



**Follow the money:
Tactics, dependencies and
shifting relations in
migration financing on the
Ethiopia - South Africa migration corridor**

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Abstract

The high cost of irregular migration between Ethiopia and South Africa is prohibitive for many low-income but aspiring migrants. The complex infrastructures of brokers, social networks, border controls and state processes that aspiring Ethiopian migrants must navigate to reach South Africa is resourced by an equally complex set of financial transactions. This paper describes a number of key tactics involved in the financing of irregular migration from Ethiopia to South Africa, as revealed in interviews conducted with 40 migrants.

The benevolence available in a sharing economy is the source of survival for many migrants. At the same time, financial dependency can hamper migrant agency en route and in the host country. A particular focus of this paper is the tactic of sponsorship that derives from the host country. A culture of reciprocity frames the repayment of debt, which may be extracted through sweat equity. The nature of relations exists along a spectrum of benevolence and exploitation. Structural, social and personal factors conspire to raise the risk of exploitation of newcomers who are bound by migration debt. One tactic within the realm of sponsorship from the host country is marriage migration. This offers a case of complex connections between migration financing and personal and community relations. It offers an extreme example of how migration facilitation through social networks, even in the most intimate of connections, cannot be assumed to be non-economic.

Executive Summary

The high cost of irregular migration between Ethiopia and South Africa is prohibitive for many low-income but aspiring migrants. Faced with financial constraints to actualize their migration dream, large numbers of aspiring migrants seek opportunities and make plans to finance their move. Brokers, smugglers and other actors and institutions facilitate each part of the migration journey to, and settlement in, South Africa. It is a pact based on mutual interests.

This paper describes a number of key tactics involved in the financing of irregular migration from Ethiopia to South Africa, as revealed in interviews conducted with 40 migrants.

The mechanics of migration financing is dependent on a range of actors in the sending and host space and, at times, involves a wider network in the diaspora. The financing of this move takes place in a context where an attempt to escape deprivation often relies on the benevolence of several kin and non-kin relations. At times, this may lead to new relationships of indebtedness and dependency.

The financial transactions associated with the migration are not one off but are undertaken at every stage of the journey. They are intertwined with the agents and processes that attend the migration industry. Several intermediaries and groups potentially benefit materially or in terms of improved future prospects from the migration of an individual. The cost and risks of migration are both linked to flexible and unpredictable routes. This reality often involves repeated attempts, rerouting and retiming of moves to cross borders. Risk intensifying factors en route and in settlement along the corridor include the physical and legal barriers erected against irregular migrants and smugglers, increased demand for smuggling services, long delays in securing asylum, hostilities against migrant businesses in the host country and the precarity of employment South Africa's informal economy.

Debt financed migration along this corridor is often linked with the promise of a job in South Africa. That job may be linked to the debt – the migrant will repay the migration debt by working for the sponsor who will also host him/her for a period in South Africa. This relationship is both a grooming into informal trade in South Africa and a form of reciprocity. In practice it may involve shifting relations from benevolence to exploitation and migration experiences from freedom to entrapment. Structural, sociocultural and personal factors conspire to raise the risk of exploitation of newcomers who are bound by migration debt.

A wide range of tactics support migration finance. This includes sponsorship from the host or sending country, or from social networks in the diaspora. The payment for the migration journey may involve accumulating money through a number of tactics that implicate not only the migrant but also the wider household and relatives. Payments are

often effected through intermediaries. This is linked also to the networks that might expect to benefit from, and indeed may depend on, the success of the migration act.

In recent years, the financing of smuggling from the host site has become commonplace, influencing the settlement processes of recent migrants ending in the informal economy of South Africa as workers or prospective wives. The repayment of loans may be effected in cash or kind. In this regard, the feminization of migration in the corridor has added a new layer of financing, which involves commodification of cultural rituals and imported institutions.

This migration takes place within a dense social network and much of the facilitation of migration depends on the strength of the migrant's connections with friends and kin. The resourcing of the migration journey and of establishment in the host country is rarely a direct financially transacted experience. Rather, it is undertaken within the norms of an ethnic, moral economy that carries a host of obligations.

The study finds indications of a shifting of relations of benevolence and exploitation attached to the migration of Ethiopian migrants to South Africa. The narratives of migrants interviewed in this study point to relations of exploitation in the extraction of the migration debt. They also indicate that the restrictive options for migrants to participate in the South African economy (given labour restrictions, the lack of policy clarity and support in the informal sector generally), and the ineffectual asylum regime, sustains migrants' dependency on co-ethnics. This may lead to their entrapment, both in personal debt relations and in livelihood opportunities. In the absence of alternatives, people rely for their survival on social and ethnic networks in sending and host countries. The narratives here align with other readings that caution against a valorisation of a gifting and sharing economy that attends a socially dense migration experience.

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Introduction

Background

The migration from Ethiopia to South Africa epitomizes the push and pull factors of transnational migration. The push factors of absolute and relative deprivation (Stark and Taylor 1989; Czaika and Haas 2011) coexist alongside the pull factors of perceived and actual opportunities. These factors conspire with the power of established familial, ethnic and business transnational networks (Kanko et al. 2013; Estifanos 2016) to instigate and perpetuate irregular migration. Faced with financial constraints to actualize their migration dream, large numbers of aspiring migrants seek opportunities and make plans to finance their move. Brokers, smugglers and other actors and institutions facilitate each part of the migration journey to, and settlement in, South Africa (Fekadu et al. 2019; Estifanos 2015; Asnake and Zerihun 2015). It is a pact based on mutual interests.

The decision-making processes of most aspiring migrants involve multiple players and interests. These moves are often a transnational undertaking involving cooperation between family members and relatives in sending, transit and destination countries. Investment in the migration of one household member may be an investment in the whole household as it is anticipated that, through these moves, one member will improve the livelihood of the household. It is also likely to increase the migration prospects of other members of the household. Migration may bring other material benefits to persons other than the migrant who is poised to improve his/her socioeconomic status through migration. Household members and relatives might invest in the migration with the expectation of benefitting from remittances. For the intermediaries (many being close relatives and immediate friends) who participate in the networked transnational smuggling networks, there is the prospect of a fraction of the smuggling fee. Hosts at the receiving end of the migration journey benefit by hiring new arrivals as shop assistants, as well as through the labour exploitation embedded in marital relations.

The migration journey from Ethiopia to South Africa involves transiting through a number of countries. A single smuggling agent may coordinate the journey and a single fee may be paid. Alternatively, migrants may make use of a number of facilitators along the journey and payments may be required at different stages. For the migrants and the sponsors, or relatives who finance the migration, guarantees may be sought by payments being made in instalments once certain milestones on the journey are reached, or the journey is complete and the migrants have arrived safely in South Africa.

The costs and risks of irregular migration and settlement to South Africa have shifted over time (Kanko et al. 2013; Estifanos 2015). Migration financing mechanisms have responded to these changes and uncertainties. The mechanics of migration financing is dependent on a range of actors in the sending and host space and, at times, involves a wider network in the diaspora. The financing of this move takes place in a context where an attempt to escape deprivation often relies on the benevolence of several kin and non-kin relations. At times, this may lead to new relationships of indebtedness and dependency. The cost and risks of migration are both linked to flexible and unpredictable routes. This reality often involves repeated attempts, rerouting and retiming of moves to cross borders. Risk intensifying factors en route and in settlement along the corridor include the physical and legal barriers erected against irregular migrants and smugglers, increased demand for smuggling services, long delays in securing asylum, hostilities against migrant businesses in the host country and the precarity of employment South Africa's informal economy.

Debt financed migration along this corridor is often linked with the promise of a job in South Africa. That job may be linked to the debt – the migrant will repay the migration debt by working for the sponsor who will also host him/her for a period in South Africa. This relationship is both a grooming into informal trade in South Africa and a form of reciprocity. In practice it may involve shifting relations from benevolence to exploitation and migration experiences from freedom to entrapment. Structural, sociocultural and personal factors conspire to raise the risk of exploitation of newcomers who are bound by migration debt.

This paper draws on the narratives of 40 aspiring migrants who have undertaken the migration journey from Ethiopia to South Africa. It describes the complex network of processes that underlie the financing of irregular migration and settlement processes on the Ethiopia-South Africa migration corridor. It specifically looks into the practice of financing that takes place from the South African side and how it is impacted by structural, economic and personal factors. The paper also discusses the mechanisms of reciprocity and repayment of loans that migrants referred to in interviews.

Fieldwork Methodology

The ethnographic research from which these observations are drawn examined the migration industry that attended the irregular migration of a number of Ethiopian entrepreneurs located in Johannesburg and Durban. The research was undertaken in South Africa and Ethiopia. A total of 45 interviews were conducted in South Africa (Johannesburg and Durban) and Ethiopia (Addis Ababa and Hosaena) between August

2018 and December 2018, of which 40 are key informant interviews upon which this paper draws its narrative.

In preparation for the 40 key informant interviews¹, five in-depth interviews were conducted with Ethiopian migrants who had been resident in South Africa for between 10 and 20 years serving as gatekeepers and opinion leaders. The information obtained from these senior informants provided insight into the socioeconomic condition of Ethiopian migrants as well as background information about the informal economy in which Ethiopian migrant entrepreneurs operate. The five in-depth interviews were conducted in the first three weeks of arrival in South Africa, i.e., during the socialization and trust building processes. Information gathered from these in-depth interviews, together with additional information obtained from the available literature, were used to frame semi-structured questionnaires that were used to interview the 40 key informants. Of the 40 key informant interviews (33 in South Africa and 7 in Ethiopia), 33 were male and 7 were female. This is consistent with the male-dominated migration to South Africa. In addition to these interviews, field notes, informal and formal discussions, observations, a transect walk and a literature review were conducted.

A purposive sampling method was employed. Informants were initially reached through gatekeepers. A snowball technique followed. Information was solicited to a point of saturation – a point where informants told redundant information. Interviewees in South Africa provided contacts of returnees and of relatives and friends back home who were interviewed and who in turn recommended others.

Most interviewees are Ethiopian migrants in South Africa. However, aspiring migrants, returnees, migrants in transit, deported migrants and a migrant-turned-smuggler were also interviewed. The ages of respondents ranged from 23 years to 50 years old. Of the 38 interviews conducted in South Africa (five in-depth and 33 key informant interviews) nine were conducted in Jeppe; five in Yeoville; five in Vosloorus; four in Mayfair; two in Berea; three in Dragon City; six in Durban (West Street); two in Maboneng; one in Parkview; one in Norwood. Of the seven interviews conducted in Ethiopia, four took place in Hosaena (three in the town and one in Bonosha); and the remaining three in Addis Ababa.

¹ Interviews are based on the informants' willingness. A few interviews were interrupted because the respondents did not feel comfortable in the middle of the interview. Almost all the respondents refused to give written consent and some interviewees refused to be voice recorded. A number of interviewees demanded that their recordings be deleted after transcription.

Of the total seven female key informants, four were interviewed in Johannesburg (Mayfair, Dragon City and Jeppe) and three were interviewed in Durban (West Street). One of the female interviewees migrated to South Africa to join her husband, whom she previously married in Ethiopia. Three of the women migrated to South Africa primarily to find a job. The remaining three migrated to South Africa to join their boyfriends or fiancés.

Socializing and Building Trust

Given that the fieldwork methodology and design utilizes an ethnographic approach, socializing and trust building with the respondents was an important aspect of the methodology. For the first three weeks of fieldwork in South Africa, the field researcher visited Johannesburg's so-called Ethiopian quarter 'Jeppe' – a shopping hub in the inner city (see Zack 2015). He participated in social events such as holiday celebrations and church events, travelled with potential respondents to different townships and other parts of Johannesburg, spent time in different immigrant shops and visited bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

The authors had previously worked together in Jeppe, undertaking ethnographic work for a joint paper (Zack and Estifanos 2016). In addition, Zack – who is a Johannesburger – has undertaken other ethnographic and economic research in Johannesburg's inner city, in 'Jeppe' and in the field of informal trade. He was therefore able to provide insights into the workings of migrant business in the area. Estifanos, who is Ethiopian, had an advantage of shared language and culture with many informants. He was also familiar with Johannesburg from his previous research. Estifanos also took considerable risk by spending a significant amount of time in 'Jeppe' in downtown Johannesburg, where crime rates are high (Johannesburg Inner City Partnership 2017). Estifanos also travelled to other neighbourhoods of the city that are known to be high-risk areas for criminal activity but where many Ethiopian migrants reside. To avoid risk during the fieldwork, the researcher avoided using or carrying visible digital equipment such as laptops and cameras. Instead, a pen and a notebook was used to take field notes, as well as a voice recorder to record some of the interviews.

Conceptual Framework

Ethiopian migration to South Africa

There is a tendency to present migration as a recent phenomenon. Some researchers even described the present era as “The Age of Migration” (Castles and Miller 2013). There is also an historical tendency to consider migration as a Western occurrence and much focus is given to transatlantic migrations. These positions are contested by scholars who place migration not as signals of the modern age, but as a continuous phenomenon embedded in the social and economic frameworks of human organization: migration is neither exclusive to modernization nor is it typically a Western occurrence (Moch 2009; Lucassen and Lucassen 1997). The dominant focus of migration studies on Europe and transatlantic migrations has also led to a gross neglect of other migration systems (Hoerder 2002). The vast majority of movements are regional, largely within the Global South. (IOM 2013). Although political narratives and media images focus on the purported mass migration of people from Africa into Europe, labelling it as a migration crisis (Kühnemund 2018), the majority of African migrations happen within the continent (Flahaux and Haas 2016). Despite the absence of comprehensive and reliable data on African migration, Graziani noted that 84% of the current African movements are intra-regional (Graziani 2017). Similarly, Landau et al. calculate that, if one excludes Africans from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, almost 80% of Africans migrating internationally do so within the continent (Landau, et al. 2018: 4).

South Africa is now the number one destination for international migrants within the continent (Landau, et al. 2018). Just over 10% of all African emigrants in 2017 went to South Africa (Landau, et al. 2018: 14). Most immigrants in South Africa originate from neighbouring countries, mainly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. But, unusually large numbers of Ethiopians and Somalis also migrate to South Africa (IOM 2013). Most Ethiopian migrants originate from southern parts of the country, and particularly from a town called Hossaena and its neighbourhoods (Kanko et al. 2013). South Africa is also a transit country for many migrants who seek better futures in the Global North. Many earlier Ethiopian migrants headed to South Africa with the prior intention of using it as a transit to cross into countries of the Global North (Gebre et al. 2010). More recent migrants from southern Ethiopia consider South Africa as their final destination (Estifanos 2016). Migrants’ movement towards South Africa is driven mostly by factors such as better opportunities, an agreeable environment and proximity to home (World Migration Report 2013:31). For example, what is now known as the ‘Southern Africa Route’ (used mainly by Ethiopians and Somalis through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and

Mozambique with destination to South Africa) is estimated by the IOM to have 16,000 - 18,000 crossings annually.

Although there is a growing literature on the Ethiopian diaspora in Europe and the United States (particularly Washington D.C), and significant work on the female dominated migration of Ethiopians to the Middle East, little is known about Ethiopian migration from Ethiopia to South Africa. There is some empirical research on practices of smuggling (Kanko et al. 2013; Estifanos 2015; Fekadu et al. 2019), but there is little depth to the nature of varied networks that enable migration. We know little about the impact that such enablers have on the success or otherwise of the migration. The study reported here explored the people, processes and institutions who facilitate those journeys and the impact that such enablers have on the success or otherwise of the migration, with a particular emphasis on migrants' economic opportunities in the host space. One aspect of this migration industry is the people and processes that financially resource the migration.

Debt-financed migration

Increasing efforts to restrain and deter irregular migrants through intensification and diversification of migration control strategies, without commensurate opening up of legal migration channels, has expanded the demand for clandestine migration (Castles 2004; De Haas 2007; Bakewell 2007; Klein 2014). The market for the services that attend irregular migration has also diversified (Davidson 2013; Brachet 2018). In this context, the costs of smuggling services are often prohibitively high. Potential migrants often enter into a variety of forms of debt in order to finance their move (Rogaly 2009; Davidson, 2013). It should be noted that both regular and irregular migration is often accompanied by debt, as people raise funds in order to move or are sponsored by employers in host countries. Whether the migration is regular or not the relationships of indebtedness can bind migrants in complex relationships of reciprocity and in extended periods of labour obligation (Rogaly 2009; Standing 2011).

Migrants employ complex tactics and enter into more complex pacts whereby their freedoms and restrictions on their agency do not operate in absolute terms of being either free or enslaved or exercising absolute choice or none (Davidson 2013). Research into debt-financed migration has described the elaborate networks and financing tactics that attend undocumented migration. Chin's research into the financing of Chinese irregular migration to the United States indicated that these debts might constitute a single amount payable to an individual or to a patchwork of smaller debts to friends and

relatives (Chin 1999). Migrants themselves or their families back home may be pressed in aggressive ways for the repayment of debts (Cole and Booth 2007; Chin 1999).

In order to repay the high costs of smuggling, migrants often need to enter the only available work opportunities in destination countries. They may enter employment voluntarily, may be exposed to forced labour and exploitation in destination countries, or may enter contractual terms of indenture that are upheld in honest and fair ways (Sobieszyczyk 2002; Davidson 2013). Either way, debt repayment can take many months or years. Nevertheless, authors show that aspiring migrants knowingly and actively make decisions that lead to their taking on of large debts to enable their migration. Migrants may trade temporary restrictions on their freedoms for longer term benefits that offer them an improvement from the life circumstances they are leaving, or offer them opportunities in the long term that would not be available to them if they did not migrate (Sobieszyczyk 2002; O'Connell Davidson 2013).

Smuggling Networks – a business transaction?

Human smuggling is conventionally defined as “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident” (UN 2000). Smugglers facilitate the migration of people through illegal channels across international borders.

Scholars have suggested different models of smuggling. Salt and Stein proposed a migration business theory where smuggling is conceived as a system of institutionalized networks with complex profit and loss accounts, including a set of institutions, agents and individuals each of which stands to make a commercial gain. The model positioned smuggling as an intermediary part of the global migration business that is facilitating the movement of people between origin and destination countries (Salt and Stein 1997). Aranowitz also argues that smuggling could not have grown as it has without the support of powerful market forces (Aranowitz 2001). Aranowitz further underlines that smugglers exhibit entrepreneur-like behaviour and circumvent legal requirements through corruption, deceit and threats. They specialize either in smuggling or in trafficking services and the profit generated varies accordingly.

Shelly (2011) proposes a “supermarket model” of smuggling. In this model, the smuggling networks demand relatively low costs, have high failure rates at border crossings, are characterized by repeated attempts, are run by multiple actors who are independently or loosely affiliated to one another and, importantly, do not have a

strong hierarchy or a violent organizational discipline. Their business is based on maximizing profit and they compete fiercely with one another. There is, however, a marked absence of accountability within smuggling networks. Despite many knowing the risks, migrants are unable to seek compensation from his/her smuggler for robbery, abuse or deception. Within the chain itself, the chief smuggler has limited control over how his clients are treated once they are beyond his immediate control. The notion of migration infrastructures combines the elements of the migration enterprise and of a moral economy that attends migration.

Whilst recognizing the role and validity of the smuggling business theory, Herman notes that this model provides only part of the answer and should be complemented by a social networks theory which takes into account non-economic elements such as the role of social networks in the migration process (Herman 2006). Social networks comprise the interpersonal ties that connect migrants, non-migrants and former migrants in webs of kinship, friendship and shared origin (Massey et al. 1993). Social networks are also placed between micro and macro formulations of migration and connect individual and socio-structural reasons for migrating (Faist 1997). A related concept of social network is social capital. A commonly accepted sociological definition of social capital is the ability to gain access to resources by virtue of membership in networks or larger social structures (Portes 2010). Social capital has been used as a predictor of many variables including school attrition and academic performance, sources of employment and occupational attainment, and success of immigrant and ethnic enterprises (Portes 1998).

It is anticipated that individual migrants use their social capital as a means to meet their socioeconomic, cultural and political ends. The role of social capital for an individual can be seen at two levels: bonding capital and bridging capital. Putnam made a distinction between these two forms of social capital. While bridging capital connects an individual to a broader society, bonding capital binds a person to his or her narrow social group (Putnam 1993). Both types of capitals involve trust: whereas bridging social capital is based on general trust (i.e. trust in strangers), bonding capital is based on concrete trust (i.e. trust in people you already know). In other words, the ability of an individual to gain access to social networks or larger structures of society is influenced by the degree trust she or he possesses (Portes 2010).

Social capital and social networks potentially increase the likelihood of migration, reduce the cost and risks of migration, provide access to valuable information, reduce emotional costs, provide recreational services, and support the insertion of migrants in the host space (Massey et al. 1987; Massey 1990; Curran et al. 2005; Ayalew et al. 2018;

Sanchez and Natividad 2017). These perspectives have, however, often underestimated power relations, exclusion, exploitation and criminal activities (Poros 2011; Hagan 1998; Boyd 1989; Estifanos 2015; Cranford 2005). The free rider problem and constraints on individual freedom are also identified as negative effects of social networks for immigrant entrepreneurs (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Landolt 1996).

Migration infrastructures – the role of states, intermediaries and social networks

‘Migration infrastructure’ broadens the perspective of the elements that service migration beyond a simple view of mediation as a profit-making business. Xiang and Lindquist (2014: S124) suggest five elements of migration facilitation and migration control. Each have distinctive leading actors, driving forces, central strategies and rationalities, as well as defining modus operandi. These dimensions are: “the commercial (recruitment intermediaries), the regulatory (state apparatus and procedures for documentation, licensing, training and other purposes), the technological (communication and transport), the humanitarian (NGOs and international organizations), and the social (migrant networks)”². Similarly, in examining the migration industry from a structuralist approach, Cranston et al. (2018: 545) propose three parallel dimensions of migration facilitation and control, namely: “the State; the social networks of migrants; and the commercial mediation of migration by brokers, security companies, transporters and recruitment agencies.”

The role of the state is ambiguous. While international migration for many people in Africa is one of the few opportunities for improving their life chances and well being, the notion of development – both for international development agencies and for governments – is often firmly rooted in ideas of the sanctity of the nation state. Moreover, migration and development programmes are increasingly premised on reducing the flows of international migrants (Bakewell 2007).

Host country governments are under pressure to increase efforts to restrain and deter irregular migrants through the intensification and diversification of migration control strategies. In the Global South, such restrictions are impacted and intensified by increasing resistance to migration to the North. In the interests of ‘protecting’ European countries from the immigration of Africans, for instance, European cooperation with African countries is increasingly being tied to firm control of those countries’ borders

² Xiang and Lindquist (2014) however concede that these are not discrete domains. For instance, commercial infrastructure functions by interacting with regulatory, humanitarian, social, and technological infrastructures.

(Capesciotti 2017, Graziani 2017). Border reinforcements that had existed primarily in the Global North countries are being increasingly adopted everywhere, making distinctions between Global North and Global South practices difficult to determine (Nawyn 2016). Giabazzi et al. argue that European external borders have also become African borders (Giabazzi et al. 2016).

The role of governments in directing migration is, however, not precise. Restrictions from governments expand the need for “clandestine migration services”, contributing to an increase in smuggling business (Haas 2013; Brachet 2018), which sometimes lead to migrant debt (Friebel and Guriev 2004).

Intermediaries, or brokers, are crucially important agents in the migration infrastructure. Brokers often occupy the ‘middle space’ between migrants, states and employers. They can act as extensions of the state seeking to outsource border controls and collude with employers to cheapen and commodify migrant labour. Brokers can also work on migrants’ behalf, finding ways of circumventing restrictive policies and practices. They are located at each point of the migrant journey, including inside host countries (Goh et al. 2017; McKeown 2012; McCollum and Findlay 2018).

The lines between voluntary and coerced movement blur as more is known about the ways in which people pay for their migration. Smugglers form an important part of the brokerage network that facilitates irregular migration. Smugglers provide a wide range of services, from physical transportation and illegal crossing of a border, to the procurement of false documents (Heckmann 2007).

Nonetheless, human smugglers are blamed for putting migrants’ lives in danger (Frouws et al. 2014; Albahari 2015). There is also widespread belief that smugglers trick most migrants (Friebel and Guriev 2004). Yet, most smuggled irregular migrants know quite well what to expect in terms of the costs and non-monetary risks involved in illegal migration (Fekadu et al. 2019; Skeldon 2000). Indeed, smugglers may facilitate migration by serving as “gate-openers” (Fekadu et al. 2019) and providing protection for migrants and refugees from below (Ayalew et al. 2018). From this perspective, the risks migrants encounter en route are an extension and part of the structural violence of global inequality and the deprivation of the mobility rights of migrants (Castles 2004; Gerard 2014; Klein 2014). Increased border enforcement, externalization and securitization measures significantly raises the risks and fatalities associated with irregular migration (Haas 2013; Ayalew et al. 2018). These measures have profoundly altered options of living across borders (Sorensen 2018).

Xiang and Lindquist (2014:132) point to how the “migrant network has been widely regarded as the single most useful variable in migration studies”. Embedded in social networks built on ties of kinship, friendship, co-ethnicity and community, migrant networks have been discussed in relation to their role in facilitating and maintaining the migration process (MacDonald and MacDonald 1974; Massey et al. 1987; Curran and Saguy 2001). Beyond family- or kin-based networks, migrant’s social networks are complex, taking on different forms such as friendship groups or community centres (Ryan et al. 2008 in Cranston et al. 2018). Social and community ties offer support for debt migration. They may also pull migrants into negative and even sinister ties of obligation. Lindley’s research amongst Somali migrants in London describes cases of non-migrants fabricating horrible stories to extract remittances from migrant relatives in the diaspora (Lindley 2007). There are also instances of blackmailing of migrants to raise money to finance migration or other purposes. Carling (2014) argues that the power of blackmail can be substantial and migrants risk being judged in moral terms as selfish, ungrateful or aloof. These judgments that matter regardless of migrants’ plans for return migration, because remittances are often sent within transnational social fields (Carling 2014).

The risk and cost of irregular migration is tied to border controls, brokerage and to the strength and extent of social networks of migrants in sending and host countries.

Moral Economy and Transnational Social Networks

Social networks are critical to discussions of transnational migration because financing occurs within these dense social networks. Social networks are needed for (Herman 2006; Cvajner and Sciortino 2010; Curran et al. 2005; Massey et al. 1987; Massey 1990; Sanchez and Natividad 2017):

- The raising of capital to finance journeys;
- The actual financing of the journey;
- The repayment of debts;
- The extraction of resources by migrants as well as the extraction of resources from migrants; and
- The on-going maintenance of the migration.

These networks are the channels of both the knowledge and resource flows necessary for migration. The networks carry with them varying expectations and relations of reciprocity. Networks play a wider role than simply the channelling of resources. Migration knowledge is generated and circulated within a transnational social space.

These spaces reflect long-term transnational migration patterns, dynamics and sustained cross-border social relations (Faist 2000). Migration knowledge produced and disseminated across transnational space enables migrants to learn about and adapt to their host environment (Ayalew et al. 2018). Internet-based media and communication technology assists aspiring migrants and refugees embarking on the journey or those stranded en route to stay in touch with families and friends abroad or back in the homeland. These platforms are also useful as instruments of learning and knowledge sharing, thereby improving the likelihood of success (Leurs 2014; Ayalew et al. 2018).

The financial and non-financial resources that flow to migrants through their social networks might be based on altruism or an expectation of reciprocity. The moral economy of irregular migrants is a useful framework within which to understand these sharing and exchange activities (Waite and Lewis 2017). The moral economy is broadly taken to mean a system of economic transactions that invoke social relationships and moral norms (Anderson 2000). In the case of Eritrean migrants to Europe, for instance, while trust, a culture of sharing and social networks make such relationships possible, social and family obligations and mutual benefits generate the necessary financial and material resources for mobility (Ayalew et al. 2018; Belloni 2016).

On the other hand, Boccagni argues that the practice of sending remittances (or financing migration) is strongly, if tacitly, embedded in a pervasive expectation of reciprocity (Boccagni 2015). Others also noted the existence of explicit and implicit expectations of reciprocity within co-ethnic and religious networks (Clope 2011). Moreover, reciprocity for the support extended to precarious migrants can be either “open”, keeping no accounts and implying a relation of permanent mutual commitment, or “closed,” operating more like market exchange in its individualistic orientation and barter-like character (Graeber 2001). Transnational labour migrants – and particularly those whose migration is debt-financed – may find themselves in trustworthy contractual arrangements, or in working conditions that are unsatisfactory or even multiply exploitative (Waite and Lewis 2017).

The Ambiguous and Gendered Nature of Social Networks

A sharing and transactional economy operates within the settlement space. Its outcomes are related to the transactional economy described thus far.

O’Connell Davidson (2013) argues that state limitations on the rights of migrants to access work opportunities contributes to their dependency on debt financed migration and to associated risks of exploitation. Waite and Lewis indicated that in the absence of

a right to work or state provision of support, migrants access vital support through informal networks, frequently of a sharing and transactional type where food and housing are provided in exchange either for explicit or implicit expectations of return (Waite and Lewis 2017). Hence, it is common for refused asylum seekers with no right to work and no recourse to public funds to turn to informal support from friends, family and acquaintances (Bloch 2014), as well as community organizations, faith groups or charities (Sigona 2012). This support is vital to survival.

In South Africa, restrictions limit work opportunities for many migrants to the informal economy. The conditions of many Ethiopian migrants in inner city Johannesburg provide limited space for economic activities. For many, profits are marginal. The combination of their survival needs, their needs to furnish repayments of debt, and to honour obligations to send remittances, places extreme strain on the incomes they gain from small scale trade in fast fashion. The practices they enter in order to reduce their day-to-day expenses, as they trade immediate comfort for the longer-term benefit of stability and an economic foothold, are relevant to the discussions of financial flows. The benefits that are embedded in the social networks of the Ethiopian entrepreneurial community offer forms of social capital – of sharing and support that translate into financial savings – which are related to the array of transactional obligations that attend their migration.

The absence of state support, then, provides a framework within which the need for a sharing economy becomes more acute. At its best, this economy is a nurturing space that incubates entrepreneurs and knits newcomers into migrant networks and a local economy. It is not, however, always benign. Gifting and sharing practices may also be employed alongside, or with, the express intent of exploitation as established migrants seek to reduce their own expenses through the extraction of the labour of newcomers. The moral economy of gifting and sharing within the clandestine economy creates and reproduces particular norms and relationships that position immigrants along a spectrum of freedom and exploitation (Waite and Lewis 2017). In particular the vulnerability of migrants due to their irregular socio-legal status, their inability to legally work or the lack of access to welfare in the settlement process makes them susceptible to exploitation in the survival oriented labour market (Waite and Lewis 2017; Friebel and Guriev 2004). This is especially the case in rich countries where sharing between immigrants is vital for survival (Waite et al. 2015).

Social networks in the host space can be exclusionary and even exploitative. Poros describes ethnic enclave economies where immigrants used their social networks and co-ethnic social capital to participate in labour markets that primarily serve their own

ethnic communities, while excluding immigrants from a different ethnic group or origin (Poros 2011). In the case of Johannesburg's Ethiopian community, these divisions feature in buildings that are dominated by persons from the Hossaena region and by preferential treatment given to brokers and fellow traders who originate from the same region in Ethiopia.

Literature indicates that the potential for exclusionary and exploitative transnational migration networks is marked for women, who often receive fewer benefits than their male counterparts who occupy similar networks (Boyd 1989; Hagan 1998; Waite and Lewis 2015). There is a danger that, by confining themselves to a diminishing set of personal networks and the strong ties on which those networks are built, migrants weaken their pool of resources and hence reduce the benefits that could have accrued otherwise (Hagan 1998).

Female Ethiopian migrants involved in the entrepreneurial environment of inner-city Johannesburg are generally confined to managing shops on site. Very few – and generally only those few who have succeeded in running their own shops and established themselves as successful individual businesswomen – are able to participate in the buying, transportation and the distribution of goods. Women staff several restaurant spaces in the ethnic enclave of Jeppe. Women run most of the coffee shops (coffee ceremonies being the preserve of females who make and serve the coffee in Ethiopian culture). The economic burden of limited access to the income earning possibilities of a small trade economy is heightened by the findings that women generally take greater responsibility for maintaining familial connections with relatives back home. They send relatively greater remittances than their male counterparts. Moreover, social space in the Ethiopian enclave is utterly male dominated. Men fill restaurants and coffee shops. These are the sites of networking, of conducting business transactions and of operating savings clubs and societies. Women are entirely excluded from this socialising and networking (Amel 2012). When they are present, their role in that space is service to the socialising men.

Migration Routes and Nature of Smuggling Networks

The migration routes out of Ethiopia can generally be classified into four main routes: the Northern route that goes to Europe crossing transit countries like Sudan and Libya as well as the Mediterranean Sea (Ayalew et al. et al. 2018); the Sinai route that goes to Israel through Egypt and the Sinai desert; the Eastern route that goes to Middle East countries through Yemen and the Red Sea (Helen 2014); and the Southern route that goes to South Africa through transit countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Fekadu et al. 2019; Kanko et al. 2013; Estifanos 2016; RMMS 2014).

This paper focuses on the Southern route. Migrant journeys from Ethiopia to South Africa are by air, land or sea and often a combination of these modes. While the choice of route is based on costs, it is also often gendered. The arrangements involved in migrating irregularly via flight are expensive, complex and time consuming. Those who have the means are likely to opt for this, however, as it provides the most swift journey and the safest transit. It is the option that is preferred for women because it is deemed safer. Female irregular migrants who are either heading to South Africa as prospective wives, or who are sponsored by hosts in South Africa, are likely to use this route because the land route is considered physically harsh and dangerous – with the risk of arrest, mugging, illness or molestation. Men who sponsor prospective wives have generally been working in South Africa for an extended period and have saved sufficient funds to sponsor a prospective wife's journey, or have the strength of social networks to take on the debt of the potential wife's migration by air. As discussed below, they may also enter into innovative tactics to finance the move.

The roles of migration regimes, increased border enforcement, externalization and securitization measures that have altered migration routes, and shaped the smuggling business in other settings (Brachet 2018; Andersson 2014; Lucht 2011; Research and Evidence Facility 2017), have also been observed in our study on the Southern route. One of the ways in which migrants and smugglers have responded to intensifying border controls is re-rerouting the journey. Consequently, the migration routes from Ethiopia to South Africa fluctuate depending on the physical and legal barriers erected against smugglers and irregular migrants. Informants indicated that smugglers bribe border police and immigration officials whenever possible and profitable. They also seek help from regular residents and institutions like churches and other actors along the way to find or create loopholes and continue their southern journey.

Increased border enforcement, externalization and securitization measures have significantly raised the risks and fatalities associated with irregular migration. There is also an increase in the time and cost for migrants needing to cross borders. Several informants in our study noted that one response to increasing border control and securitization policy in transit countries (such as Kenya and Tanzania) is shifting the migration route across the Indian Ocean rim. Migrants and smugglers are also known to make repeated attempts as well as change the time of travel to past-midnight to cross borders. Such measures have increased the cost of migration and the risks immigrants encounter en route, as well as reduced the power of irregular migrants against smugglers.

Informants in our study indicated that the amount of money required to smuggle migrants has significantly increased following a number of major international and national events. These include the 'September 11' incident that intensified border restriction on security grounds; the 2000 and 2005 Ethiopian National Elections and instabilities that followed them; and the 2010 World Cup hosted in South Africa. More recently, changing migration policy on the South African side has increased the cost for migrants. Consequently, in 2018 the average smuggling cost surpassed 200,000 ETB (around 6,800 USD). Some informants said they were asked to pay additional money to travel across water, to bribe officials posted at borders or to make repeated attempts. Other studies along the Southern route complement our findings. In 1999, for example, the mean amount of money paid to be smuggled from Ethiopia to South Africa on land was 20,772 ETB (around 700 USD). This has more than tripled over a decade to reach 63,220 ETB (around 2,150 USD) in 2009 (Teshome 2010). The cost of smuggling via a flight has increased from 5,000 ETB (around 170 USD) in the first half of the 1990s to 120,000 ETB (around 4,100 USD) by 2015 (Estifanos 2015; Fekadu et al. 2019).

Our findings suggest that it is mostly aspiring migrants, their families back home, or their hosts in South Africa who initiate contacts with local agents and smugglers to actualize the migration.

Smuggling networks that are driven by market forces and responding to border restrictions pull in members and elements from near and far. They draw from diverse networks such as religious, financial, personal, familial and other actors and institutions dispersed across a transnational space. They also invite incidental agents to join in, over time and across space, to fill the vacuum created by rather uncertain and unpredictable smuggling networks. The smugglers work together, but not with a structure in which one works for the other. They work independently and no one smuggler is accountable, which puts migrants at further risk.

The smuggling network in the Ethiopia-South Africa migration corridor approximates the migration business theory forwarded by Salt and Stein (1997) where smuggling is conceived as a system of institutionalized networks with complex profit and loss accounts, including a set of institutions, agents and individuals each of which stands to make a commercial gain. As Aranowitz (2001) argues, the smugglers also exhibit entrepreneur-like behaviour and circumvent legal requirements through corruption, deceit and threats. In its operation, it resembles Shelly's "supermarket model" (2011), where the smuggling networks entail relatively low costs, have high failure rates at border crossings, are characterized by repeated attempts, are run by multiple actors who are independently or loosely affiliated to one another, and do not have a strong hierarchy or a violent organizational discipline. Their business is based on maximizing profit, and they compete fiercely with one another. Costs increase with increased border security. In most cases the purpose of migration is labour migration. There is a marked absence of accountability within smuggling networks.

However, the findings do not support Herman's thesis (2006) that actors involved in social networks are non-economic entities. Rather the narratives gathered in our research suggest that many relatives, friends, acquaintances or siblings who finance the migration, intermediate or host newly arriving immigrants do so not only to minimize the cost and risk of migration, but also to gain materially. The narratives indicate that it cannot be assumed that the motive of facilitation for self-enrichment is confined to smugglers or to government officials.

Migration Finance and Reciprocity

The financing of migration is not simply a one off payment. It is a staged process that often requires considerable planning and support. The sourcing of money to undertake a migration journeys stretches across social networks and across geographic boundaries. As smuggling costs have increased, the range of financing agents and funding sources has broadened. Pioneer immigrants interviewed in this study indicated that in the late 1990s and early 2000s very few persons (generally migrants and one or two relatives) were involved in financing. More recently, the networks have grown more complex and include fellow migrants, kin in the diaspora, wider families (who borrow/sell their assets) and sponsors in the host country.

Interviewees named the following tactics that aspiring migrants and their households engage in to raise money for migration:

- Internally migrating to bigger cities to seek work in order to raise money;

- Renting out their land³;
- Selling household assets including cattle;
- Borrowing money from relatives in Ethiopia;
- Receiving financial assistance from diaspora kin in Global North countries;
- Drawing on remittances sent back home from South Africa; and
- Being financed by settled immigrants in South Africa.

In recent years, the practice of financing, as well as facilitating, irregular migration from the South African side has become commonplace as Ethiopian migrants have established an economic foothold in South Africa and many have moved beyond owner operator of single enterprises to establish several businesses that employ workers. The repayment of the migration debt then might be undertaken through remitting money to Ethiopia, or through repayment to South African based sponsors in money or labour.

Financing migration from the host space

The high cost of migration for recent migrants has meant that many family members based in Ethiopia can no longer afford to raise the required amount of money to support aspiring migrants. Aspiring Ethiopian migrants are increasingly seeking support from hosts based in South Africa, either to finance their migration to South Africa or, where necessary, to pay for their release from captors in transit countries. This affects their settlement processes and integration in South Africa's informal economy.

As is the case with many recent immigrant interviewees, Solomon's migration from Ethiopia was financed from the host site. His brother based in South African paid money to a chief smuggler in South Africa:

I didn't pay to the brokers in Moyale. My brother handled the smuggler in South Africa since my travel was urgent. My initial payment was 56,000 Rand. The chief smuggler in South Africa sent a message to the smugglers in Ethiopia. The chief had ordered them to smuggle me to Nairobi. Once I reached Nairobi 1/3 of the payment was effected.

This financing model aligns with Friebel and Guriev's debt financed migration, except

³ Legal ownership and transactions of land in Ethiopia: Land in Ethiopia belongs to the government. Ethiopian citizens have user rights. Recently the government introduced land certification programs to improve land security. However, the outcome of the program is contested by scholars like Dessalegn Rahmato, who argues that the program only consolidated the power of the government over the peasant.

that the host-based sponsor replaces the intermediary sponsors referred to in their work (Friebel and Guriev, 2004). Debt-financed migration evokes an implicit or explicit expectation of reciprocity. This model changes according to context.

Interviewees suggest that in the case of recent migrants travelling from Ethiopia to South Africa, the sponsor is re-paid through work in which the migrant is often exploited

One indication of the family's vested interest in financing migration is the fact that the equivalent funding would not be provided, by either the relatives in Ethiopia or the host in South Africa, for the establishment of an Ethiopian-based business. Rather, migration is viewed as a preferred form of investment that may benefit sponsors or relatives.

The economic logic of this is sound. Informants noted that the South African informal economy presents business opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs. They noted the purchasing power (and the desire or inclination to consume) of South Africans was much higher than that of customers back home. Informants also pointed to the apparent ease of doing business in South Africa, where there appear to be less bureaucratic procedures associated with entering the informal sector. Further, many migrants in the informal economy do not pay tax. They compared this with the perceived bureaucratic complexity and tax requirements in Ethiopia. These perceptions are borne out by the lack of enforcement of legislation and regulation, except in sporadic police clampdowns on informal trade and unregistered small business.

Informants also indicated that business opportunities that allowed established migrants to diversify or expand their businesses meant that they needed trustworthy assistants in their original businesses, often tuck-shops in townships or small shops in downtown areas, while they pursued expanded opportunities. This need also inspired the sponsoring of new migrants.

Reciprocity in Settlement Processes

Our findings indicate that there is change in gifting and sharing practices among Ethiopian immigrants. Pioneer and earlier migrants used to share or even abandon their bedrooms for the "guest" and sleep in the couch. More useful for the "guests" in their settlement processes was the practice of monetary contributions or provision of trading items (such as belts, wristwatches, and towels) in the form of gifting, so that they could start their own business. The hosts also used to assign a familiar Ethiopian guide for the "guests", so that the latter could more easily get along with the city and understand the modus operandi of the informal economy.

Mr. Mesfin, one of the pioneer Ethiopian migrants in Yeoville, Johannesburg shared his experience:

Back then, those of us who arrived and settled earlier used to provide for new comers easy to carry items such as belt, cap, towel and wristwatch free of charge so that they could establish themselves. Especially in Yeoville area, we were a group of eight pioneer migrants and each one of us would make 10 Rand contribution and “welcome” newcomers with 80 rand worth items. We also assign someone familiar with the city to accompany the newcomer and show him the business. The new comer would convert that 80 Rand worth item into 500 Rand. Most newcomers trained and traded their items in and around Bree Street and Taxi Rank.

Many Ethiopian migrants who benefited from such arrangements concur with Mr. Mesfins’ narrative. For example, Ismael shared accommodation at Saratoga in the inner city and received wristwatches free of charge to kick-start his own business.

Social networks have limitations. They have not proved to be a guarantor of positive experience for many of the recent migrants. Indeed, there appears to have been a decline in socially transacted migration experiences over the years, as the Ethiopian community in Johannesburg has grown. The practice of gifting and sharing has changed significantly in recent years, particularly after the 2010 World Cup hosted in South Africa. The event sparked a significant increase in the size of migrant informal trader communities. In Johannesburg, the economic downturn, clampdowns on informal trade, crime and corruption and the pressures placed on the financial capital of established migrants (as the density of traders and, therefore, competition has increased), have impacted the ‘excess’ resources available for gifting and sharing.

Our findings indicate that, for recent immigrants, social networks operate based on explicit or implicit expectation of reciprocity and, oftentimes, the reciprocity advantaged the sponsor. Many recent migrants indicated that it is not unusual for migration to be sponsored by a ‘boss’ in the host country. This sponsorship is often a loan arrangement. It is envisaged that the migrant will repay the money in cash or kind, through labour, after arrival.

The motivation for sponsors in the host space to facilitate the migration of their kin, or persons accessed through social networks, include the need for trustworthy employees (to be posted in diversifying business or branching out tuck-shops and container shops) and the search for relief from stress and risks in townships and hotspot areas. These motivations reproduce migration. An interviewee (Abera) in Johannesburg said:

Even though the “bosses” are aware of the risks en route and the dangers in South Africa, they are still willing to finance the migration of younger siblings, relatives, friends or even prospective wives. The hosts finance the migration not only driven by the acts of altruism but also because they want to release themselves from stress and risks in townships. So, by the time the “border” arrives he or she will suffer in the townships while the “boss” stays in cities and enjoys the relative peace. The same cycle continues when the “border” assumes a status of “boss”.

Exploitation of ‘guests’ by ‘hosts’

Recent immigrants rely on settled migrants for job opportunities. More specifically, to initiate their self-employment in informal trade. Their experiences indicated a change in the relationship between recent immigrants and hosts from a mutually beneficial one to exploitation by the latter. In this regard, Waite and Lewis (2017) argue that the moral economy of gifting and sharing within the clandestine economy creates and reproduces particular social and cultural norms and relationships that position immigrants along a spectrum of freedom and exploitation. Furthermore, exploitation should be seen as co-produced within moral economies by both cultural and structural forces, the latter being particularly constructed by the state’s restrictive immigration policies.

The perversion of reciprocity into exploitation, and the complicity of structural forces in creating conditions that exposed migrants to such norms, were witnessed in the narratives gathered in this research. Migrants working in the informal sector, as many newly arrived Ethiopians do, face the intersection of risks associated with working informally as well as risks associated with being a migrant. Restrictive migration policies limit the opportunities for work for political asylum seekers and many are restricted to working in informal trade. There, they face the same risks as South Africans in that sector:

- Restricted spaces for trade;
- Risks of corruption by officials;
- Exposure to crime in public spaces;
- Limited shelter and safety for their stock;
- Extortion by officials or leaseholders who might sell access to trading sites; and
- High physical risk in areas where policing is poor and crime rates are high.

In addition, migrants face the precarity of their political asylum seeking status, which is renewed for periods as short as a few months, after which they are illegal migrants until the status is again renewed (and this is often done under conditions of extortion). They also face risks of xenophobic attitudes and xenophobic attacks on their businesses and on their person. These risks create situations where those who are able to might shield themselves from risk by placing more vulnerable migrants in the businesses that are at highest risk.

Kassech was an Ethiopian returnee migrant from Saudi Arabia. She suffered financial difficulties in Addis Ababa (including the demolition of her small restaurant when owners redeveloped the site it was located on). She moved to South Africa hoping to work for her brother's friends whom she met in Addis Ababa. They welcomed Kassech in Johannesburg and she started working in their shops. She felt exploited. After two years, she wanted to work independently, but found the risks associated with informal trade in Johannesburg to be too high, and she remained in the employ of her social contacts.

Another migrant, Temesgen, shared his experience of exploitation by his own brother, who financed his smuggling to South Africa:

When I first arrived in Johannesburg, I stayed with my brother's friends because my brother was living in Cape Town. So, I stayed a week with this guy and tried to get my paper through brokers who facilitate it. I tried twice but it didn't work out. So, I went to Cape Town, my brother welcomed me and I started to settle. When I asked my bother to help me get the paper, he was not happy to help me and he told me to work without a paper. I was not happy with that. I was also not comfortable with the work because I was supposed to work (in his tuck-shop) starting from 10 o'clock (4am) in the morning. It was tiresome work. He only wanted me to work for him. He didn't care about my paper or me; he wanted his money only. But my dream was to support my family. I didn't come here to serve him. That started a disagreement between us, and I escaped.

Informants further revealed that recent migrants from Hosaena (known as "borders" in the migrant community) tend to be employed by bosses who place them in shops in remote townships and informal settlements. They may be paid minimally and commitments made to them may not be honoured. In addition, their own entrepreneurship may be stifled as bosses control access to networks and business opportunities. In these ways, the bosses erect various barriers to disable migrants from becoming successful entrepreneurs. This adds another dimension to the discussion of

exploitation in settlement.

There are also cases where bosses exploit recent immigrants whose smuggling they sponsor. The case of Yoseph, a teenager interviewed in Jeppe while he came for medical treatment, is revealing. He was well settled in Hosaena, but friends in South Africa encouraged him to migrate to South Africa with assurances of great opportunities. Attracted by the promise of better city life, his family sold their land for 180,000 ETB and invested the 120,000 ETB to finance his migration. When he arrived in Johannesburg, he did not end up in the hands of his hosts. He was held hostage by opportunists at the receiving end who demanded ransom. His friends told him that they paid ZAR12, 000 to release him and he started working in their tuck-shop - indebted for the same amount. At the time of the interview, the exploitation was continuing:

When they called again and again and told me, "You cannot change there," I thought they wanted to see me succeed. It was a complete opposite. After I reached Johannesburg, I ended up being hostage. My friends told me that they paid ZAR12,000 to bail me out, and I owed them the same amount and started to work for them. They put me in shop located in rural township and I am working for them. There is a lot of danger and risk in the area: I only worked for 2 weeks when I suffered my first attack. The bosses stay in safe place and do as their hearts bid, but I could not get out of that shop. I am buried there. Some bosses finance up 200,000 ETB to find someone like me to come and work for them. But I paid myself and here I am suffering. I was hoping to pay back the amount I owe them and start my own business as soon as possible. I worked for two years and yet I am still shackled. I asked the boss to start my business and he told me to wait for three months. I asked him again after three months and he told me to wait for few weeks. Two months are past since then, yet nothing is changed. They only make one excuse after another.

In informal conversations in Jeppe, people said that such practices of exploitation based on a perverse reciprocity is becoming a common practice whereby settled hosts (relatives, siblings, friends and bosses) are taking advantage of the precarious and vulnerable position of new arrivals. In extreme cases, it can even involve physical attack, as in the case of Biruk. Biruk expected to be welcomed in South Africa by his uncle who had promised to host him. However, when he called upon arrival, his uncle redirected him to another migrant from Hosaena. The latter also declined, saying that he himself was struggling to make ends meet. Biruk found himself in a precarious position. He struggled in Jeppe, searching for ways to insert himself in the informal economy. A businessman approached and asked him to work in his tuck-shop located in a remote

township. Strangely, however, the businessman asked Biruk to pay him 3000 Rand (three months salary) in advance to start the job. When Biruk refused the offer, he was beaten.

The narratives indicate that the coincidence of familial and kinship bonds with socially transacted debt migration, that tie people to relationships of reciprocity, and the nature of migrant businesses in the informal economy of South Africa create double entrapments for vulnerable migrants.

The gendered nature of marriage migration and associated debt financing

In addition to reciprocities of labour exploitation and release from stress discussed above, the desire for loving partnerships appears to be a strong factor in the willingness to finance or smuggle in prospective wives from Ethiopia. In this regard, a complicated reciprocity manifests in the marriage migration of Ethiopian women in “welcome” and “wedding” ceremonies. Such migrations are often accompanied by significant gifts that informants have associated with helping stabilize the financial situation of the men they marry. The welcome and wedding ceremonies are connected with reciprocal savings and social institutions such as *Mahibers* and *Idirs*, which are imported from Ethiopia and modified to accommodate migrant and entrepreneurial needs in South Africa (Zack and Estifanos 2016). This may facilitate their establishment in South Africa. Asrat shares his experience:

Marriage is a big culture in our country. But it has a bigger value in South Africa than in Ethiopia. In these days people are getting married without wedding ceremonies in Ethiopia, but in South Africa migrants from Southern Ethiopia consider wedding ceremony as mandatory because they make profit from it. Most Ethiopian migrants from my area bring wife from Ethiopia and when she comes, we make a promise to each other in a church. Then we start to live together. Then when we have the capital, we will arrange a wedding ceremony. It might cost up to 100,000 rand. The people who will be invited at the wedding ceremony will give money as a gift. In addition to the monetary profit, the bride and the bridegroom might also receive presents in kind. For example, my families gave me a car as a gift on my wedding day, and her families gave us another car. This is how marriage becomes beneficial.

In the case of gifts offered at wedding and welcome ceremonies, the reciprocity is closed. Contributions operate more as a loan than an extension of support. In extreme cases, cultural rituals are commodified and wives are used as a means to profit from

marriage ceremonies. Interviewee Blen said:

Sometimes, some married people even bring another woman for marriage to make business on them. There will be a “welcome” party on the second day after she arrives. And they will make a lot of money from it. If that is not enough, there will be a wedding ceremony after two months to make more money.

Marriage ceremonies may finance migration. In these cases, brokers and smugglers may receive their fees after the ceremonies. Asnaku, an Ethiopian migrant in Durban, described the process:

There is a welcome party when they bring a wife here. And they will get a lot of money from the party, they could make as big money as 300,000 ETB and they use the money to pay for the smuggler who brought her. The person who would bring a potential wife would make a deal with the smuggler to pay the latter from the money he would profit from the party. The smuggler would wait until the party is over and he takes his cut. But in this days, this kind of things are decreasing and it is good.

The migration facilitation of prospective wives indicates how the smuggling business is embedded within the social and cultural institutions and practices of migrants. It also references the innovation of smugglers and migrants. However, the smuggling of would-be-wives is a complex transactional undertaking. The matchmaking of an intended husband and wife may take place with varying degrees of agency accorded to either party. It may be initiated through social media, through mutual acquaintances or through relatives of either party. Once the couple has agreed or decided to marry, confirmation by parents, relatives and village elders requires protracted social and cultural rituals.

Given the high risks of journeying by land or sea along the Southern route, the preferred mode of transport for would-be-wives is airplane. Establishing reliable smuggling networks through airports and securing the relevant documents is a costly and often arduous exercise. Potential husbands in South Africa who finance the smuggling of would-be-wives need financial and social capital to resource the move.

Tadele arrived in South Africa from Kambata in 2006. He is an established entrepreneur who travels between South Africa and Ethiopia. He has become a facilitator in matchmaking processes as he has been called upon to carry photographs of prospective partners to and from Ethiopia. He described how familial networks are attached to marriage migration:

It is our families or our best friends who chose a wife for us in Ethiopia. Some people say there are migrants here who marry by just looking pictures on Facebook or similar social media apps. But most migrants don't choose their wife on Facebook. It is our families who study her background and her behavior for us, and it is them who send the photos. It is not like the way people talk. I have brought many photos from Ethiopia and it is the husband's family who send those photos. It is his families that choose the wife for him. All of the process and rituals will be finished in Ethiopia by the families of the two. After that she is going to come to South Africa.

Other female respondents indicated that wives who work in businesses owned by their husbands, or owned jointly by the couple tend, to be responsible for most business routines, including managing shops or restaurants as well as the household chores, while men undertake the physically less demanding coordination, stocking and follow ups in the business.

Gendered relations and social institutions imported from home seem to reinforce exploitative conditions for female migrants, who are assuming the dual role of wife and worker. In this regard, it is indicated that one of the outcomes of migration to South Africa is the role reversal between males and females in a transnational space, where Ethiopian men have taken over social processes, while the women have taken on the male roles of business managers (Amel 2012). Men control the imported social processes in South Africa. They import and operate social institutions, such as *Idir* and *Mahiber*, and are able to adjust and shape them to their advantage in the host space.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the financing of the migration of Ethiopian migrants to South Africa, as revealed in interviews conducted with 40 migrants. Structural factors, market forces as well as a combination of push and pull factors, augmented by established transnational smuggling networks that stretch from Ethiopia to South Africa, interact to increase the costs and risks linked to migration and settlement processes.

The findings indicate that costs vary according to the migration route, the mode of transport, the physical and legal barriers erected against smuggling, and the access that migrants have to social and smuggling networks. The financial transactions associated with the migration are not one off but are undertaken at every stage of the journey. They are intertwined with the agents and processes that attend the migration industry

along this corridor. The payment of migration costs occurs through formal and informal channels of finance. These channels are also dispersed across geography in source, transit and destination countries, as well as the diaspora in Global North countries.

A wide range of tactics support migration finance. This includes sponsorship from the host or sending country, or from social networks in the diaspora. The payment for the migration journey may involve accumulating money through a number of tactics that implicate not only the migrant but also the wider household and relatives. Payments are often effected through intermediaries. This is linked also to the networks that might expect to benefit from, and indeed may depend on, the success of the migration act.

In recent years, the financing of smuggling from the host site has become commonplace, influencing the settlement processes of recent migrants ending in the informal economy of South Africa as workers or prospective wives. The repayment of loans may be effected in cash or kind. In this regard, the feminization of migration in the corridor has added a new layer of financing, which involves commodification of cultural rituals and imported institutions.

The research shows that the nature of financing, and the facilitation of financing, impacts on the nature of the journey, on vulnerability to exploitation, and on the agency of migrants en route and upon arrival. Financial dependency can hamper migrant agency en route and in the host country. One tactic of migration financing that is presented in the narratives of interviewees is nuptial migration. This offers a case of complex connections between migration financing and personal and community relations. It offers an extreme example of how migration facilitation through social networks, even in the most intimate of connections, cannot be assumed to be non-economic. It is an area that may benefit from further ethnographic study.

The shifting of relations of benevolence and exploitation that are attached to the migration of Ethiopian migrants to South Africa is linked to several factors. This migration takes place within a dense social network and much of the facilitation of migration depends on the strength of the migrant's connections with friends and kin. The resourcing of the migration journey and of establishment in the host country is rarely a direct financially transacted experience. Rather, it is undertaken within the norms of an ethnic, moral economy that carries a host of obligations.

The risks of irregular migration, including the physical risk of the long journey, threat of exploitation by smugglers and the threat of detection, deportation or imprisonment,

deepens the precarity and the dependency of migrants, as they rely on social networks and smuggling networks for their safety. The layers of dependency are increased by the number of persons potentially involved in the financing of the migration journey and the insertion into the economy of the host space. These are persons located in the sending country, the diaspora, along the journey and the host country. Even where few people are involved – such as when the migration is wholly financed by a host in South Africa – the obligation of reciprocity may be extensive and communal. A migrant who has benefitted from benevolence joins the community of migrants who similarly welcome newcomers. A migrant who has been brought to South Africa by a host may have a debt obligation that is payable through sweat equity and other obligations.

The narratives of migrants interviewed in this study point to relations of exploitation in the extraction of the migration debt. They also indicate that the restrictive options for migrants to participate in the South African economy (given labour restrictions, the lack of policy clarity and support in the informal sector generally), and the ineffectual asylum regime, sustains migrants' dependency on co-ethnics. This may lead to their entrapment, both in personal debt relations and in livelihood opportunities. In the absence of alternatives, people rely for their survival on social and ethnic networks in sending and host countries. The narratives here align with other readings that caution against a valorisation of a gifting and sharing economy that attends a socially dense migration experience.

The susceptibility of migrants to these exploitative conditions would be alleviated by more progressive migration practices within South Africa that would lower the vulnerability of migrant workers. However, this is not an option that seems likely in the foreseeable future. At the time of writing, the South African government is considering developing regulations to restrict the rights of migrants to work in the informal economy.

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About Migrating out of Poverty

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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