EJED

Ethiopian Journal of Enviromental Development

Networks, Perceptions, and Migration Decisions: A Comparative Analysis of Young Migrants from the Gurage and Wolayita Areas to Addis Ababa

Wegene Mengistu Deneke[1]

[1] *Lecturer at the Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Dilla University, Ethiopia. The researcher holds MA degree in philosophy, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia (2011) and European Master in Migration and Intercultural relations, University of Oldenburg, Germany (2013).*

Abstract

In Ethiopia, rural-urban migration has been visibly dominated by the mobility of the youth. Scholarly works in the area have exhaustively identified the prominent causes as well as effects of this pattern of mobility. By going beyond the push-pull categorization, this study comparatively examines the role of social networks in the migration decision of young rural-urban migrants. Precisely, revealing the nexus between social networks, migrants' perceptions of their home, and destination, vis-à-vis migration decision has been the concern of this inquiry. The study being of a qualitative type, interview and focus group discussion were employed as the main instruments of data collection. Having adopted a purposive sampling design, participants of the study were selected by using snowball and quota sampling techniques. The research has pursued a thematic design of analysis. By and large, young migrants' perception consisted of mixed as well as erroneous characterization of their destination. Exaggeration of possibilities and reduction of impossibilities characterizes the defect in the flow of information from one end of the network to the other. As a result, the paradox between perceptions, expectations, and realities has urged migrants to rethink their choice of migration as a feasible response to their socio-economic circumstance. Social networks and migrants' perception of their destination had played unequivocal role in the migration decision of both groups of the study. Besides, social networks determined not only migratory decisions but also sponsored it and have evidently played a role in the migratory projects of migrants.

Keywords: Social networks, Perceptions, Migration decision, Migratory projects

Introduction

Human beings have always moved in search of new opportunities, or to escape poverty, conflict or environmental degradation (Castles and Miller, 2009:2). Birth and death are natural and mainly ruled by biological aspects while migration is more affected by socio-economic factors and human behavioral subjectivities (Filho *et al*, 2011). Factors motivating local as well as international migration have been both numerous and interdependent. According to Hunnes (2012), the decision of when to move and the

motivation for that movement is shaped by various factors that drive migration. Although migrant's aspiration for greater economic well-being has been considered paramount both in internal and international migration (Adepoju, 2007; Harris 1970; and Todaro, 1969), earlier theories of migration, particularly, the neo-classical theory, has failed to explain why only few people migrate to some destinations and not others (Arango, 2000:286).

Despite several political unrests, economic inequalities, and environmental degradation not many people are part of the international migration; in fact, many countries - especially like China, India, Brazil or Nigeria – have a higher rate of internal migration when compared to international migration from the same destinations (Castle and Miller, 2009). According to Adepoju (2007), regional migration involves diverse types of people, professions, classes and cultural background. The Sub-Saharan Africa – in which Ethiopia is part a - is a region characterized by a variety of migration configurations: contract workers, labor migrants, skilled professionals, refugees and displaced persons- in regular and irregular situations. Migration patterns in Ethiopia include rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural, and urban-urban movements. The rural-urban migration trend in Ethiopia has been explained by a number of so-called push and pull factors. Ezra and Kiros (2001) identified overpopulation; famine, poverty, land scarcity, governmental agricultural policies, and lack of agricultural resources as the main push factors among rural-urban migrants in Ethiopia. In addition to the above-indicated factors, a study conducted on the causes, characteristics, and outcomes of migration to Addis Ababa pinpointed that social networks were among the determinants in the migration decisions of rural-urban migrants to Addis Ababa (Moller, 2012).

With regard to this, Arango (2000) states that, while networks rank among the most important explanatory factors of migration and are not an entirely new notion, their introduction to migration studies has certainly brought an additional perspective through which issues of migration can be scrutinized (Arango, 2000; Boyd, 1989; Chen, 2009; and Fawcett, 1989). Networks shape migration outcomes, ranging from no migration, immigration, return migration or the continuation of migration flows (Boyd, 1989). That being the case, Meeteren and Pereira (2013) have critically examined the function of social networks among different group of migrants. The function of social networks, the findings of their study revealed, varied across diverse group of Brazilian migrants to Portugal and the Netherlands. Similarly, Willems (2003) has shown the difference in the type of support that social networks are capable of providing in the case of urban refugees in the context of Eastern Africa. The support given by social networks included: emotional support, material help, accommodation, and financial assistance.

What is more, the decision to migrate depends on the extent to which the migrant is connected to the communities both at home and destination. For instance, someone with 20 contacts in the destination is roughly twice more likely to migrate than someone with 10 contacts (Blumenstock and Tan, 2016: 25). As the utility of social networks varies among different individuals and group of migrants, explaining and understanding the differential role played by networks enables an accurate understanding of migration decisions and captures the intra-group and inter-group intricacies in migration decisions.

The relationship between migrants' perception of their home, destination, and migration decisions has also been central to this study. The utility of networks, as articulated throughout the literature on the issue, mostly begins with providing information based on which would-be migrants could form their own sketch of their destination. Moller (2012) states that, a considerable share of the migrants, when they arrived in Addis Ababa, had already accumulated some information regarding the general opportunities and challenges posed by the city. As stated by Dominiko (2016), young migrants from the Wolayita area formed an account of their destination based on the information they were able to acquire from their networks. Additionally, Dominiko (2016) states that, migrants' perception of their destination ("easy to make money", "easy to get job", "better quality of life") has urged them to consider leaving their hometowns and villages as a feasible alternative. Information from migrant's networks at the destination has partly formed their perception of the destination. In view of that, this study comparatively examines the nexus between migrants' perception of home, their destination, social networks, vis-à-vis the migration decision of individuals from two groups with different migration history, i.e the Gurages and the Wolayitas.

Context of the Study

The geodemographic scope of this study encompassed young rural-urban migrants from the Wolayita and Gurage areas to Addis Ababa. But still, the research did not include those migrants who moved to Addis Ababa for they are already recruited for a professional job or who have left their place of birth for educational purposes like joining higher education.

The main economic activities in the Wolayita zone include: subsistence mixed farming system where 'enset' (false banana) farming is intermingled with the production of cereals, root crops and coffee. Demographically, the high density of population in the zone has gradually made land a scarce resource. In other words, access to land has been uneven among and within households. Besides, such

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demographic pressures pose different economic, human health, and resource related problems (Dominiko, 2016).

The Wolayita zone entertains not only outmigration but also in-migration from one village/town to the other.[1] For instance, Sodo Zuria is among the weredas with a higher rate of in-migration. Of the population in this wereda, the youth between the ages of 10-29 years constitute 52.4 percent (CSA, 2010). Bombe, a locality in the Wolayita zone, has been one of the destinations chosen by young migrants. Migrants' preference of this location has been partly motivated by the availability of alternative livelihood. Young migrants were able to produce and sell charcoal to residents from the surrounding villages and towns. As charcoal production has been forbidden and declared illegal by the authorities, migration to this destination has shrunk down and triggered young migrants to search for other opportunities. As a result, since 2006/2007 young migrants from the area began to migrate to Hadaro, a place in the Hadiya zone (not far away from the birth place of most migrants). Eventually, the surplus in the market for daily laborers has caused the reduction of the daily wage from twenty-five birr (about 0.92 USD) to fifteen birr (about 0.55 USD). Consequently, young migrants have begun looking for better opportunities.

The Gurage zone is also characterized by similar economic activities. Particularly, farming, livestock rearing, and trade are among the dominant categories. Although the out-migration of the Gurages has been motivated by various factors, economic aspirations were the common motive among generations of migrants from this area (Nida, 2000). Furthermore, there is a renowned culture of migration of young people from the Gurage area to Addis Ababa since the 1950's or even before (Zewde, 2002). According to Nida (2000), the size of the Gurage population in the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, which increased from 2,000 in 1910 to 255,000 in 1984, is evidence of their large-scale migration. In the year 2017, the total population of Addis Ababa was estimated to be 6.6 million and 19 percent of this was believed to be Gurages, i.e, 1,254,000 (The World Fact-Book, 2017).

As this study has been conducted based on the accounts of young rural-urban migrants from the Gurage and Wolayita areas to Addis Ababa, it may not fully capture the perspectives of other members of the households which migrants are part of. However, as this research primarily aims to demonstrate the nexus between migrants' perception of home, destination and the role of social networks in migration decision; this limitation may not negatively reflect on the objectives as well as the findings of the study. The intricacy of the factors in migration decision allows social networks to be treated only as a sufficient

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[1] Based on the first, second, third national censuses and the unpublished documents of Municipality (2012) of the town the population size of the study area increase from time to time: in 1967 /-- 10.842, in 1975--- 19.414, in 1984--- 24.278(the First National Censuses), in 1994--- 36.287(the Second National Censuses) in 2007 ---76,050 from which 43,639 were migrants (Aydiko, 2015).

condition in explaining migration decisions. Therefore, this study falls short of determining the existence of would-be migrants who decided to stay at home whilst they have destination networks and the same level of information with those who have decided to migrate.

Materials and Methods

As this study uncovers the nexus between migrants' perception of their home, destination, and social networks vis-à-vis migration decision, qualitative research approach has been utilized. Kalof, *et al* (2008) states that, one of the objectives of qualitative research is to understand processes, experiences, and meanings people assign to things. In terms of research design, comparative and explanatory designs were pursued. Basic questions of the study were addressed based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Interview and focus group discussion were the instruments through which primary data has been collected. Relevant books, journal articles, and research works related to issues of the study were consulted as the principal sources of secondary data.

A purposive sampling design served as the procedure through which participants of the study were selected. Particularly, the sample population of the study has been selected through snow ball and quota sampling techniques, as snow-ball sampling uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate, through their social networks, other participants who meet the eligibility criteria and could potentially contribute to a specific study (Morgan, 2008: 816-817). These techniques are believed to be apt as the population under investigation is dispersed and difficult to easily detect. Yet, identifying the first participants has been guided by the general information the researcher had about the location and job sectors in which most of these migrants involve. On the next stage, the first participants of the study were used to identify additional participants, which fulfill the attributes outlined for the sample population. Quota sampling has also been used to select participants from different age groups and year of arrival at the destination. The rationale for such selection has been driven by the plausibility of reflecting diverse voices and experiences of the participants. Although finding precise figures has been difficult, in the last six years or so, young migrants from the Wolayita area have become a visible group of migrants in some of the urban places in Ethiopia. Besides, they have also involved in different job sectors which other migrants previously took part in. On the other hand, the mobility of young migrants from the Gurage area goes back to the 1950's or even before. Moreover, due to the large volume of rural-urban migration of the youth to Addis Ababa, the research focused only on those migrants who moved to Addis Ababa in the time between 2013-2016 and between the ages of 18-22.

The data collected both through interview and focus group discussion has been analyzed by using qualitative approach. The process of data analysis began with the transcription of almost all the recorded interviews, informal conversations and views from focus group discussion. Then the data has been interpreted in relation to the themes of the study. At this level, thematic analysis has been employed. Conducting thematic analysis on data requires that the text in question is organized into manageable categories and linked to concepts. Moreover, the accounts and experiences of different individuals as well as groups has been compared and contrasted.

Findings and Discussion

Migration Decisions: An Overview of Push and Pull Factors

Migration decision includes the decision to migrate, stay, as well as return. This decision of individual actors is the result of the dynamics between micro-level, meso-level, and macro-structural conditions (Haug, 2008). Thus, theories of migration should not only look at mobility but also immobility, not only to centrifugal forces but also centripetal ones (Arango, 2000: 293). As diverse as the reasons for the decision to migrate, principal factors which motivated young migrants from both of the studied groups included: lack of opportunity to work in diverse sectors or absence of alternative livelihood strategies, cheap labor at their home town, the belief that success is not a figment but a reality in Addis Ababa, better quality of life, peer pressure, migrants' notion of success, and success stories they have heard through the networks they have formed. The decision to migrate to Addis Ababa has been rarely motivated by parent's lack of commitment to their children's education and young migrants' lack of perseverance to walk in a challenging path.

Unlike young migrants from the Gurage area, those from the Wolayita zone have consistently pointed out the lack of opportunity and how cheaper their labor has been afforded in their hometown. For instance, shoe polishing, which is the job that a considerable number of these young migrants from the Wolayita area take part in, generated a lesser amount of income back home. They stated that, they charged more for the same job in Addis Ababa and people are able to afford it. Young migrants who engaged in this job claimed to have more customers and make more money in Addis Ababa. Another migrant from the Wolayita area states, "even making one hundred birr in a month was very difficult back home." That is to say, the expected wage gap between sending and hosting areas is the major pull factor, while surplus rural labor is often viewed as the major push factor (Chen, 2009:5). The above claim and

aspiration of young migrants can be associated with the neoclassical economics models where migration emerges from individuals search for more satisfactory economic conditions like higher wages or better job opportunities. Yet, as the living conditions at home and destination are different in several regards, better wages may not necessarily entail better quality of life.

However, migrants also indicated that, due to a large influx of young migrants to Addis Ababa, the wage for daily laborers has decreased in the last three years (i.e 2013 -2016). The presence of large young labor force has partly contributed to this reduction of wages. For instance, daily laborers who curve stones used to be paid 130-150 birr per day (4.81 - 5.56 USD). Nowadays, this rate has gone down to 70-90 birr per day (2.60 - 3.33 USD).

The fact that opportunities were limited in Wolayita combined with the information that there are plenty of job options in Addis Ababa have contributed to the migration decision of migrants. Not only the opportunities to work in diverse sectors not demanding special skills but also the amount of hourly and daily rate of payment for such jobs has been the other factor that young migrants claimed to be the cause for their mobility. Hence, this account of migrants can be elucidated in terms of the rational choice theory, which considers individuals as capable actors who select from sets of choices. Yet, the availability and selection of such options are hardly unconstrained.

Creating alternative livelihood for households and the role of families has been a factor, which affected the migration decision of young migrants. As a way of diversifying household livelihoods, some families have encouraged the migration of their children to Addis Ababa. A young migrant from the Gurage area said, "I came here one year ago. My parents were not against it." Another migrant from the same area stated, "our families want us to go to Addis Ababa, and work and make money." However, some family members were against young migrant's decision to move to Addis Ababa, as they wanted their children to pursue their education and follow a different path of life. Migration has been a livelihood diversifying strategy of households among individuals from both groups of the study. For instance, a migrant from

the Wolayita area said, "I occasionally send money to my parents." Families who could not afford their children's educational and living expenses has encouraged migration. The success of prior migrants has partly contributed to such stance of families. Common to individual migrants and other members of the households was the association of migration decisions and aspiration for better life. Migration has been considered as an instrument for the enhancement of the livelihood of rural households (Makonnen, 2016).

Precisely, migratory decisions and projects are not entirely regulated by the principle of maximizing individual benefits. The new migration economy theory holds that, migration decisions were made to maximize the benefits of households as well as individuals (Stark, 1991). Moreover, migrants' decision to migrate can also be associated with what is formulated as the encouraging hypothesis. According to this thesis, families may encourage members of their family to migrate for work, e.g. as a strategy to secure the household income (Hugo, 1981: 196; Stark, 1991).

Migrants' dislocation from what they considered home or family and the desperation they felt has urged them to look for alternative socio-economic setting in which they will be able to reconstitute a meaningful existence. Moreover, weak attachment with members of the family has contributed to the migration decision of young migrants. For instance, a young migrant from the Wolayita area said, "my brothers own a boutique in Areka (a locality in the Wolayita area). Yet, they did not want him to work with them to overcome his economic problems. At this juncture, the notion of conflict hypothesis can be invoked to indicate the role of unresolved disagreements among members of a family. Intra-familial conflicts within the community also cause migration (Hugo, 1981: 196). While this has not been the case among young migrants from the Gurage area, the aspiration to build a better future and overcoming their basic challenges is no doubt a factor that they share with young migrants from the Wolayita area.

Overall, economic challenges - lack of opportunity to get 'fairly paying' jobs, cheap labor, and limited job sectors due to less demand from the existing market at home-, hopelessness (the belief that success takes a long way at home), success stories, household's outlook towards migration, social networks, poor (at home) as well as better quality of life (at the destination), narrow definition of success, and the

aspiration to build a better future were the determinant factors which shaped the migration decision of migrants from both groups of the study.

Social Networks and Migrants' Perceptions of their Destination: The Nexus?

In this study, perception pertains to the pre-migration realm and refers to the visualization, imagination, idea, or portrait that migrants had about their destination. A perception signifies an opinion formed as a result of different information, misinformation, assumptions, and judgments thereafter. Filho *et al* (2011) argue that, each agent has a perception about the environment and this perception is a result of several elements present in the neighborhood of the agent. Psychologists propagating its subjective dimension have challenged the objectivity of perception. "Perception reflects the needs, expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs of the perceiver. In this light, the phrase "seeing is believing" must be modified. Clearly, we see what we believe, as well as believe what we see." (Coon and Mitterer, 2010: 176).

The key actors in the networks of both the Gurage and Wolayita youth consisted of friends, families, relatives, distant relatives, and friends of friends. Particularly, young migrants from the Gurage area mainly relied on family networks, while young migrants from the Wolayita area had such an option only to a limited extent. This was partly due to the fact that, migration of the youth from the Gurage district goes a few decades back and there is a socially and economically established Gurage community in Addis Ababa. As such influx of young people from the Wolayita area is relatively a new phenomenon, finding a socially and economically established community seemed impossible. But still, Meeteren and Pereira (2013) argue that, migration scholars need to move beyond the narrow conceptualization of social networks based on community or kin relationships, to consider multiple configurations involving different agents – both in the origin and destination countries – at different stages of the migration process.

Young migrants' perception of their destination has shown both intra-group and inter-group variations. Migrants' perception of their destination consisted both down to earth and illusory characterizations. Additionally, such deficiencies were detected among young migrants in both groups. Social networks had the role of painting the portrait of a world that was previously unknown to would-be migrants and lent the instrument through which this world could be experienced. For instance, a young migrant from Wolkite town, which is in the Gurage Zone, stated that, "when people tell you about Addis Ababa, you

will be eager to go there and change your life." Young migrants from the Wolayita area have shared this aspiration as well. The circumstances of those at the sending end (their success or failure) has been the basis based on which they have shown their world to those who aspired to be part of it. The extent to which those at the sending end of the network made the destination appealing has attracted young migrants from both groups of the study. For example, a young migrant from Areka, a locality in the Wolayita area, stated, "people from my village told me about the beauty of the city." Generally, "If you work hard, you can make a lot of money", "there are plenty of jobs that you can make enough money from", "there are enough jobs", "you can change your life", "Addis Ababa is a place where you can dress up nice, make money, and also get a nice food", "and you can rely on us (friends and relatives) until you settle and find jobs (exclusive to young migrants from the Gurage area). Since they described the general scenario at the destination, these statements, which were exchanged through the networks, shaped young migrants' perception of their destination as well as migration decision.

To an extent, the above stated information were substantiated by the success stories of migrants who went back home during different socio-religious holidays. In other words, returnees who have realized their migratory projects have served as a basis of migrants' perception of their destination. For instance, a migrant from the Gurage area revealed "my friends said, "you can work anything and change. They have told and shown me the progress they have made". Also, another migrant from the Wolayita area stated, "from what I have heard from friends, I thought of Addis Ababa as the 'America of Ethiopia`." According to the view of another migrant from the Wolayita area, Addis Ababa is a place where two of his friends were able to make the money to buy a motorbike.

Young migrants both from the Wolayita and Gurage areas have heard stories of success, better life, more opportunities, better payment, and the possibility of changing one's own and others life. As a result, migrants associated their destination with different ideas, which mirrored their perception of it. The information passed through social networks added more confidence to the migratory decisions of young migrants, while the absence of details had prompted migrants to rethink their decision to migrate. For example, the information received by some migrants in both groups stretches to include details regarding the amount of income made in different job sectors. As a result, would-be migrants were able to make a comparison between their situation and the possible gain from their decision to migrate. Thus, the decision to migrate has been guided by a cost-benefit analysis.

Networks, Perceptions, and Migration Decisions

In addition to the raw success stories communicated through social networks, some young migrants from both groups were able to form and corroborate their opinion of the destination with actual evidence. Although this corroboration has not been entirely based on the success of family members, at times, the stories were as concrete as they can be as they involved close family members. For instance, a young migrant from the Gurage area states, "I heard about Addis Ababa from my father. I have seen him change. It was not much of telling, it was more of observing his changes and deciding to follow his footsteps." Regarding young migrants from the Wolayita area, an influence from such circles occurred very rarely. Migration decisions of young migrants both from the Gurage and Wolayita areas were not merely based on the information handed down through social networks. But, they were also triggered by the repeated pressure and seduction from the sending end of the networks.

As almost all the youth from both districts are economic migrants, they largely sought information focused on economic matters. The exchange of information concerning the socio-cultural condition at the destination has been noted only rarely. This aspect, which is also a factor in migration decision, has been neglected among young migrants from the Wolayita area. For they were convinced by the idea that they would get sufficient support from their friends and relatives during their transitory stage, young migrants from the Gurage area were also negligent towards the socio-cultural condition at the destination.

Migration decisions, besides the availability of jobs and better payment, were partly influenced by other conveniences, which migrants believed could ease their transitory stage (early days at the destination). Occasionally, the networks at the destination, in addition to providing information about the destination, arranged accommodation for newly arriving migrants. Nevertheless, under circumstances where young migrants did not have such an image of their destination; where relying on others, even temporarily, is not an option; they resorted to different alternatives to realize their aspirations. For instance, young migrants from the same neighborhood moved in groups from their hometown to Addis Ababa. In some cases, as they have information about housing, the newly arrived young migrants handled this part of their passage collectively. This strategy has been mostly pursued by young migrants from the Wolayita area. With regard to this, a young migrant from the Wolayita area stated that, "I came to Addis Ababa with other five people from my village and they all had some information regarding jobs and other details important for their future. Besides, four of us have rented a room and shared the cost". Even within the same group of migrants, strategies devised to enable migration, staying, and returning; as well as achieve migratory projects were different.

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As crucial as the information communicated through the networks has been; it has occasionally been misleading. At times, as confirmed by migrants from both groups, migrants were deluded by the information passed through networks, as it did not signify the actual situation at the destination. For instance, a young migrant from the Gurage area stated, "my relatives encouraged me to come to Addis and change my life". They told me, "If you have a good habit of saving, you can change your life easily". Yet, that alone was not enough." Another migrant from the same area pointed out that, "switching between jobs has not been as easy as said." Migrants' misperception of their destination has been partly caused by such and such incomplete information from the sending end of the networks. Now and then, such misperception and misrepresentation emanated from migrants' interpretation of what they have seen and heard. That is to say, having seen and heard the success stories of their friends and relatives, young migrants formed a particular picture of their destination. A migrant from the Wolayita area indicated, "I used to think that you can just simply get money; but once I arrived in Addis, everything is different. I have observed how hard work makes money making possible". Additionally, a young migrant from the Gurage area thought of Addis Ababa as a city where only rich people lived.

Migrants' perception of their destination has gone through some changes once they have arrived at the destination and began experiencing the world that previously existed only in their imaginations. At present, young migrants' positive characterization of their destination is based on the availability of job opportunities, better income, the ease in forming social ties or absence of tribal barriers in bonding with other people, and better quality of life. For instance, a young migrant from the Wolayita area pointed out, "at the beginning I did not like Addis Ababa. That was because life was tough. Nowadays, I do not feel that way." Another migrant from the same place of origin indicated that he was uncertain about the social life and bonding at the destination. After a few months of stay at the destination, the migrant was able to observe that bonding with people is relatively easy.

Exaggeration of possibilities and reduction of impossibilities characterizes the defect in the flow of information from one end of the network to the other. Regardless of their unmeet expectations, young migrants were not equally disappointed by the situation they have come to find themselves in. Careful examination of different aspects of the reality at the destination has not been an issue of concern in migration decisions of young migrants from both areas. Both the receiving and sending ends of the network were critical about the information they send and receive only to an extent.[2]

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[2] The receiving end of the social networks refers to those who receive or seek information regarding the destination, while the sending end connotes those who are sending information to would-be migrants.

Migrants' Perception of Home and Migration Decisions

Migration decisions were influenced not only by migrants' perception of their destination but also their attachment and characterizations of what they call 'home'. Migrants' perception of their place of origin has been vastly positive. In other words, only insignificant portion of young migrants from the Gurage and Wolayita areas negatively characterized their hometowns and villages. As bitter are the experiences and memories of home of some migrants from both groups, others did not relate to their place of origin in such a way. But still, there were migrants from both sides with a plan to return back home once they have enough capital to commence the project they have planned before and after their migration to Addis Ababa. Limited number of job sectors and lack of opportunity to work in these different sectors, poor quality of life, and cheap labor or unsatisfactory payment is some of the grounds based on which they justified such an image of their home. On the contrary, migrants' positive characterization of their hometowns and villages has been founded on their attachment to their communities, the natural environment, the culture (hospitality and generosity are repeatedly mentioned), and easy access to shelter. This last feature is the result of migrants' evaluation of their current situation at the destination.

Overall, socio-economic bonds are mutable. Most young migrants from both groups of the study delineated the strong attachment they have with their families, neighbors and relatives as a bridge that links them with their home. Currently, such bond, at least temporarily, is unavailable due to migrants' physical absence from their home. However, such bond seems to be partly reproduced among Gurage migrants as there is a larger and settled Gurage community in Addis Ababa. As an indication of the complexity of the idea of home, young migrants from both groups stated that, "the social bonds at the destination may not be sufficient to feel at home." At times, natural environment, different social activities they involve in, and generally, what they termed as "memories of home" constitute young migrants account of home. Barkan *et al* (1991) describe hometown associations as "communities of memory that reaffirm people's sense of place and attachment to their hometowns or origin" (pp: 460).

Migrants' attachment with their home as well as their destination influences their decision to migrate permanently or not. With regard to this, migrants' lack of strong attachment with the destination has urged them to rule out permanent migration. For instance, rural-urban migration in china is characterized by circular migration and temporary return. According to Hare (1999), labor migrants in China tend to have little attachment to destination cities and return home frequently during a year (Hare, 1999 cited in Chen, 2009: 6).

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Despite the predominantly positive perception they have about their hometowns and villages, young migrants from both groups were hard-pressed and enticed by other factors at home and their destination. For the most part, the positive image that migrants have about their hometown did not necessarily trigger returning back to home as their first alternative. Positive perception of home has been only a sufficient condition in the decision to return back to home. Particularly, young migrants from the Gurage area mentioned the issue of returning back home only rarely.

Social Networks and Migratory Projects: Purpose and Scope

Social networks had different roles in the migration decisions and migratory projects of young migrants from both groups of the study[3]. As compared to those from the Gurage area, social networks had limited purposes among young migrants from the Wolayita area. To be precise, networks have been used to exchange information about job opportunities, housing, and very rarely, food options (both in terms of affordability and quality). Networks served wider purposes among migrants from the Gurage area. A young migrant from the Gurage area claims, "what my sister's husband told me has encouraged me to migrate to Addis Ababa. He assured me that, I can work in different job sectors and make enough money for covering my living expenses as well as start my own small business given I carefully utilize the money I make. Additionally, as he has been living here in Addis Ababa for the last five years, he has helped me to switch between jobs." Those at the sending end of the networks have also covered the costs for migrant's initial mobility from home to the destination. Young migrants from the Gurage area were the ones who benefited from such support offered by those in their networks. Furthermore, among those from the Gurage area, networks were not only channels of communication but also instruments of assistance in the realization of migratory projects.

According to some migrants from the Wolayita area, the lack of trust among them has partly affected the possibility of higher cooperation and assistance that young migrants from the Gurage area claimed to have. As stated by a migrant from the Wolayita area, "people are not willing to contribute money that may help others to start businesses and realize their ambitions. They are skeptical about their money being returned." Conversely, migrants from the Gurage area pointed out that, the cooperation among them extends up to contributing the initial capital for their friend's investment or business. In addition, as

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[3] The notion of migratory projects refers to the aims that migrants want to realize by using migration to the chosen destination as a means. This project could be maintained, expanded, and changed. Those who have decided to move for economic reasons might later on aspire to realize other projects.

opposed to the conception of migration as a project embracing both individual and communal benefits, the understanding of migration as an exclusively individual passage to success halted the extension and maximum utilization of networks in the post-migration realm.

Limitations in communal and kin based networks were among the factors that compelled young migrants from the Wolayita area to form additional networks. Those who are self-employed and working as employees in different sectors were able to form additional networks at their work places. The gap in kinship and community-based networks has been overcome by the strategy that individual migrants have devised after their arrival at the destination. Securing better paying jobs and getting financial assistance, which is necessary to start different small businesses at the destination, were the purposes that additional networks served among those from the Wolayita area. In other words, additional networks were intended to contribute to the realization of migratory projects. On the other hand, young migrants from the Gurage area engaged in forming additional networks very rarely.

Success stories were a common denominator in the migration decisions of young migrants from both groups of the study. The equation of success with financial well-being happens to be the predominant understanding among young migrants from both groups. Most young migrants from the Gurage area attributed success a multitude of features (even within the economic sphere) while most of the youth from the Wolayita area defined success in terms of limited markers. For example, a young migrant from Wolayita area mentioned that, having worked in Addis Ababa, some of his friends bought a motorcycle and provide local transportation service at home.

The threshold of migratory projects has been mostly based on the achievements of prior migrants. For instance, a young migrant from the Wolayita area said, "when our friends came home to visit their parents during holidays, they show-off the clothes they have, their money, and so on." This being one conceptualization of better quality of life, a young migrant from the same area, indicating the improvement in his life and by implication corroborating the already formed discourse of better quality of life, said, "when I first came to Addis, I did not have a shoe or even a nice trouser. But now, I am able to buy a shoe." To be precise, the migrant has set the verge of his migratory project and what a success means to him; and he aspires to follow the footsteps of those who have passed through this journey. Differences in the scope of migratory projects have been noted among different age groups. Younger migrants from both groups of the study aspired to achieve smaller aims, while older migrants targeted bigger goals. Experience in life, expectations about the destination, circle of influence, duration of stay, and maturity seem to partly explain such differences in migratory projects.

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As uncertain as it may be, unlike those from the Gurage area, most migrants from the Wolayita area have a time-bound and short-term plan of staying at the destination. Young migrants from the Wolayita area predicated the duration of their stay on finding an initial capital that would enable them to start a business at home or achieve their migratory goals. For example, they have a plan of working and saving money for buying motorbikes, an initial investment to open a retailer shop, and occasionally to buy an ox for farming. Having attained their migratory projects, most migrants from the Wolayita area have a plan of returning back home. They believed, given they are able to achieve their projects; starting a business back home would be more profitable as there are no many competitions in their hometowns and villages. In other words, they believed to have the opportunity to be among the few who can provide different services. To an extent, the realization of migratory projects combined with migrants' positive perception of home has contributed for their stance on returning back to home. In view of that, cost-benefit analysis plays a role not only in decisions to migrate but also in decisions to stay as well as return.

By and large, the transition from would-be migrants to migrants may not be fully explained only in terms of social networks. But still, social networks were of paramount importance in the migration decision of young migrants from both groups. Regardless of the unmeet expectations of some migrants from the two groups, the availability of different facilities or better quality of life (better income, water supply, electricity, food, and work environment), and aspiration to change has contributed to young migrants' decision to stay in Addis Ababa. On the other hand, some migrants seem to be trapped in various adventures of city life; such as, frequent drinking and partying, and engage in sexual promiscuity. As a result, the realization of their migratory projects seems to be jeopardized by such activities, which consumed their money and time, and hindered their industriousness. At times, initial migratory projects have been expanded to incorporate additional goals that migrants aimed to achieve simultaneously. For instance, having addressed part of their economic goals, few migrants who dropped out of elementary and secondary level of education began attending schools in non-working hours (commonly known as night or extension shift). Young migrants from the Wolayita area were the ones mostly found in this category.

The intertwined nature of social networks and the continuum within them has transformed those at the receiving end to the sending end of the network. Those who were would-be migrants and on the receiving end of the networks have now become providers of information for would-be migrants. Young migrants from both groups, whenever there is a need, informed their friends and relatives about the opportunities as well as the challenges in Addis Ababa. A young migrant from the Wolayita area states that, "a friend of mine back home asked what I do for living and I told him that I sell chewing gums, cigarettes, mobile cards, tissues (toilet papers) and condoms." Besides, "I have also told my friends

about the reduction in daily wages of laborers due to the presence of surplus labor force." Such communication takes place during holiday visits of migrants and telephone communication between migrants and their families, relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Conclusion

The decision to migrate, stay, and return has been motivated by socio-economic factors both at home and destination. Besides, factors, which transcend the traditional push-pull scheme, have also motivated migration decisions. Migration decisions were predicated on cost-benefit analysis (job opportunities, wages/income, assistance from their networks) of the circumstances both at home and the destination. Yet, migration decisions were not always driven by migrants' accurate perception of their destination. Migrants' perception of their destination consisted both down to earth and illusory characterizations. At times, migrants' decisions were founded on inaccurate depiction of their destination, a depiction, which they have built based on the information they have gathered as well as their assumptions. The disappointment, which emanated from misinformation and migrants' expectations, has initiated despair among some young migrants from both groups. As a result, they have reassessed the appropriateness of their decision to migrate to Addis Ababa and whether it is still a project worth pursuing. That is to say, combined with other push-pull factors, expectations which originated from the unrealistic characterization of the destination by those at the sending end of the network might have a sort of a boomerang effect on migration decision; particularly, on the decision to stay at the destination or not.

A comparative analysis of migrants' perception of their home and destination has revealed the complexity in how both home and destination are characterized as well as their differential role in migration decisions. While some connected their future to what they believed to be their home and considered their destination only as a transitory part to this future, others did not share such a stance for several reasons related to both home and the destination. Hence, positive perception of home has been only sufficient condition in migrants plans to return as it has occasionally failed to explain both the decision to stay at the destination and return to home. Both staying at the destination and returning back were dependent on other factors.

The utility of social networks has been partly wrought by the interests of those at the receiving end. Social networks served different purposes ranging from being a source of information to those at the receiving end of the networks up-to being a living evidence to validate the raw success stories circulated

through them. Moreover, networks have also sponsored the mobility of migrants as well as assisted their transitory phase. This has been one of the differences regarding the role of social networks among migrants from the Gurage and Wolayita areas. Social networks have partly shaped the scope of migratory projects. Yet, the decision to migrate did not always depend on the concrete support that migrants secured from those at the sending end of the network. As undeniable as the relevance of those at the sending end of the networks, their role has not been without limits. The limitations in communal and kin based networks have urged the formation of additional networks after arrival at the destination. Such efforts to fill the gaps in communal and kin based networks were not equally employed among individual migrants.

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