



**Brokers, migrants and the state:
Berri Kefach “door openers” in Ethiopian
clandestine migration to South Africa**

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Abstract

This paper examines the crucial role that migration brokers play in organizing and sustaining irregular migration from Ethiopia to South Africa. Brokers and smugglers assist migrants in circumventing layers of migration control and navigate the complex, risky mobility landscape in the context of the governments' organized campaign to stop 'illegal migration'. The existing bodies of literature pertaining to irregular migration in Ethiopia suffer from major limitations. First, they tend to reduce the complex processes of overland migratory exits from Ethiopia to narratives of human trafficking. Secondly, they are devoid of the perspectives of migrants and brokers about the role of migration intermediaries even though their roles are indispensable where official migration channels are inaccessible. Thirdly, there is also a tendency to ignore the ambiguity of the boundaries between migration facilitation and the domain of migration control. Based on our research in major migrant sending locations—Hadya in Southern Ethiopia and the transit town of Moyale on the Ethiopia-Kenya border— this paper examines the multifaceted actors, their roles and infrastructures that facilitate and condition the migration process. More specifically, we examine the interplay between the complex web of migration facilitation, migrants' agency and the control regimes to show how Ethiopian migration facilitation functions and how migrants navigate this complex landscape.

Executive Summary

This working paper discusses the key roles that brokers and smugglers play in helping Ethiopian migrants heading to South Africa in circumventing layers of migration control. They assist migrants in navigating complex, risky landscapes that have emerged in the context of the Ethiopian government's organized campaign to stop 'illegal migration'. Our data challenges the prevalent hegemonic official narratives that reduce migration facilitation to individual acts of human traffickers. Rather, it highlights multiple actors, complex processes and infrastructures of migration. Furthermore, instead of portraying migrants as silent victims of various kinds of abuse, the paper emphasizes the active participation of the migrants, their families and their communities in the migration facilitation. Specifically, the paper discusses how brokers/smugglers organize departures, transportation arrangements, money exchange and transfer services, crossing borders and setting up reliable networks and routes through transit points and up to specific destinations.

The paper departs from the dominant literature on human smuggling and trafficking by present-ing an alternative approach to understanding migration facilitation from the perspectives of mi-grants and migration facilitators at the places of origin and the first border crossing. The data was collected over three months of fieldwork conducted between March and December 2018 in Hadya and Moyale, origin and transit respectively. We interviewed and held Focus Group Dis-cussions with aspiring migrants, deportees, returnees, families of migrants, informal brokers, law enforcement officials, border guards, immigration officials, officials of international organ-izations and local NGOs.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of "assemblages" is used to analyse how various actors come together at different nodes of the journey to respond to shifting policy environments. Contrary to the statist top-down view, brokerage is socially embedded and is part of the every-day lives of the community. Kinship networks, customary elders, church leaders, ordinary peo-ple and local officials play important roles in facilitating migrants' departures from Hadya.

In the borderlands of Moyale, smugglers have successfully changed migration into a community enterprise by involving unemployed youth, under-paid civil servants, drivers, cross-border traders, workers in hotels, religious institutions, immigration officials and border guards. These are assembled due to their common interest – supporting the migrants' mobility. However, internally, their interests vary from

financial gains to loyalty based on social relations such as ethnicity, religion, language and belonging to a certain locality.

Communication technologies play key roles in holding the networks together and transferring money. Ethiopian smugglers from the border town of Moyale follow up their clients' mobility across South-eastern African countries and avail resources, when necessary, by exploiting the communication technologies and money transfer agencies. Accessibility to Kenyan mobile phones and money transfer agencies in Moyale, that operate across Southeast African countries, is crucial for the brokers and smugglers as migration facilitation requires urgent interventions in cases of potential risks en route. Thus, Ethiopians irregular migration to South Africa has been shaped by the involvement of complex social relations, access to communication technologies, money transfer services and flow of information.

Introduction

“...the broker was called Dagim... He is Hadya [ethnically] but used to live in Addis Ababa. I know his brothers and their village. I contacted him through my cousin who lives in South Africa. I gave him a call and met him in person. He has supported so many Hadya [to emigrate]. He even helped some deportees to try once or twice again without demanding additional payment from them... My elder brother negotiated the brokerage fee and paid half of it on the spot and agreed to deposit the remaining half with a shop owner who is familiar to both of them... Dagim told us to “get online” [a code phrase for taking a bus to Moyale]. We were 24 people when we arrived in Moyale where his people received us... In those days the journey was relatively smooth, and the cost was relatively small. I paid only 28,000 birr [currently equivalent to 1000 USD]... It took us only two weeks to reach Malawi. But, Malawi was a very difficult country to cross where many ‘boys’ were caught. The broker who received us in Malawi was very smart. He was a Somali, and his assistant was from Hadya... He put us in a refugee camp for over one month. We were registered in the camp... Then, one day we were called by the broker to leave the camp and he told us that everything was arranged very well for our journey to South Africa.”— Interview with Dawit, a returnee from South Africa

The above quotation is a recollection from Dawit, who was a returnee from the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and now running a cafe in Hadya. He narrated the story of his own migration trajectory, which exemplifies the organization of exits and the journey including the infrastructures of migration. In the face of precarious socioeconomic and political conditions that deprive younger people of life chances, compounded by limited opportunities for legal migration paths, a vast majority of Ethiopians— mainly low skilled young men and women— opt for overland exits. These journeys involve dangerous and long trails across deserts, difficult terrains and seas until they arrive in Europe, the Middle East, the RSA or other destinations (RMMS, 2014a; 2014b; Kubai, 2016; Ayalew, 2017b).

There are three major overland routes of irregular migration from Ethiopia: the eastern route (to the Middle East and the Gulf States through Djibouti and Somalia via Yemen), the southern route (to South Africa via Eastern and Southern African countries, which is the focus of this paper) and the north-western route (to Italy/Europe via the Sudan and Libya and to Israel via Egypt).

Migrants accomplish long overland journeys through collective, accumulated and improvised forms of knowledge and resources that are acquired, developed and shared by those in transit and their communities. In addition, research reports and anecdotal information suggest that various types of formal and informal brokers known in local parlance as *delala* (pl. *delaloch*) arrange specific transport services and other facilities of mobility to cross borders, deserts and seas (ILO, 2011; Ayalew, 2017; Fernandez, 2017). In other words, risks of migration are mediated and journeys are organized through the entanglement of

transnational social and *brokers'* networks, the use of diverse mobility routes, communication technology (e.g. mobile phones) and informal money transfer institutions.

There is a growing body of research on migration in Ethiopia. However, common shortcomings of the extant research are: (1) reducing the complex processes of migratory exits from Ethiopia to simple narratives of human trafficking (see Abebebew, 2013; Triulzi and McKenzie, 2013; Hailemichael, 2014; Habte, 2015; Shewit, 2015; Zeyneba, 2016); (2) portraying migrants as silent victims of various kinds of abuse including sexual abuse, forced labour and physical abuse by trafficking rings and smuggling operations (see also Fernandez, 2010; Guday and Kiya, 2013; Asnake and Zerihun, 2015; Grabska, 2016; Zeyneba, 2016); (3) eliding the perspectives of migration brokers/intermediaries, aspiring migrants and their household members who are key stakeholders in the migrant's mobility.

This paper aims to explore the role of migration facilitation in organizing migratory departures from Ethiopia, crossing multiple state borders, towards the RSA. With a focus on migration facilitation at places of origin and transit, we challenge the criminalizing and individualizing tendencies inherent in hegemonic official narratives that reduce migration facilitation to individual acts of human traffickers. Instead, we highlight multiple actors and examine complex collective practices of mobilization. However, it would be difficult to understand the workings of the migration facilitation without paying attention to the migration control and the humanitarian industry (cf. Xiang and Lindquist, 2014). Therefore, our intention is to examine how these 'subcategories' work together and how migrants navigate the complex and risky landscape of control, facilitation and regulatory infrastructures. Understanding this situation necessitates seeing the role of brokerage as an entry point to the wider organizational logic of migration rather than narrowing it to the relationship between brokers and migrants (Alpes, 2013). This includes understanding the *modus operandi* of brokers/smugglers interactions with the multiple actors and how they adapt to very dynamic socio-cultural, political, and economic situations. It further involves understanding of how they facilitate departures, transportation arrangements, money exchange and transfer services, crossing borders and setting up reliable networks and routes up to destinations.

Methodology

The data discussed in this paper are drawn from the ongoing research on the migration industry in Ethiopia, which is part of the UK Aid funded Migrating out of Poverty (MOOP) Research Programme Consortium. The study was conducted in three major migrant origin locations (Addis Ababa, Hadya and Wollo) and three transit towns near borders with other countries (Desheto, Metema and Moyale). The empirical data for this working paper was gathered mainly from Hadya and Moyale- as the place of origin and transit for migrants heading south towards RSA.

Perspectives from Hadya, explain the organization of migration at origin, the personal and social relationships and expectations between aspiring migrants, their families, brokers and other intermediaries. They further explain the community’s perception about the brokers and the mode of money transfers. The border town of Moyale is very crucial as it is the first transit for the migrants’ over land journey from Ethiopia to the Republic of South Africa. It is where migrants, for the first time, experience and circumvent multiple barriers including border control agencies such as border guards and immigration officials. Border transit towns are also where we see different “assemblages” of migration facilitation actors compared to the place of origin. We discuss the theoretical underpinnings of migrant assemblages in the conceptual section below.

The data was collected over three months of fieldwork conducted between March and December 2018 in Hadya and Moyale. We interviewed and held Focus Group Discussions with aspiring migrants, deportees, returnees, families of migrants, informal brokers, law enforcement officials, border guards, immigration officials, officials of international organizations and local NGOs. These include six brokers, two border guards, 16 officials/personnel working in migration related government offices and three NGOs/ international organizations engaged in migration management activities. In addition, 25 aspiring migrants including deportees, 23 families/households of migrants, 20 returnees and 3 migrants en route were interviewed.

Conceptualizing migration facilitation

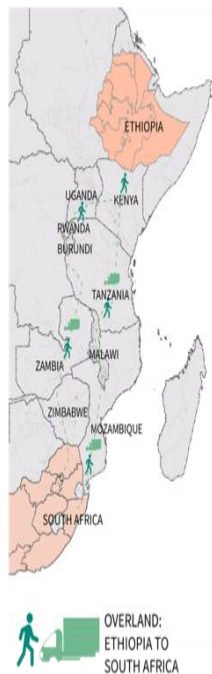


Figure 2 Map showing overland migration routes

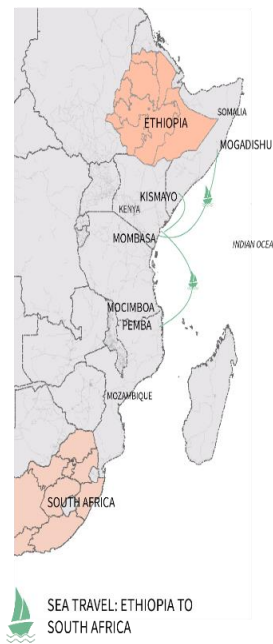


Figure 1 Sea route from the Horn of Africa to South Africa

In the 1990s, the notion of the migration industry was introduced into the field of migration studies to understand how migration flows sustained themselves despite increased state efforts to close their external borders and stem immigration flows. Following the pioneering work of Salt & Stein (1997), migration scholars have sought to explain the role of mediating actors and processes involved in border controls and those facilitating contemporary irregular labour and refugee mobility, particularly from the Global South to the Global North (Hernandez-Leon, 2008; Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2013; Andersson, 2014). Hernandez-Leon (2008) promulgates the concept of migration entrepreneurs which include service providers arranging travel, legal services, smuggling operations and documents necessary for clandestine mobility. Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sørensen broaden the discussion of the migration industry to encompass 'service providers' who facilitate migration, including human smuggling and trafficking networks, transnational criminal organizations and trafficking rings, as well as 'control providers' such as private contractors performing immigration checks, operating detention centres and/or carrying out forced returns (2013: 1-19). Their study emphasized that these various actors maximize and accumulate huge economic gains by capitalizing on migrants' desire to move and the states' increasing efforts to manage migratory mobility.

Drawing on Hernández-León's (2009) notion of the migration industry, they pointed out that the migration industry 'greases the engines of international migration' by providing and articulating the expertise and infrastructural resources needed for cross-border movements.

The strength of the migration industry metaphor in irregular migration facilitation theory is that it enhances our understanding of migration as a multi-level process involving different actors. For instance, Salt and Stein's (1997) business model interestingly demonstrates how migration facilitators such as brokers play key roles in three stages of migration: 'mobilizing' exits from homelands, facilitating transitions 'en route' and 'inserting and integrating' in the destination country. However, their approach has since been critiqued for portraying brokers mainly as profit maximising actors with little attention to the reciprocity of the arrangement as we argue below. In this paper we focus on the first two aspects of brokerage that Salt and Stein highlight: the dynamics of migrants' exits from source areas and the way in which migrants manage the first major transit in their migration trajectory.

Early research on the economics of the migration industry emphasized the entrepreneurship and business dimensions of facilitating mobility. However, it paid little attention to migrants' subjective energy and agency in mobilizing migration resources, non-profit factors such as social and family obligations that complement the organization of migratory trajectories and the dynamic relationships that emerge between migrants and brokers (Herman, 2006: 217; Sanchez, 2015). Moreover, the manner in which migrants and brokers create and use networks by capitalizing on shared nationality, ethnicity, religion and origin during organizing clandestine migratory journeys is overlooked. For instance, brokering practices in the contemporary Ethiopian migration facilitations and pathways to the RSA that we are discussing here are embedded in and complemented by the entanglement of local socio-cultural norms and cross-border social and brokering networks.

The types of actors in the migration industry and the multifaceted interweaving between them is extremely dynamic and complex. In this paper using brokers/smugglers as the entry point, we discuss how different actors “assemble” to facilitate migrants’ departure, mobility and border crossing. We draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of assemblages to understand the functioning of the migration industry and how different actors within it relate to each other and how they respond to particular constraints and opportunities created by policy, resource availability and networks. As Wise (2013) points out, the term assemblage must be understood as a verb— the process of arranging, organizing and fitting together or that which is being assembled. Marcus and Saka underscore its importance in allowing researchers to examine the emergence of heterogenous groupings in an “ephemeral in nonetheless ordered social life” (2006: 101) while Anderson and McFarlane (2011) argue that assemblages are a way of thinking about particular socio-spatial formations that come together for a united purpose.

In Ethiopia, “assembling” is done by migration facilitators, the migration control industry and the humanitarian industry, who have their own specific objectives which are often conflicting but also interestingly, as Schapendonk (2018: 665) argues, play overlapping roles to shape migrants’ mobility. Therefore, to understand migration facilitation we examine the interplay of migrants, brokers/smugglers, *hawala* agencies and multiple migration control structures at different levels and how different actors are brought together. The international organizations that provide humanitarian support and facilitate deportations are also part of the industry (cf. Schapendonk, 2018: 665). We explore how brokers play the major role in enabling these “complex web of relations in which different actors liaise” (see also Schapendonk, 2018: 663) and shape migration from Ethiopia to the Republic of South Africa. Migrants’ desire to migrate and their active participation in selecting and paying the brokers make them “active constituents of these assemblages” (Collins, 2018: 978). The assemblage is a dynamic process that continuously embraces or leaves out actors depending on contexts.

In Ethiopia, multiple layers of brokers, transporters, employers, ordinary residents and *hawala* agents engage in selecting, housing, transporting, protecting, facilitating the access of foreign currencies and helping migrants cross several checkpoints and state borders. Migration control actors include the anti-human trafficking command post, police officers working at checkpoints, and border guards that are organized and placed along the main migration routes to prevent irregular migrants’ mobility and target smuggling networks. The humanitarian industry such as International Organization for Migration (IOM), support the deportation process of apprehended migrants at the border and en route in several countries by providing transportation and the necessary finance to take them back to their place of origin. For these purposes, the IOM has opened offices in major migration transit border areas. This indicates complex migration industry actors and infrastructures that are differently configured and function in a particular migration context.

However, these three major migration industry actors— the facilitators, the controllers, and the humanitarian actors— shift their roles and blur their boundaries (Cf. Schapendonk, 2018: 665). In these changing roles, administration and immigration officials and border guards

work both against and with the migration facilitators. In fact, the crucial role and success of a broker is evaluated not only through his/her relationship with the migrants but mainly in how effectively they work with the migration control structure. The same migration control actors work with the humanitarian industry on their mission to control mobility. This shows the extent of the heterogeneity of the domain of the state where some actors and institutions enforce the regulatory instruments in place while others reinforce migration facilitation (Alpes, 2011). For example, in major border towns of Ethiopia, including Moyale, the police and border guards hand over the apprehended migrants to the IOM office for humanitarian aid and support in the deportation process. The IOM provides sheltering services to the migrants and gives them a small amount of money to cover their travel expenses to go back home.

Contemporaneously and contrarily, brokers and smugglers also try to make use of the humanitarian industry whenever possible. For instance, many Ethiopian smugglers are registered in the refugee camps in Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique so that they can use their refugee status to situate themselves in this migration space. The smugglers also help migrants en route to be registered and hosted at the refugee camps in the situation of uncertainties in their journey until they monitor the route. The above discussion indicates how contemporary clandestine migration is informed, conditioned and mediated by various dimensions of migration infrastructures.

The contexts and conditions of Ethiopian migration to South Africa

Risky border crossings and long journeys of Ethiopian migrants need to be situated in the context of the social and political economy. In the face of increasing uncertainties in Ethiopia – expressed, for instance, in limited life choices, volatile politics and precarious economic conditions particularly for young people – a large number of Ethiopians find themselves in desperate situations (Girmachew, 2018; Ayalew, 2017).

Ethiopian youth are dissatisfied by growing economic inequalities, long years of repressive political conditions and environmental challenges. At the same time, they are lured into migration influenced by perceived diasporic remittances or “returnees’ prosperity”, and driven by social and familial expectations. Positive images about migration and the diaspora often circulate in family narratives, popular culture, and state policies in Ethiopia (Ephrem, 2011; Ayalew, 2017). It is in this context that young people begin to look at migration as a window of opportunity through which personal, family and social expectations are expected to be fulfilled.

In the face of limited opportunities for legal migration paths, large numbers of young people not only dream of international migration but are also determined to make high-risk departures in multiple directions: towards Europe via Khartoum, the Sudan, crossing the Sahara desert, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea; towards the Middle East via Djibouti,

Somalia and Yemen by crossing the Red sea; towards South Africa by crossing several international borders (Asnake and Zerihun, 2015).

This paper locates the study of migration brokering in a particularly complex Ethiopian socio-historical, political, administrative and organizational structure of migration facilitation. Unlike the revolutionary socialist Derg regime (1974–1990) that curtailed labour exits, the current regime (1991 to date) has liberalized emigration policy in Ethiopia. Several proclamations and legal infrastructures have been developed to facilitate formal labour migrations from Ethiopia. The *Overseas Employment Proclamation* of 1998 resulted in the establishment of 400 Private Employment Agencies (PEAs). However, the licensing was limited to the Middle East countries. That left other significant labour migrations to the RSA, North Africa and Europe to facilitation by informal brokers¹. There are thousands of informal brokers connected to villages across the country; who either recruit and connect migrants to formal labour recruitment agencies or facilitate overland irregular migrations (ILO, 2011; Abebaw, 2013; Fernandez, 2013; IOM, 2009). Some informal brokers supply migrants to both the formal agencies and informal brokers, though most of them work only with either of the two.

The flow of Ethiopian migrants to the RSA started in the post-1991 context following significant political changes in both countries: the fall of the socialist government and liberalization of migration governance in Ethiopia, and the change of government and end of the Apartheid regime in the RSA (Habte, 2015; Teshome et al, 2013; IOM, 2009; Ephrem, 2010). A decade ago an IOM report estimated that between 65,000 and 70,000 Ethiopians live in the RSA. Over 95% of these migrants entered the country through irregular means but immediately applied for asylum to regularize their situation (IOM, 2009; Girmachew, 2014). The same IOM report (2009)², also estimated that between 17,000 and 20,000 male migrants from the Horn of Africa, mainly from Ethiopia and Somalia, arrive in the RSA annually, which shows the magnitude of the issue. Unofficial estimates by IOM staff at monitoring stations in Moyale suggest that roughly 60 people migrate towards RSA every day and 60% are from Hadya (pers. comm.).

¹Even for the Middle East countries, when the services of legal overseas private employment agencies – such as finding employers, arranging travel documents or employment contracts, and organizing skills and language training before departure – became lengthy and costly, the informal brokers have become alternatives in organizing direct flights or overland journeys to destinations by informally using their connections (cf. De Regt and Tafesse, 2015).

² This report is 10 years old, but it is the most recent data that has attempted to estimate the number of Ethiopians that annually migrate to South Africa.

The majority of the Ethiopian migrant communities in the RSA are from two neighbouring administrative zones in Southern Ethiopia: Hadya and Kambata³ (IOM 2009). In these zones it is hardly possible to locate a village from where youths have not migrated to the RSA. A recent survey by Hadya Administrative Zone Labour and Social Affairs Office estimated that between 50,000 to 60,000 migrants from the zone live in the RSA. Many informants and growing literature reveal that the Hadya and Kambata migration to the RSA was noticed in the beginning of 2000s when then Ethiopian Ambassador to the RSA supported a few of his relatives from the same region to emigrate to the RSA (Ephrem, 2011; Girmachew, 2013; Teshome et al, 2015). This initial individual contribution and subsequent expanded networks, in conjunction with the involvement of smugglers and spread of success stories of prior migrants, eventually developed into a massive stream of migration to the RSA.

Hadya and Kambata, with population densities of 342 and 502 persons per km² respectively, are among the most densely populated areas in Ethiopia (CSA, 2007). As a result, shortage of agricultural land has been a serious challenge among the Hadya and Kambata ethnic groups for a long period of time (Girmachew, 2018). Rural-rural migration, particularly to labour intensive sugar plantations, had been their traditional livelihood coping mechanism (Kloos, 1982). The government had also organized resettlement programmes for the two groups to land-abundant areas (Ephrem, 2010). The problem of land shortage or limited access to it affects young people more due to subdivisions of inherited land. Thus, migrants from Hadya are typically young males with no or low levels of education (e.g., Girmachew, 2018; Habte, 2015).

State restrictions on mobility and its consequences

In 2013, the Government of Ethiopia banned all licensed Private Employment Agencies (PEAs). This was triggered by two incidents: 1) several dozen Ethiopian migrants were suffocated to death in 2012 en route to RSA in Tanzania; 2) Saudi Arabia deported more than 163,000 undocumented Ethiopian migrants, mainly female domestic workers (Asnake and Zerihun, 2015). With increased media coverage of the death of Ethiopian migrants en route, abuses they endure at destinations mainly in the Gulf countries, and also when opposition to government was building momentum at home, the Ethiopian government responded by criminalizing informal brokers and banning all PEAs (De Regt and Tafesse, 2016).

The state's intensification of migration control and regulatory infrastructures always manifest itself through the criminalization of brokers and portrayal of migrants as victims of human trafficking practices. To that end, anti-human trafficking and smuggling legislations were adopted swiftly and "anti-human trafficking taskforces" have been established at all levels of the administrative tier with the aim of targeting the migration brokers. In order to broaden migration control activities, a joint anti-human trafficking committee was formed out of

³Hadya and Kambata are also names of ethnic groups residing in the two provinces respectively.

representatives of the law enforcement agencies along with religious and traditional leaders. Checkpoints have been set up in the main migration routes. Brokerage has been criminalized and brokers subjected to organized campaigns. As a result, hundreds of brokers have been convicted, and are currently serving long-term prison sentences⁴.

Regardless of this, there has been a further rise in the migration of Ethiopian youth by using the services of informal brokers (De Regt and Tafesse, 2016; Girmachew, 2018; Ayalew, 2018). However, the government has not been perceptive to the fact that the banning of licensed agents for several years has left informal brokers as the only alternative for potential migrants who are prepared to move at any cost. This paper shows that intensification of migration control structures and the absence of licensed employment agencies do not stop migration. Instead, they contribute to increases in the need for more inventive migration facilitation, raising the price of migration facilitation, attracting more actors including the law enforcement or the control actors themselves and increase the risk of migration.

Assembling different components of the brokerage system

Brokering (*dilela*) structure in Hadya

Hadya has a well-established and dynamic system of migration brokerage that links villages and towns in Southern Ethiopia with chains of smugglers in transiting border towns and countries. This starts from Moyale across several countries of Eastern and Southern Africa up to the RSA. The structure and functioning of the migration industry is fluid and various assemblages have emerged in response to the policy environment as well as growing social networks with increasingly diverse actors. For example, the location of the lead broker⁵ is not fixed and he situates himself at a point between the place of departure and the destination depending on the ‘political’ situation. Until 2013, when the Government of Ethiopia started an organized campaign on ‘illegal’ brokers to combat “trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling”, most of the lead brokers had lived in Hossana, the capital of Hadya administrative zone, and Addis Ababa. Since then, some of them have been imprisoned, and others went underground by changing their places of residence. Some moved to the transit countries from where they facilitated the mobility of the Hadya migrants. From those transnational locations they continued to provide services including organizing supply and departures from places of origin and arranging clandestine journeys with the involvement of their chains at several

⁴ In the last years the Ethiopian government’s efforts were also backed up by the EU’s externalization of border controls (*Gaibazzi, Bellagamba and Dünnwald, 2017: 5-10*), which is noticeable in the northwestern route that leads to Europe.

⁵ Our informants, including brokers, believe that there have been around 20 lead brokers in Hadya/Kambata since brokering to RSA has become noticeably important and about five of them are very successful. Success is measured by the number of people they safely sent out, which is of course a main factor to continue to operate in the field.

conjunction points. They also organized money transfers to these several nodes along the route of the long overland journey to RSA.

The lead broker has several suppliers (*akirabiwoch*) or collectors (*sebsabiwoch*) at his command who are paid a commission per aspiring migrant that they supply. The main role of suppliers/collectors is to put the potential migrants in contact with the lead broker either in person or by phone. These are civil servants, teachers, contractors, traders or even church officials. In the face of stiff competition between lead brokers, the suppliers may also play the role of building the reputation of the lead broker in the area by communicating his success stories. However, different from the state's accusation of the brokers "luring innocent migrants into exploitative situations" (Lindquist, 2012), we did not find evidence that they sought to persuade potential migrants to migrate. The risks of migration to South Africa are well known in the community as it is an established route. The decision to migrate is thus consciously made by weighing up the potential risks along the route and the socio-political situation in the RSA, including xenophobia, which are well known almost among all aspiring migrants and their respective families. Indeed, in this situation, providing migrants with false information and persuading them to migrate might not be credible given the presence of thousands of deportees and returnees in Hadya Zone. In such a risky journey, potential migrants and their families would double check the accuracy of information.

Successful brokerage is determined by the lead broker's ability to establish a structure of 'supply' at the place of origin and the ability to establish strong networks with hard-working, smart and trustworthy individual smugglers along the transit route, based at each important point along the route. Petros is one of the well-known migration brokers in Hadya. He has served as a broker for over fifteen years. He even was detained for some time by "the anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling Command Post". He claims to have successfully facilitated the migration of close to four thousand Ethiopians to the RSA, most of them from Hadya,.

He started brokering in 2003 as a local supplier (*aqirabi*) for two lead brokers who lived in Addis Ababa, and were originally from Eritrea and Tigray⁶. Petros managed to graduate from migrant supplier to lead broker when he got an opportunity to meet Gebremeskel, another Eritrean broker who was based in Nairobi Airport facilitating transit migration of Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis to the RSA. Gebremeskel was part of an 'effective' brokerage network in the aviation industry from Addis Ababa Airport to the airports in the RSA.

As Gebremeskel's specialization was mainly in the facilitation of those who travelled by plane, he introduced Petros to four Ethiopian smugglers based in Kenya for overland journey facilitation at transit points in Nairobi and Mombasa. Back from Nairobi, Petros travelled to

⁶ Up to the early 2000s most of the brokers in Ethiopia were Tigreans, Eritreans and Somalis. The three share experiences of longstanding civil war and forced displacements and migrations. That led to the domination of the domain of migration facilitation by the members of the three groups.

Moyale at the Ethiopia-Kenya border where he met two established smugglers who facilitated border crossings and arranged transportation between Moyale and Nairobi for migrants. Gebremeskel and the Ethiopian smugglers based in Nairobi had already established chains in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. Situated at each node, these smugglers (ashagariwoch, literally those who help to cross a river or a border) enable southward mobility of irregular migrants from the Horn of Africa.

The fact that most of the migrants from Hadya to the RSA are not or little educated and do not speak any of the languages spoken en route make the services of the smugglers indispensable. Interestingly, however, none of the six brokers (including the lead) we interviewed in Hadya and Moyale had gone beyond grade eight in their level of education, which put the brokers at the same educational level as those to whom they provide services (cf. IOM, 2009). Except a few suppliers, most of the lead brokers at place of origin and the smugglers en route are male. One exceptionally famous woman broker, who ran away to Nairobi when the organized campaign was launched against brokers five years ago, was caught by the Government of Kenya and repatriated to Ethiopia where she is serving a long prison sentence⁷. In Hadya women's roles in migration facilitation are mainly "home-based" as recruiters and as trusted third parties to hold the payment for brokers to be paid at different stages of the migrants' journey. Their duties are therefore in keeping with traditional gender roles while the men do the main, outside work. Women can also be part of the support system for brokers in transit towns such as Moyale, where they cook food for the migrants while they are waiting until their further journey is organized by the smugglers.

Two issues are very crucial in the brokerage structure. Firstly, there is a degree of changeability in the structure of the network in terms of the mode of operation and the individuals working within the network in response to regulatory policies. The membership works as far as there is activity going on in the network. Individuals based at any node in the network are free to work with any chief broker as long as they are contacted and supplied with migrants. Secondly, individual brokers situated at the important points in the route have their own local structures and personnel with specific jobs, and they do not know the chief broker. Keeping one's network secret is crucial as it can be easily taken over. As mentioned above, Petros took over the network of his bosses when he got the contact address of the smuggler in Nairobi. In his turn, Petros' own network was partly taken over by a teacher who used to be his supplier when he was imprisoned by the anti-human trafficking command post. Competition, cooperation, suspicion and secrecy are important aspect of brokerage and the smuggling industry (see Alpes, 2012; Lindquist, 2012).

Brokering is part of everyday life in Hadya

⁷ It is unusual for a woman to be at such a high rank in the migration industry. Her case is exceptional. She had an extended family of successful brokers behind her: her father was one of the first brokers in Kambata Zone; her brother was also a famous broker until he was detained in Tanzania; her brother in-law was a well-known broker in Hadya zone and he is also serving a prison sentence in Hossana.

In Hadya, migration brokerage is a socio-culturally embedded business. Brokers make money in migration facilitation by using their multiple relations – ethnic, clan, religious, geographical – with potential migrants and their families. Migration brokers live among the community, they worship with the community, and their children go to the same school as the children from the local community. They belong to the same local burial organization (idir). Thus, brokers at origin abide by local values and norms. The basis of the trust between the brokers and potential migrants is also embedded in these multiple relationships, community values and norms. Migration to South Africa is a long journey with a high risk of being intercepted and deported⁸. Thus, for potential migrants using the services of a broker with whom they share multiple relationships, and whom they believe will respect the local values and norms, is a strategy to reduce risks.

Brokers will also go to great lengths to maintain trust and compensate failed migrations through their own resources as Petros narrates below,

“Once 133 boys I sent at different times were deported all together. They were collected from several prisons in Tanzania and Malawi and transported back home. It was a tough moment for me. On their arrival, I asked famous elders, who represent the Hadya people and work as advisers to the zonal administration, to intervene. This was public. With the elders’ mediation, I paid back the money I received from the deportees by selling my house for two million birr.... the elders and the migrants themselves calculated [and considered] some of my expenses.

The above quotation shows that brokers will work hard and use their own money to mitigate migration failures as this impacts on their reputation.

If disputes between brokers and migrants arise, village elders, religious leaders and traditional authorities (such as clan representatives) are important in customary dispute resolution in communities such as Hadya. Resolving disputes in relation to migration is just treated as part of the customary system of conflict resolution. This is also the reason why migrants prefer and trust local brokers from the same village, hometowns, common religion and ethnic groups instead of using the services of a stranger in a distant land.

Elders are the most trustworthy migration mediators (*asmami*) between the potential migrants and the brokers even before departure. They mediate negotiations of brokerage price. Contrary to other routes, potential migrants from Hadya to South Africa negotiate

⁸ Between June and December 2018, two rounds of deportations of Ethiopian migrants, who were intercepted by border guards along the migration route to South Africa, took place with the support of IOM. In June and October 2018, 300 and 67 migrants respectively were deported, and most of them were from Hadya (See www.iom.int/news/iom-facilitates-return-300-stranded-ethiopia-migrants-tanzania; www.iom.int/news/iom-helps-67-ethiopian-stranded-migrants-return-tanzania).

payment straight from Hadya to South Africa, not step by step⁹¹⁰. It seems that every aspiring migrant has one grand plan, which is arriving in South Africa. In this situation, migrants who migrate without their extended families' approval, and as a result might approach less known and cheaper brokers, risk compromising the chance of getting their money back in the case of failed journeys or deportation. When the migrants are deported, it is difficult for them to claim their money back from the brokers who are not socially tied to the local norms. The case of Madabo, a deportee from Malawi, exemplifies this:

“My father and mother passed away when I was in grade five. When I reached grade 7, when all my school friends left for South Africa, I asked my brother to help me to go. He told me that he would not let me go, citing my excellent performance at school. I had always stood number one in my class. My brother was a teacher and works far away from our home area... I sold crops, goats and bulls, and managed to collect 100,000 birr [by then around 4000 USD]. I called a broker on a number I got from a friend. He told me the price and to come to Hawassa. I met him at a bus station in Hawassa city and discussed about the routes, and paid him 80,000 birr... I was caught in Malawi and deported back after spending four months in prison... Since I did not know the broker, I could not trace him at all when I arrived back here. I tried to call him on his phone number but the line was no more in service.”

The extract shows that local social capital is as important as transnational networks in making the migration project successful. Madabo disappointedly told us that while some of his friends who retrieved part of their money tried out another round and succeeded in reaching the destination, his ended there. Such stories of migration without local social embeddedness are not common in Hadya. Yet, this type of grim story often paves the way for the emergence of images of 'bad' brokers who do not show accountability to their clients when they are in crisis. These stories are usually emphasized in the state discourses broadcasted by media. Unfortunately, many academic publications in Ethiopia have followed the same path (Abebeaw, 2013; Triulzi and Mckenzie, 2013; Hailemichael, 2014; Habte, 2015; Shewit, 2015; Zeyneba, 2016). Such research shows a lack of the understanding of the dynamism of the organization of migration facilitation at the place of origin.

Contrary to the media-created image of the 'heartless' broker exploiting their migrant-victims, our findings show that brokers perform traditional male protector roles. For instance, Petros and other brokers repeatedly visited the family of the deceased when migrants who used their service of facilitation had passed away en route. In such instances, it has been a common norm to return the full amount of money paid for the facilitation of migration. Thus,

⁹ In the northwest route, migrants negotiate payment first to Khartoum. Further journey is planned from Khartoum. In the eastern route migrants also first negotiate either up to Djibouti, Yemen, Puntland or Hargeissa, from where the next step is planned.

¹⁰ Usually in Hadya payments are made in three stages. The first stage is paid before departure, and the remaining is deposited with the elders who release it on the authorization of the family members based on the progress report of the migrant. Usually, the second stage is paid when the migrant arrives in Nairobi and the third is when the migrant is about to leave Malawi or Mozambique for the destination.

the kind of relationship between the potential migrants, their extended family members and the migration brokers in Hadya is not a mere business engagement. Rather, it is embedded in existing socio-cultural relationships. Both sides count on the multiple fields of interaction. For example, for the potential migrants and their families, these multiple relationships consolidate trust in the brokers. For the brokers it situates them within the local population giving them a market and protection against risk at the same time.

However, the fact that the brokerage service functions within the existing socio-cultural relation does not contradict the competitiveness of the service as a “business”. Brokers’ successes also depend on their reputation as effective brokers – their success stories. A straight answer from potential migrants to a question, “What kind of broker do you prefer?” is the one who effectively takes them to their destination. In other words, potential migrants and their families look for an effective and efficient broker. As a result, brokers invest in building their personal reputation as effective, generous and trustworthy individuals¹¹. In the long quotation at the beginning of this paper, a broker named Dagim, “even helped some deportees to remigrate without demanding additional payment”. This information about the generosity of Dagim has been spread throughout Hadya province. It is part of building one’s reputation. Every broker works hard to keep his or her reputation high in the community, which demands increasing one’s rate of success. Petros said,

“If people lose confidence in me, I lose all my market. The source dries up, and then others will take over. Every broker works to win the competition.”

A single failure, such as reports of abuse of their clients en route; repetitive deportation of clients and failure to treat those deported properly could cause the “source” to dry up¹². Our data from Hadya is rich in examples of brokers who failed to maintain their reputations after they became famous. Thus, at the place of origin a chief broker must subscribe to the local norms and values, and at the same time work effectively to build and maintain his/her reputation. Next, we will discuss how migration facilitation functions in religious institutions.

Migration facilitations and Churches

Close to 89% of the Hadya population are Christians of different categories, with Evangelical Protestants constituting over 75% (CSA, 2012). Churches contribute to migration facilitation through their prayer programmes and institutionally by arranging exchange programmes with churches in Southern African countries. For instance, priests/pastors usually pray for potential migrants to succeed in their aspiration to migrate to South Africa; they prophesize

¹¹ A story of a famous Hadya broker who allowed his client to try out his chance three times without additional costs has spread throughout Hadya. This broker, living in Addis Ababa with many investments in Hosanna, is known by nearly everyone.

¹² For Petros, the source is where he gets aspiring migrants. If his reputation is damaged, no one comes to him to look for his service and the source will dry up.

over the life of individuals aspirants that their future will be great in South Africa. This gives hope and courage to potential migrants, and encourages them to take risks¹³. When potential migrants are about to start their journey, fellow Christians in the neighbourhood gather and pray for their success. The Church has a vested interest in endorsing migration as successful migrants remit money to the churches and the churches publicly recognize receiving money from the migrants, giving thanks to the Almighty for their success in public.

The church-migration nexus extends beyond Ethiopia. A number of churches have been established by migrants and brokers from Ethiopia in Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and RSA. Churches in Hadya train gospel choirs and pastors, and send them under exchange programmes to churches in Southern Africa that invite them by securing visas for religious purposes. Most of them overstay their visas. Migration is also contributing to the creation of a Hadya community in the major transit towns. For instance, in Moyale there is a growing Hadya population, and a church where most of the members are from Hadya. In 2017, a pastor originally from Hadya was fired from this church and accused of smuggling migrants. When he told me about this pastor, Towfiq (a migrant smuggler in Moyale who will be discussed later on) said:

You see that big church. The pastor first contacted me and asked me to do him a favour. His family members came from Hadya to go to South Africa. He asked me how much they should pay, and if I can help him. He paid me, and I processed his relatives' migration. I did this several times for him. After a while, he asked me for a commission. I paid him 1000 birr per person for those who came through him. He gradually started brokerage, and we were working together. Last year his congregation learnt that he is a broker, and they expelled him from the church. Now, I don't know where he is.

According to informants, government intelligence officials had put pressure on the church administration to fire him. He was accused of receiving Hadya migrants and hosting them, sometimes using the church buildings for accommodation, and smuggling them to Kenya. In engaging in migration facilitation, the church officials also have multiple interests: they have kin members who want to migrate; they sympathize with members of their congregations; they have interests in expanding their religion; they have financial interests. Other research also analyses the role of church in migration. Hagan and Ebaugh's (2003) study of Mayas from Guatemala in Texas found that religion and the church play an important role in decision-making, preparing for the journey and after arrival. These involvements of different categories of the population make migration facilitation a community enterprise rather than a business run by independent criminal networks alone.

¹³ The Ethiopian government has warned church leaders to stop the prayers and prophecies.

Self-representation and others' presentations of brokers

When he appeared before the court accused of “human trafficking and smuggling in persons”, Petros did not express any guilt. Instead, he presented himself as a hero who gave service to his community members who wanted to improve their lives. He mentioned the number of Hadya ‘boys’ he supported in migration to RSA whose lives have now been changed for the better¹⁴. The Hadya diaspora in the RSA, who are the result of this irregular migration, have been contributing to local development. Petros asked the judge, “Was Hossana the same city few years back?”... “Whose contribution was that?” Until Petros was ordered by the judge to stop, he attempted to deconstruct the state’s discourses of criminalization of the brokers responsible for migrants’ vulnerability by emphasizing his contribution to the people who were attending the hearing that day.

Petros used the court as a forum to present his contributions to his people and show where his legitimacy lies. He knew this could be the only opportunity for him to defend himself and argue against the state’s positions. Unlike migration organizations (see Akesson and Alpes, 2018), individual migration brokers of irregular migrants often keep their work underground and they get legitimacy from their clients due to the effectiveness of their work without any public self representations. However, in this situation Petros was already caught by a law enforcement body and he was presented before the judge.

Hossana has changed very fast, which everyone attributes to the remittance flow from RSA. This is especially true of service sectors such as hotels, bus transportation and the banking industry, which have visibly improved as compared to other towns in the region. All commercial banks opened branches to benefit from remittance flows and money transfers from migrants. Hossana municipality officials also occasionally visit the Hadya diaspora in RSA to ask them for financial contributions to development activities back home. Beyond remitting to their family, the Hadya migrants in RSA contribute to their original neighbourhoods in multiple ways. For instance, migrants remit money to cover expenses for the annual bull slaughtering festival, showing they are still connected to their communities’ customs. They also get transnational blessings from people gathered there. Similarly, migrants cover burial expenses and contribute money for marriages. It is public knowledge that these migrants were sent out by migration brokers. As a result, among the Hadya population, contrary to the statist labelling of brokers as human traffickers and the subsequent aggressive criminalizing campaigns (Alpes, 2013), the local discourses recognize the brokers’ positive contribution. Among these recognitions is the nickname of “*Berri kefach*” which literally translates to “door openers”¹⁵. Our Hadya informants were clear that

¹⁴ Interview with the Hadya Zone Judge, May 2018

¹⁵ The nick name “*Berri kefach*” has been given previously to very few famous individuals who have greatly contributed to the development of the Hadya people. For instance, individuals who had contributed to the establishment of the first school, the first hospital and the first road had secured the nickname.

the alternative to irregular migration is domestic migration to labour intensive sugar plantations and to urban constructions sites. When seen in that context, successful transnational migration to RSA is a big opportunity. And in calling the brokers “*Berri kefach*”, the Hadya population is recognizing the crucial role brokers play in opening such opportunities, which attests to Petros’s arguments cited above.

“Getting online”: Exit, transportation and arrival in Moyale

The modes of transport organised by brokers have changed in response to the hardening of state policy. Instead of transporting migrants in groups using mini busses as they used to do, brokers in Hadya inform their clients, like Dawit, to just ‘get online’. This means they should take public transport and travel to Moyale, the border town. Using public transportation “they just travel as citizens in their own country”, as Petros told us, making it difficult for the anti-human trafficking command post to stop them at check-points¹⁶. “Get online” has thus become a key phrase for potential migrants and brokers in Hadya. For the migrants from Hadya who speak neither of the local languages, Moyale is just a ‘foreign’ land and their arrival, accommodation and arrangement of further journey depends on the smugglers. On top of that, the population of Moyale have constructed the identity of the Hadya migrants as uneducated rural boys migrating to South Africa carrying money. According to Tofiq, who is one of the brokers in Moyale,

“The youth you see on the street just waits to steal from Hadya migrants. They are uneducated rural boys. They lack confidence. Even small boys scare them. That is why we send our boys to collect them from mini-buses and buses before they enter the town.”

This precarious situation makes them vulnerable to risks and highly dependent on the smugglers. This has been confirmed by a number of interviews with deportees in Hadya. Among them, Madabo witnessed that, “...when I got out of the bus, local youth started to chase me. I did not know which direction to run, but luckily a guy sent by the broker to collect me was already there and he called me by my name. According to the migrants, the youth in Moyale just rob them if they find them ‘unattended’ by the smugglers. In the last two years, Moyale has been hit by protracted inter-communal conflicts, and the government’s presence has been weak. In this situation, the jobless youth even established informal ‘checkpoints’ and collect revenue from those boys (*buustuu*, meaning those who unload), who receive Hadya migrants from public transport mostly on the outskirts of Moyale¹⁷. Thus, in this situation smugglers play a role of protecting the migrants in a vulnerable situation.

¹⁶ Except the route from Wallo to the Djibouti border where there is no public transportation, transporting migrants en masse by a rented car up to the border has been more or less abandoned.

¹⁷ Interestingly, migrants from other parts of the country do not need that protection as they can articulately defend themselves.

Smuggling¹⁸ infrastructure at Ethiopia-Kenya border

The main smuggler in the transit place is the one who communicates with the lead broker – the one who sends out migrants from place of origin – and receives payments from him for the facilitation. He oversees all the activities including documentations (such as accessing vaccination certificate), helps them at immigration offices, border crossings and transportation up to the next node, i.e., Nairobi. Under the main smuggler, there are several lower level “smuggling boys” (ijoolle nama ceesisttu, literally boys who help people to cross) with specific jobs. These include receiving migrants on arrival and getting them accommodation, organizing documentation including vaccination certificates, and arranging border crossing and transportation. They are not necessarily young boys in terms of age; rather they work for the main smuggler since they do not have their own long distance network. Each of the main smugglers has several “smuggling boys” facilitating these processes. For each task there is a fixed rate at a certain moment. For example, boys who receive migrants from the bus station and arrange accommodation are paid 300 birr (10.7 USD) per person; those who take migrants to immigration offices get 200 birr (7 USD) per person, a transporter who takes migrants across the border by motor bike gets 300 birr per person, and a border guard gets 200 birr per person.

Migration facilitation actors working in these networks are people from various backgrounds. They include civil servants, drivers (of buses, mini buses, Bajaj auto-rickshaws, motor bikes), traders, jobless youth, workers in hotels (from the manager to the janitors), workers in churches and mosques, immigration officials and border guards; they are all part of as well as beneficiaries of the migration industry. They are assembled due to their common goal – supporting the migrants’ mobility. However, internally, their interests might vary from those “motivated by pursuit of financial gains” (Hernandez Leon, 2009: 154) to loyalty based on social relations such as ethnicity, religion, language and belonging to a certain locality. Indeed, in Moyale inhabitants can identify the ethnic identity of the migrants from the identity of the smuggler they use.

However, similar to the place of origin, smugglers at transit points also have to work hard to accomplish their duty and satisfy the clients. Failure to perform properly may result in “going out of business”. Concerning this, Tofiq said, “If that broker [for instance, the lead broker in Hadya] loses confidence in me, he looks for another more effective one, which means I will be going out of business”. Comparing the concerns of the two brokers featuring in this paper – Petros, who is based at place of origin and Towfiq, who is based at transit – both work hard to satisfy their clients. Petros lives within the migrant sending community and his commitment is to the broader clients (migrants, their extended families, the mediating elders

¹⁸ In this paper ‘brokers’ have been used to refer to the actors in a wider infrastructure of migration facilitation including those involved in recruiting, obtaining documents, organizing departures, arranging transportation, etc. In the context of border town, we use smugglers to refer to those actors who support migrants endeavor to cross international border irregularly.

and the church community), while Towfiq frames his task narrowly in terms of satisfying the lead broker who sends migrants from place of origin.

“Passport” and “Fax”: Migrants’ “legality” and “illegality” in Moyale

Smugglers divide migrants into two categories: migrants with passports and migrants without passports called ‘fax’ migrants¹⁹. Next, we will discuss the smuggling processes of the two categories.

Migrants with Passport - “Legal” migrants

Migrants arriving in Moyale holding a passport first apply to the Ethiopian Immigration Office to get an ‘exit stamp’ or immigration clearance to travel to Kenya. The immigration officials ask them why they are travelling to Kenya and who their contact person there is. This is a tough and inconvenient encounter for Hadya migrants who are perceived by the public, the law enforcement and the immigration officials as people migrating to South Africa. In other words, in Moyale the Hadya migrants’ mobility is constructed, without exception, as migration to South Africa. This, of course, makes border-crossing and travel within Kenya difficult for the Hadya migrants different from other Ethiopians, which increases the importance of smugglers in making their migration possible.

The “smuggling boys” guide them to the immigration office and advise them how to perform well in the interview. More importantly, every main smuggler has his ‘own persons’ in the immigration office. Towfiq narrated the process,

“I call the immigration officials and inform them that these are my children. Then the officials stamp for them and keep records of their number, and I will settle the payment later on... I usually pay them 300 birr [11 USD] per person. The Ethiopian side is ok. The officials are very good...”

After securing exit clearance from Ethiopian Immigration, migrants go to the Kenyan Immigration office, some three hundred meters walk southward, separated by two check-points – Ethiopian and Kenyan. Ethiopians do not require an entry visa for a short visit to Kenya, and can enter with only an ‘entry stamp’ on their passport. However, getting the entry permit especially for travellers from Hadya/ Kambata is only possible through the smugglers’

¹⁹ The analogy with “fax” can be understood in contrast to procedure of sending mail through a post office in Ethiopia. In the case of the former an office manager sends a fax to a certain destination just from his/her office. In the latter case, one has to go to post office, communicate with the workers there, pay and submit their mail. Similarly, for migrants without passport, a smuggler organizes transportation without undergoing the bureaucratic procedure at immigration office and seeking documents, which migrants with a passport have to undergo.

support. Similar to the Ethiopian Immigration Office, in the Kenyan Immigration Office there is a general perception that every Hadya/ Kambata passing through the border crossing heads to South Africa. This generalization is a result of a repeated interception of migrants from Hadaya/ Kambata in Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. The Kenyan Immigration Office in Moyale has been instructed several times by the state not to issue the stamp for travellers from this particular region in Ethiopia. We could not confirm this, but regardless of whether that is true or false, the discourse itself is sufficient to construct migrant identities and a complex web of smuggling networks aligned to it (see Deshingkar, 2018).

This vulnerability of the migrants increased the demand for more smuggling, resulting in the creation of another layer of smugglers in Moyale whose special expertise is dealing with Kenyan Immigration officials. Towfiq further explains the procedure:

“I don’t personally contact the Kenyan immigration officials. There are agents [of the Immigration Office]. I send codes of my clients to the agent... The agent sends that code to the officials working in the visa department. When my clients arrive, the officials check their passports against the code. I transfer to the agent around 30,000-35,000 shillings [equivalent to around 400 USD] per person based on our deal.”

In October 2018, there were four ‘big’ smugglers called ‘agents’ in the Kenyan Immigration Office in Moyale, without whom smuggling of documented migrants through the Kenyan Immigration Office was nearly impossible. All other smugglers have to go through these four ‘agents’, and if any smuggler in Moyale fails to approach them the only option is using “fax”. Therefore, there are several smugglers in Moyale who give service only to those who do not use the “legal” means to travel to Nairobi. Just in front of the Kenyan Immigration Office, a couple of boys sell vaccination certificates to the migrants. The certificate has been taken to Moyale from one of the hospitals in Addis Ababa. It costs between 300 and 600 birr [equivalent to between 10.7 and 21 USD] based on its availability on the market in Moyale²⁰.

The migrants’ status as documented travelers in Kenya ends when they arrive in Nairobi – a journey that only takes one day. The whole complex smuggling process in Moyale ensures safe travel to Nairobi, where other smugglers are waiting to organize further southward journeys for them. The first duty of the smugglers who receive them at the bus station in Nairobi is to collect their passports and eliminate them. This is part of the deal between the ‘agents’ and the Immigration Office in Moyale. The reason is that Kenyan police could recognize and detain the migrants regardless of them having permission to enter Kenya, and the Immigration Office in Moyale does not want them to be caught with the entry permit. In other words, after a single day of “legal” travel, the Hadya migrants’ status turns into ‘illegal’ aliens. Of course, when they leave Kenya and continue the clandestine journey southward, documents showing their Ethiopian identity are a liability to the migrants, and thus have to

²⁰ For comparison, this costs just 22 birr in hospitals in Addis Ababa. But travelers can access the certificate formally only if they have visa, a system favoring the informal market.

be thrown away in any case. This shows the failure of the statist discourse, which presents migrant status in dichotomy as “legal” and “illegal” or “regular” and “irregular” as a hard category, which in reality can change swiftly. Migrants also navigate various migration regimes along the route and constantly move between legality and illegality. The role of the Ethiopian and Kenyan immigration officials in the smuggling process also shows the ambiguity of the boundaries between migration facilitation and the domain of migration control, which the state and some scholars who emphasize individual human traffickers tend to ignore.

“Fax” Migrants – Clandestine Journey

For “fax” migrants’ – those who do not hold a passport – smugglers arrange accommodation in the hotels until their number reaches a threshold for transportation to Nairobi. In the meantime, they make necessary preparations including currency exchange and occasionally purchasing Kenyan SIM cards for them to communicate with their families, networks and smugglers while en route depending on the security situation.

Crossing the border mainly takes place in two ways. Firstly, smuggling boys guide the migrants across the border at night. Secondly, smuggling boys transport the migrants across the border by using motor bikes with the knowledge of the border guards. Rates of payments are meticulously put in place so that the border guards just count the number of smuggled persons across the border and claim their payments when it is convenient.

There are two routes for migrants’ clandestine journey to Nairobi based on the security situation and the ethnic identity of the lead smuggler and transporter. The first one, which is favoured by most smugglers, goes through the Eastern province – Moyale – Marsabit – Isiolo – Nairobi. It is preferred by all non-Somali smugglers and transporters²¹. This route has better infrastructure with asphalt roads. The second route is in the Somali inhabited Northeastern province – Moyale – Wajir – Isiolo – Nairobi. Most of the road is rough gravel.

Ethnicity is an important factor in the selection of the route for smugglers and transporters. This is because law enforcement bodies with whom transporters and smugglers negotiate if they are intercepted belong to the inhabitants of the provinces. Language proficiency and belonging are social capitals that smugglers make use of during negotiations. Most of the transporters between Moyale and Nairobi speak either Somali and/or Oromo; both languages are also widely spoken in Ethiopia. This indicates that smuggling is embedded in and functions with cross border ethnic, economic and social relations in the area.

The transportation systems have been changed from trucks and containers to pickup-trucks, as they allow the transporters to flexibly change routes or detour into the bushes when they

²¹ Population on this route from Moyale to Isiolo, which is 500 kilometers long, is inhabited by the Oromo. The ongoing conflict in Moyale is between the Oromo and Somalis, thus the Somali smugglers and transporters prefer the northeastern route to avoid the Oromo inhabited areas.

face unfavourable check points and towns. They are less risky than trucks and containers, in which migrants have suffocated in the past. After Moyale, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Lilongwe are very popular points of assemblage where smugglers are concentrated, arranging clandestine accommodation and transportation, and facilitating communications and money transfers. With smooth and fast money transfer systems, Kenya is also a centre where the bribing of officials and law enforcement are organized (detail of this will be discussed under technological infrastructure).

Potential migrants are usually given the opportunity to choose between the “sea route”, “land route” or “half-sea and half-land route” as part of the deal with the brokers before departure. There are different prices for each of these routes. However, in reality the choice of route is made by smugglers in Kenya after assessing the “safety” of the routes. They then force migrants to obey their decision, though changing route is a common practice that usually results in arguments between migrants and their transporters. In Kenya and Tanzania, pastoralists, farmers and unemployed youth stop migrants en route and demand payments. But unlike the popular portrayal of migrant-broker relations, holding migrants hostage and forcing families back home to transfer ransom was not reported. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the actors are local inhabitants rather than organized criminal gangs, different from Libya or Yemen (Triulzi, 2013; Abebaw, 2013). Migrant transporters, who belong to the localities act as trouble shooters bribing any troublemaker along the trail.

Most of the returnees and deportees we interviewed had spent some time in refugee camps either in Malawi or Mozambique. Confirming Dawit’s story quoted at the beginning, Tadesse gave us the account below. Tadesse was a former migrant from Hadya who became one of the successful brokers. Tadesse started smuggling in Malawi, where his friend was serving as a smuggler. He returned from RSA and then moved to Tanzania and Kenya before finally ending up back in Hadya. According to Tadesse,

“Kaka Refugee Camp in Malawi was an ideal place to put migrants temporarily. It was located immediately before a very difficult checkpoint. The camp officials would not prohibit the newly arriving migrants to reside there and apply for asylum... However, Lilongwe Refugee Camp was a more comfortable camp for migrants to stay for a while since there were good facilities and the officials were also friendly and were very familiar with the business.”

The account indicates the overlapping and shifting roles of various elements of the migration industry, and how smugglers navigate this to facilitate migration. While the states work with international humanitarian organizations such as the IOM to transport intercepted migrants back home, the smugglers also use humanitarian organizations who run refugee camps for smuggling purposes. In other words, the humanitarian industry at the same time works both to control and facilitate migrants’ mobility (Schapendonk, 2018). It is the interplay of these actors and their roles that shapes and sustains human mobility from Ethiopia in the face of the state’s (at least officially) and other stakeholders’ intensified efforts to curtail mobility.

Money transfer and communication infrastructures in Moyale

The border town is perhaps the most crucial place in irregular migration generally, and the migration industry in particular. With its multiple institutions, which are aimed at controlling mobility, one would say that borders present barriers to mobility (Fernandez Leon, 2008). To the contrary, border towns are the most important places where irregular migration is being facilitated. Of course, the multiple existing institutions of control are counteracted by the high concentration of migration facilitators. They are further hindered by the very fluid relationship between the control and facilitation industries they create through the relationship between the smugglers and immigration officials in Moyale.

Communication infrastructure and resource flows (money transfer) are the two crucial infrastructures in the facilitation of irregular migration. Ethiopia has a single telecom company monopolized by the state. It does not work beyond the national borders of the country. Similarly, Ethiopia has a very tight financial system where money transfer by citizens from the country to the outside world is almost impossible. Given the chronic shortage of foreign currencies Ethiopia is facing, it is even difficult to access foreign currencies in the financial industry. There is actually no formal mechanism of trading Ethiopian Birr for Kenyan Shillings or Sudanese Pounds and vice versa. Formal businesses take US Dollars, which are extremely scarce. On the other hand, in the border towns of East Africa, currencies of the neighbouring countries are exchanged informally but publicly in the streets and in shops.

Within this ostensibly tight environment, migration facilitators have innovatively established, diverse and dynamic strategies of money transfer and payment systems that operate in different locations such as places of origin, transit and destinations. The specific operations of the money transfer systems vary from one route to another mainly depending on the geographical distance and business relations between the source of migrants and destinations. For instance, money transfer between Ethiopia and Gulf countries is embedded in imports, exports and remittance flows. In the southern route— where there is very little import and export between Ethiopia and South Africa and migrants cross several countries that use different currencies— money transfer involves informal *hawalas*, aviation staff and mobile banking from the border towns where the Kenyan system can be used.

The communication and financial systems at the border are very crucial as they instantly respond to potential risks en route, which usually need urgent interventions. Unlike Ethiopia, Kenya is a liberal country with several telecom companies, most of them operating in Eastern and Southern African countries. Comparatively, Kenya has also advanced systems of financial transfer. M-PESA, a Kenyan based mobile banking service – transfer and deposit – has been very effective since 2007 in Kenya and Tanzania, and later expanded to the RSA. Situated at critical points on the route, smugglers exploit transnational opportunities and enable migrants to circumvent layers of migration control to navigate the complex and risky mobility landscape. Petros's account exemplifies this,

“One day because the land route in Tanzania was full of uncertainties, my people decided to use a boat from Mombasa to Mozambique. Unfortunately, just two hours after they started the journey, I heard they were intercepted. Dr. Tekle²² gave me a call and told me the bad news. I was very sad. I told him to do whatever he could. Dr. Tekle was very smart. I transferred money to Sisay²³ in Moyale who immediately wired it to Dr. Tekle. Though a lot of money was paid, he settled the problem in a few hours. They were freed and continued their journey.”

This extract reveals how communication technology allowed a broker in a remote town in Ethiopia to follow up his clients on a journey on Indian Ocean. It shows how the interplay of infrastructures such as commercial banking for money transfers from Hadya to Moyale, mobile money transfers from Moyale to Mombasa, the ease of communication, and the effective use of migration infrastructure that helped circumvent the mobility control regimes.

Language barriers are broken by the presence of networks of multilingual smugglers at important nodes. Petros completed only primary school and speaks only two local Ethiopian languages (Hadyigna and Amharic), while people in his smuggling network speak several languages crucial for the facilitation of migrants’ mobility – Oromo, Somali, Kiswahili, English, etc. Thus, with the flow of migrants to RSA, smugglers from Hadya have been placed at the crucial nodes either as lead smugglers or as assistants, facilitating communication between migrants, brokers/smugglers and other mediators.

Thus, technological infrastructure (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014), mainly communication and money transfer, are the most crucial elements in the facilitation of migrants’ clandestine mobility. Smugglers’ innovative use of the technological infrastructure “entangled with the wider web of relations” (Schapendonk, 2018: 665) shape the clandestine mobility across nation-states and risky landscape.

Conclusion

In this paper, we examined how the interplay between the complex assemblage of a dynamic relationship between migration facilitation, the domain of control and humanitarian regimes shape migrants’ mobility from Ethiopia to South Africa. By taking into account the social and cultural conditions that shape the migration industry in general, and brokering practices in particular, we shed light on the workings and dynamics of contemporary irregular migration processes in Ethiopia.

²² Dr. Tekle was one of Petros’s ‘people’ based in Nairobi and Mombasa. He is Ethiopian and has now left Kenya for one of the Western countries.

²³ Sisay was a smuggler working with Petros’ based in Moyale.

Contrary to the official hegemonic statist discourse, the actors are not just specialized professional smugglers, but also ordinary individuals, government officials, law enforcement agents, and migrants' families and friends in the place of origin and abroad. It involves complex social relations, access to communication technologies and flow of information, and formal and informal money transfer agents. Brokers play a crucial role in creating this "complex web of relations in which different actors liaise" (Schapendonk, 2018: 663) and shape a migrant's mobility in this complex environment. As Jill Alpes correctly says, understanding this situation necessitates seeing the role of brokerage as an entry point, and examines the wider organizational logic of migration rather than narrowing it to the relationship between brokers and migrants (Alpes, 2013).

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Migrating out of Poverty research programme consortium is funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). It focuses on the relationship between migration and poverty – especially migration within countries and regions – across Asia and Africa. The main goal of **Migrating out of Poverty** is to provide robust evidence on the drivers and impacts of migration in order to contribute to improving policies affecting the lives and well-being of impoverished migrants, their communities and their countries through a programme of innovative research, capacity building and policy engagement.

Migrating out of Poverty is coordinated by the University of Sussex and led by Research Director Dr Priya Deshingkar and Dr Robert Nurick as Executive Director. Core partners are the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana, and the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia and L'Université Assane Seck Ziguinchor (UASZ) in Senegal. Past partners included the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) in Bangladesh, the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore; and the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) in Kenya. Please visit the website for more information.

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