why development often *creates* the need to migrate. In Wayisso, desires for an urban future have risen faster than actual capabilities to realise them. This gap between aspirations and opportunity is a key driver of both rural out-migration and involuntary immobility, and many dimensions of “development” are responsible for it: political-economic transformations that concentrate economic and educational opportunity in urban areas; widening access to formal education, the formal and hidden curriculum of which often carries an urban bias; and growing connectivity and infrastructure development between rural and urban places, among other factors. Development in practice not only entails structural shifts in our political or economic lives. It is also a cultural process, involving the gradual displacement of values, norms, and attitudes that sustained rural ways of living with values, norms, and attitudes that support the social and economic systems of “modern”, urban-industrial society.

The profound force of changing aspirations on migration desires is not unique to Wayisso. In fact, there appear to be remarkably common shifts in the nature and direction of aspirational change, associated with “development”, occurring in rural places elsewhere. For example, across Ethiopia, researchers note a strong resistance among rural youth to “end up

like their farmer parents” (Tadele and Gella 2012, 6; see also Sumberg *et al.* 2012; Camfield 2011; Abebe 2008; Mains 2013). Similarly, in Northern Ghana, Laube (2016) shows that rural youth now believe “modern careers” are the only way to succeed in life, and thus invest their energy and incomes in education rather than agriculture. In rural India, Morrow (2013) finds the widening access to formal education generates new aspirations for professional futures among children and their families. Part of this aspirational shift is a concomitant devaluation of farming, even among those who have no other livelihood option. In Peru, Crivello (2011) shows strong desires among young people to “become somebody in life”, but rural youth believe that “becoming somebody” requires moving someplace else (Crivello 2011, 409; Crivello 2015). These aspirational shifts appear to be a core feature of the “modern transformation”, with significant migration consequences.

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Appendix I: Details of Household Survey and Interview Approach

The primary purpose of the household survey was to assess the migration histories and status of each household. I wanted to know: 1) who leaves Wayisso and where do they go? 2) who stays in Wayisso? 3) who moves into Wayisso? and 4) what demographic characteristics are associated with these various (im)mobility trajectories? Through the more qualitative and historically oriented aspects of my methodology, I triangulated these mobility histories with the broader social changes taking place over time.

The household survey was carried out with seventy-three households that lie within three family clusters within Wayisso Qancerra *kebele*, or peasant association. From the perspective of those who live in Wayisso, there are a number of family groups, or *gandas*, within this *kebele*. Although the Oromo word *ganda* was appropriated by the government to now refer to the entire *kebele* as a whole, *ganda* originally meant village and referred to smaller units within what is now the *kebele*. These *gandas* are named after their founding patriarchs. I focused my survey within three *gandas*, originally founded or settled by three patriarchs. A man named Bedane was one of the first to settle and populate the area with his wives and children. This growing cluster of family compounds was and still is referred to as *ganda Bedane*, which is part of the Hadumana subbranch of the Habernoosa *gosi* (roughly, tribe) of Arsi Oromo (see red boundary in Figure A1). Similarly, just half a kilometer away, another *ganda*, founded by a man named Dakabo Bulu, is part of the Abayii *gosi* of the Arsi Oromo (see yellow boundary). Finally, a third family cluster is part of the Alekira, another subgroup of the Habernoosa *gosi* (see white boundary). A fourth cluster of families fell within this relatively small geographic area, who together were part of the Qoma *gosi* of the Arsi Oromo. I did not include them in this survey because they arrived in Wayisso later and were settled by several different households at once. There is little intermarriage between these family clusters.

The main advantage of surveying all the households within these three *gandas* was that it let me follow the mobility histories of larger family groups after the transition to settlement. I was able to trace their family histories rather than randomly selecting some households within somewhat arbitrary government-set boundaries. In the end, I was able to survey all the households within these three family clusters of Wayisso, totaling seventy-three households and 657 individuals.

The household survey provided a snapshot of mobility trajectories to and from Wayisso village. To understand how and why (im)mobility patterns changed over time, I needed to hear the stories of people's lives: how they narrated the social transformations that shaped their region and history, how they understood the good life and how it has changed, and why they moved or stayed. My interviews were structured to capture first and foremost people's own narratives about their lives and history, before asking more specific questions about migration. I wanted to hear what social transformations were important for them and how (im)mobility directly or indirectly figured into these changes, before explicitly asking about migration. With the assistance of a local translator, I carried out eighty-four formal interviews. Fifty-four of these formal interviews were with individuals who were born in or had moved to Wayisso. In addition, I interviewed other individuals of interest: six additional return migrants from the Middle East from other areas of the *woreda* (district), three phone interviews with women currently working in the Middle East, fourteen interviews with current or previous workers at the Sher Ethiopia flower farms, and seven interviews with community leaders or government workers.



Figure A1. The Three *Gandas* That Bounded the Household Survey
Source: Satellite Image from February 2016, Google, Digital Globe.

Appendix II: Family Tree (Model 2)

Legend: Migration Status (Model 2)
Lives in Wayisso
Returned to Wayisso
Rural-rural marriage out-migration
Rural-rural marriage in-migration
Lives in nearby urban area
Lives in distant urban area
Lives abroad

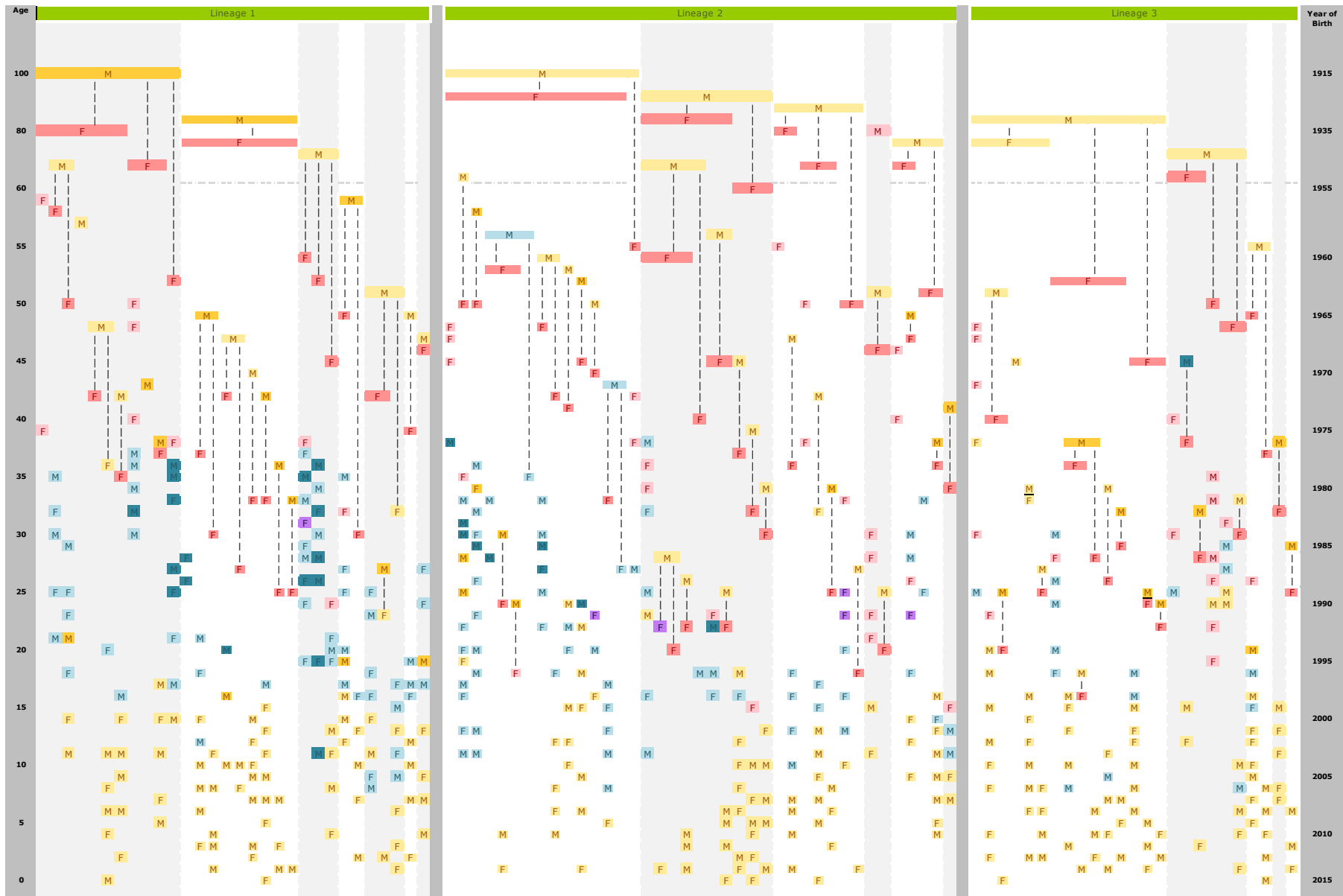


Figure A2. Migration Status by Family Tree | Model 2

Appendix III: Education and Spatial Mobility

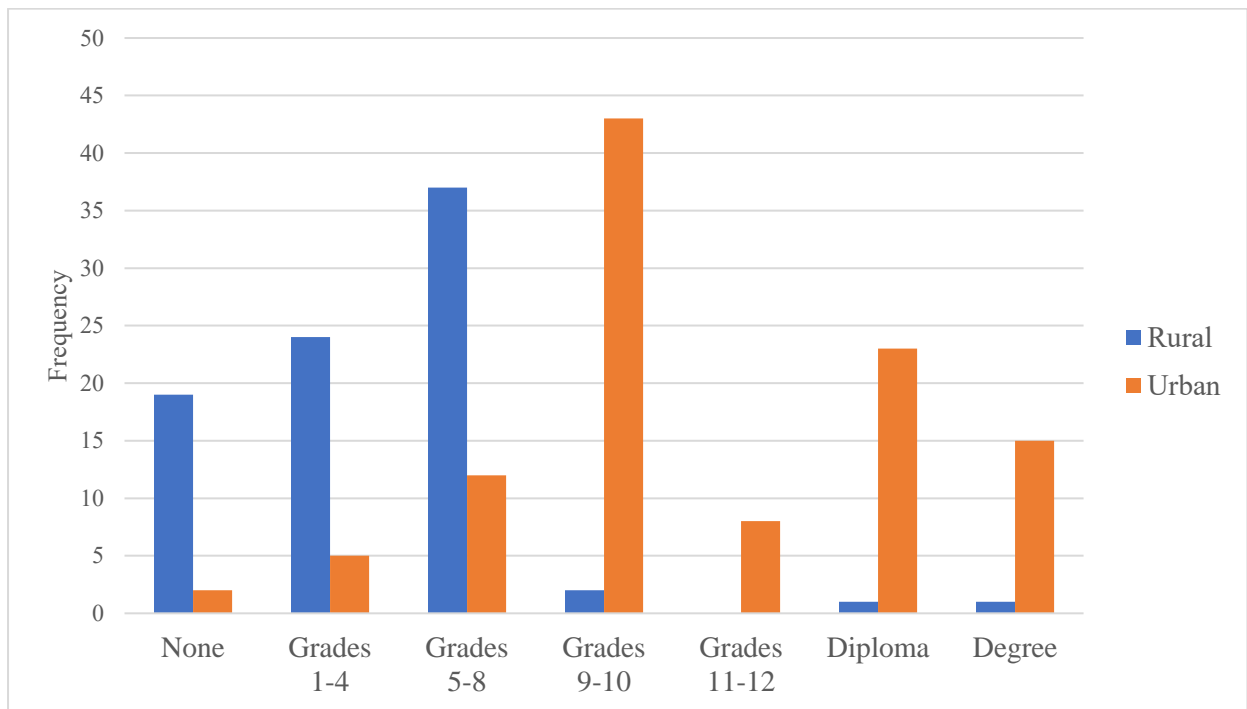


Figure A3. Place of Current Residence by Educational Attainment, Men

Source: Household Survey 2016 (for men 15 years and older).

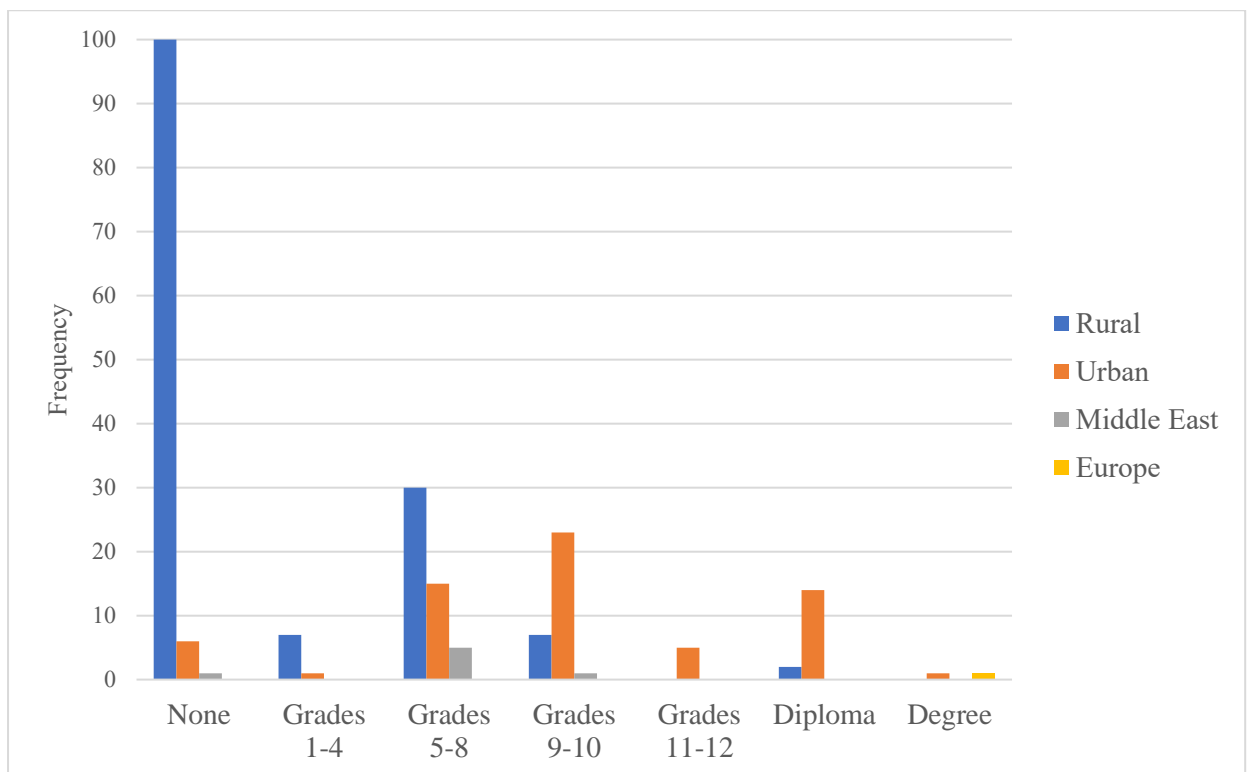


Figure A4. Place of Current Residence by Educational Attainment, Women

Source: Household Survey 2016 (for women 15 years and older).